

# Moving Forward

Patients struggling with addiction, weight gain and poor self-esteem, among other issues, find resolution and redemption through Dr. Steven Rosenberg



by Phil Gianficaro  
photography by Rob Hall

**In 1978, as his father lay dying of emphysema brought on by decades of cigarette smoking, Steven Rosenberg leaned in close and whispered a promise.**

"I vowed to him that I would stop smoking," Rosenberg recalls. "I was a three-packs-a-day smoker, Parliament filtered, and I could see what was going to happen to me if I didn't stop. I was smoking cigarettes, cigars, and had a collection of expensive pipes. I was addicted to tobacco and nicotine. What cigarettes did to my father woke me up."

Thirty-four years later, Steven Rosenberg, Ph.D., has not only kept that promise to his father, but he's devoted his life to helping others kick the habit.

Over the past 30 years from his office in Elkins Park, Dr. Rosenberg, a renowned psychotherapist dealing in behavioral therapy, has, through one-on-one and group sessions, his book, "Quit it

Now and Forever," and self-help audiotapes and CDs, helped more than 40,000 patients stop smoking. From 1995 to 2008, he spearheaded The Great American Smoke Out in Philadelphia.

"What I do is erase that bad habit," he says. "I go through exercises that teach people how to get rid of the physical addiction through exercise, meditation, drinking fluids to clean the body and lessen the urge."

Dr. Rosenberg has also had great success in helping people stop smoking with a technique called aversiotherapy, a psychological treatment where a person is put into a state of altered consciousness and given subconscious triggers, such as thoughts or phrases, that help them quit.

"I use aversiotherapy to make cigarettes seem nasty to people, to make the thought of smoking sickening," he says. "In my book, I associate the aftertaste of vomit to smoking. I make the thought of smoking objectionable. I have patients who've not smoked for 25 years after seeing me. The success rate is 90 percent. It works."

Diane Jackson is among Dr. Rosenberg's success stories. When the 48-year-old Roxborough resident first visited him in 2008, she smoked a pack of cigarettes a day. Despite using nicotine gum therapy and efforts to stop cold turkey, she couldn't break the habit.

"Finally, I was able to stop after Dr. Rosenberg put me in a hypnotic state and gave me suggestions about how to quit," she says. "He made a CD of our session and told me to listen to it once a day for a week, then once every other day. From that first day, I never smoked again."

Dr. Rosenberg also helps patients wanting to improve the quality of their lives by helping them with their weight, self esteem, sleep troubles and physical pain. Through therapies presented in one-on-one sessions and from his book, "The 15/150 Secret to Simple Dieting," Dr. Rosenberg has compiled a 98 percent success rate helping people lose weight.

Dr. Rosenberg has also been successful helping patients overcome low self-esteem. Patients benefit from office sessions and from his 1997 book, "I Hope the Hell I Win! Turning Hope Into Reality ... How Winners Win." As the team psychotherapist in the mid-1980s, two of his patients were former Philadelphia Flyers defenseman and Hockey Hall of Famer Mark Howe, who, according to Dr. Rosenberg, had self-confidence issues despite being an All-Star player, and the late Vezina Trophy-winning goaltender Pelle Lindbergh.

"I helped Mark with techniques I devised that had him visualize what he wanted to do on the ice," he says. "I basically brainwashed him. We had him visualize what he wanted to do in practice and games, and wanted him thinking he would do nothing wrong. Pelle always had a monkey on his back when it came to beating New York teams. So we sat down in my office and visualized a shutout. The next night he shut out the [New York] Islanders."

Dr. Rosenberg will showcase these life-improving techniques at the first annual Forever Young health and wellness event on October 21. He will talk about how people can use the same visualization techniques he used to enhance the success of professional athletes to improve the quality of any facet of their lives, personally and/or professionally.

The event, held at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown, will also feature Dr. Andrew Weil, founder and director of the world-renowned Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona College of Medicine. Also, Dr. Rosenberg will explain to attendees how to improve their golf game, among other things, using many of the same methods he used to help members of the Philadelphia Flyers reach their true potential.

"The techniques I will use are based on the motivational work I did with the Flyers team, showing how it all applies to everyday life," he says. "Hopefully everybody can make somewhat of a positive change in their life by using the techniques that I will present to them, keeping them motivated to move forward and do whatever they need to do." ■

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