

I Quit!

Monday, January 10th 2022

It's 6am. I'm groggy. I hate mornings. I need some caffeine.

I need a quick fix. I make a Nespresso. It's good enough. I'll make a french press after this cup wakes me up.

I sit in my office chair and browse the Hacker News homepage, check out /newest, and then I check Reddit.

I already feel jittery, but I ignore it. Like every other day.

It's 6:30am. I finish my cup. I'm not awake. I get up to prepare my french press. The good stuff. *Black gold*.

(At this point, coffee doesn't give me energy. It just makes me feel *normal*.)

I grind my own beans. They're shipped to my door, freshly roasted, every couple weeks.

I put the water on the kettle and get the press ready. A quiet sound grows into a loud whistle. My addiction's almost ready.

I dump the coffee grounds into the press, pour in the boiling water, and put the lid on. I throw a towel over it.

Over the years, I learned that a towel keeps the coffee hot for longer. It's a nice trick, because it means I can make more.

Five more minutes.

I like my morning routine. It's been this way — more or less — for the past 10–15 years. It's how I start my day.

It's 8am and I lift up my hands from my keyboard and hold them in front of my monitor. They're visibly shaking. I don't remember them shaking so early in the morning.

My heart skips a beat. It's been happening more frequently, so I look it up and they're apparently called "palpitations." I ignore it.

It's 9am. I'm anxious. Nothing out of the norm, though. I lift up my hands again and I see more of the same. My heart has skipped a handful of beats this morning. One made me jump.

But it didn't stop me from pouring another cup. Keep em' coming.



I worked at a coffee shop in my early twenties. I drank it until sunrise to sunset. I could do this all day. But I'm in my thirties now, and caffeine just hits different.

It's 1pm. I finish lunch with my family. I'm about to head back to the office, but my coffee's gone to nil.

I contemplate brewing more.

I usually make a decaf Nespresso. But I have a lot to do today, and I'm tired. Instead, I opt for another caffeinated hit.

My 2 year old daughter helps me work the Nespresso. I love that she loves helping me make coffee.

I see that I'm running low on Nespresso pods. I make a reminder to order some tonight.

It's 3pm. I look down at my keyboard. I can see my fingers lightly tapping my keys, uncontrollably. I probably overdid it today.

I'm feeling anxious. A bit more than before. I get up for a glass of water.

When I stand up, my heart skips another beat. Weird. This is getting annoying, I think to myself.

It's 9pm. I finish putting my daughter to bed and lay down on the couch to watch TV with my wife. I feel weird. Still anxious.

My heart skips a few beats, rapidly. It makes me more anxious. It's *been* making me more anxious.

Pretty soon I feel like I'm having an anxiety attack, but I've never had one before so I can't really be sure.

I calm down after 10 or 50 minutes. I don't know — I wasn't keeping time. I was trying to calm down.

I think, "is this worth it?"

A few days pass.

I was at my wife's prenatal appointment and they were discussing decaf coffee and some coffee alternatives. I've never liked coffee alternatives, and I don't really like tea.

I like my coffee strong and black, and alternatives are never strong enough, or worse, they require heretical "cream" to taste good.

But I ask our midwife a few questions. She's also a nutritionist. I've told her about my heart palpitations in the past, which we attributed to caffeine and stress, so she asked if those are still happening.

I nod.

I listen to her recommendations, as I sip on my extra-shot latte.



It's 9pm. I finish the bedtime routine and sit on the couch. I sip on L:ε ζε vulin 16 while reading "Dark Matter." I've had a few jumps tonight, but nothing out of the norm. I had a busy day, lots of caffeine.

My mind wanders.

I forgot to order coffee a few days ago. I should do that.

I sit at my Amazon cart's checkout screen, still anxiously pondering "is this worth it?" I close the app.

I decide to order one of our midwife's recommendations instead. It's made with mushrooms and roots and has "adaptogens." Who knows what that means, but I go all in with the sampler kit.

A week passes.

I got my coffee alternative shipment in the mail last night.

It's 6am. I brew my first tasting. I use a french press, as recommended. I throw a towel over it and let it steep for 15 minutes.

I pour my first cup. It's not bad. It doesn't taste like coffee, but it's strong and I kind of like it. Maybe it'll grow on me.

It's 9am. I finish off the french press. I lift up my hands and notice they're not shaking. But my head *hurts*.

I decide to press through the pain. In a moment, my love for coffee turned into hatred. It was no longer worth hurting myself.

I head to the kitchen and grab a big glass of water. I sit at my desk to try and get some work done.

It's 1pm. Lunch is over and instead of making a decaf coffee, I decide to make another batch of the new stuff.

"More coffee, daddy?"

Not today.

I do this for days. I think it's called cold-turkey.

A couple days pass.

It's 6pm. I sit over a sandwich and soup from Panera as I try to get through a migraine. They've been happening a lot lately, but this one is the worst. I feel nauseous.

I put some Wintergreen essential oil on my temples to help with the headache and I go to lay down.

I ponder the inverse, "is *this* worth it?"

A couple weeks pass.

(It took about this long for the caffeine withdrawal symptoms to completely ease up.)



It's 6am. I do my morning routine. Not much has changed. But by midday, I feel less anxious and I'm not jittery anymore. And better yet, the caffeine-induced heart palpitations are completely gone.

I sit in my office chair and browse the Hacker News homepage, check out /newest, and I see my post. I'd upvote it, but I can't.

I feel good. I don't really mind mornings now.

Epilogue

It's been 4 months since I quit caffeine cold-turkey. I was addicted for 15 years. It helped me get through a lot — from late nights in the office to early mornings with newborns. But now, at what cost?

Quitting was incredibly challenging. I won't pretend it was easy. I've never had worse headaches in my life. And I'm sure I was not a joy to be around during that time.

But it *was* worth it.

I've tried having an occasional cup of coffee and it always results in the same symptoms. Like clockwork. Any caffeine does. I guess my body is saying "stop." And I need to listen.

I do still have a cup of decaf every few days, because sometimes it's just easier to do a pod than a french press.

But even having more than one cup of *decaf* brings on the shakes and skipped beats. The caffeine microdosing adds up, I guess.

I still have my morning routine. It takes a bit longer (I let my Rasa steep for about 30 minutes before drinking it, to make it extra strong), but it's still the same, just different.

I actually now *prefer* it over coffee. I never thought I'd ever say something like that, but here we are.

Sometimes I wake up and forget my ritual, without later repercussions. Before, coffee was *a/ways* the first thing on my mind.

Overall, I can't express how much cutting caffeine has improved my wellbeing. If you need to chat, [my mailbox is open](#).