

Jasmine Miller started smoking at 14 to impress a boy. Now, she wants to quit to impress her son. After sizing up the stop-smoking options on the market, she's betting on love to work for sure

Quitting time

I started smoking at 14, regularly bumming smokes from my pimply faced peers. I only lit up two or three times a day, mostly letting the tobacco burn away or mashing long butts into the ground when it was time to head back to class. I wasn't loyal to one brand, like a true smoker; I was dabbling in the nicotine arts to get the attention of a boy.

His name was Liam Jerusalem and he was in Grade 12. My first older man. I was stuttering, bumping-into-walls, falling head-over-heels for months and I went unnoticed like so much sweater lint for about as long. Smoking was my excuse to hang out at door nine, the southeast entrance to our high school.

Along with the other cool kids, the six-foot, brown-haired object of my affection was a door nine fixture. I was hypnotized by the way his fingers manipulated the skinny white cylinders, mesmerized by his lips on the brown filters, completely seduced by the smoke rings (cheesy, I know) he blew so adeptly.

Learning to smoke meant hours of practice. I coughed and sputtered, with my head hanging out my bedroom window, but eventually the dizziness passed and I could fill my mouth without puffing up, chipmunk-like. I was cool.

I don't know when I started to look forward to the smokes more than the sight of Liam's blue eyes, but eventually, between classes, I was running to door nine for my fix. In the end, I snagged the boy. And when it was over, I was left with many lovely tender memories and one grotesque habit. I was a smoker.

Over the next 15 years, I became devoted to my brand, puffing through university, the angst-ridden months of my first real job, the other older men who came and went. My only prolonged interlude as a non-smoker came after I found out I was pregnant; I was still breastfeeding, a year later, when I picked up the habit again. Somewhere along the way I became a learned addict, mastering not only the smoke rings but also the excuses. ▷