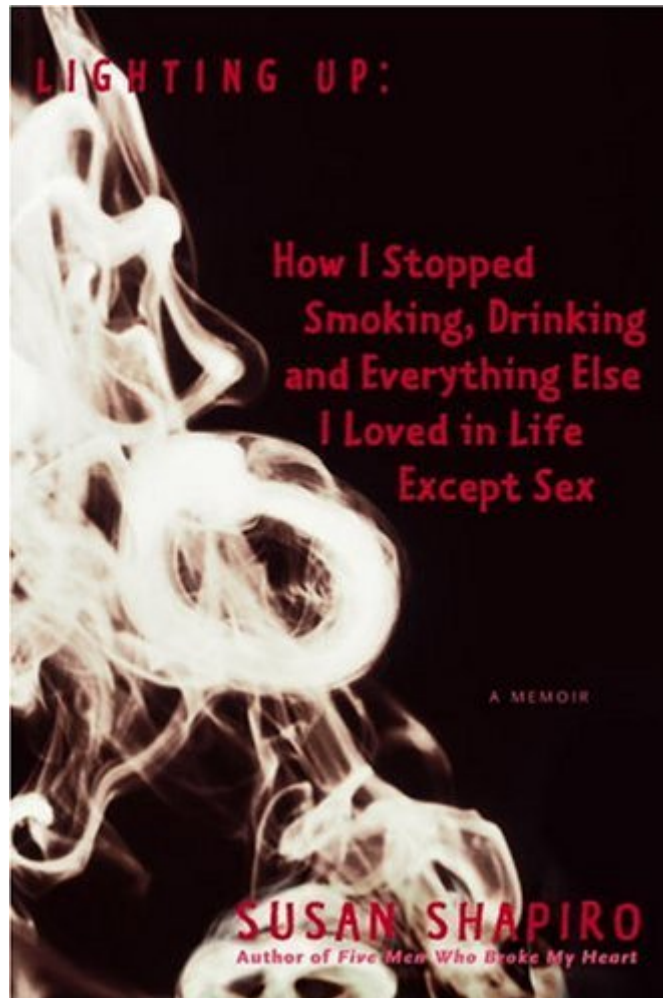




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Lighting Up



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Synopsis

In the critically acclaimed *Five Men Who Broke My Heart*, Manhattan journalist Susan Shapiro revisited five self-destructive romances. In her hilarious, illuminating new memoir, *Lighting Up*, she rejects five self-destructive substances. This difficult quest for clean living starts with Shapiro's shocking revelation that, at forty, her lengthiest, most emotionally satisfying relationship has been with cigarettes. A two-pack-a-day smoker since the age of thirteen, Susan Shapiro quickly discovers that it's impossible to be a writer, a nonsmoker, sane, and slender in the same year. The last time she tried to quit, she gained twenty-three pounds, couldn't concentrate on work, and wanted to kill herself and her husband, Aaron, a TV comedy writer who hates her penchant for puffing away. Yet just as she's about to choose her vice over her marriage vows, she stumbles upon a secret weapon. Dr. Winters, the James Bond of psychotherapy, is a brilliant but unorthodox addiction specialist, a former chain-smoker himself. Working his weird magic on her psyche, he unravels the roots of her twenty-seven-year compulsion, the same dangerous dependency that has haunted her doctor father, her grandfather, and a pair of eccentric aunts from opposite sides of the family, along with Freud and nearly one in four Americans. Dr. Winters teaches her how to embrace suffering, then proclaims that her months of panic, depression, insecurity, vulnerability, and wild mood swings win her the award for the worst nicotine withdrawal in the history of the world. Shapiro finally does kick the habit "while losing weight and finding career and connubial bliss" only to discover that the second she lets go of her long-term crutch, she's already replaced it with another fixation. After banishing cigarettes, alcohol, dope, gum, and bread from her day-to-day existence, she conquers all her demons and survives deprivation overload. But relying religiously on Dr. Winters, she soon realizes that the only obsession she has left to quit is him. . . . Never has the battle to stem substance abuse been captured with such wit, sophisticated insight, and candor. *Lighting Up* is so compulsively readable, it's addictive. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Stumbled upon Susan Shapiro's new book, *Lighting Up*, yesterday. Just finished it with a bottle of Spanish Cab and a half a bar of Ghiradellis chocolate, as if on a two-day binge. Further confirming my belief in Shapiro's brilliance. She is a strong, self-assured, sensitive, sardonic woman... my kind of hero.

I started this book on Friday and could not put it down, finished it on Sunday and felt sad when I hit the last page. As I began reading, I realized I would need paper and pencil to take notes to use in my own life. My whole life I've been surrounded by people who smoke and drink, and I made a conscious effort not to become one of "those people." But after I read this book, I realized I'm no better; that I have addictions of my own that have nothing to do with "controlled substances." This book sheds a lot of light on how to live through suffering so one can come out the other end feeling like a better person for it. Susan's writing is so down to earth that you will see yourself in her no matter who you are. Dr. Winters is a big player in the book, but it's the way Susan takes the wheel of her own life that makes you want to cheer for her and ask yourself why the hell you've waited so long to face what makes you "suffer" the most. Dr. Winters said that underneath any addiction is a deep depression. Read it and find out what it means to you.

A fun, insightful, and challenging memoir by a New York writer who worked with a therapist to quit smoking. Along with quitting smoking, her therapist, Dr. Winters, helped her kick all self-medication and urged her to "sit with" and experience her emotions and feelings. It is a very interesting look at addiction recovery outside of the 12step paradigm. Highly recommended!

"Lead the least secretive life you can," the author's addiction therapist writes. Personally, I'm someone who avoids therapy so this book was especially helpful for me to realize patterns in my own addictive behaviors. Susan is a journalist and writes her memoirs with a reporter's stealth, examining everything from feelings, outside influences to dreams. Her naked honesty makes this a page turner and I found myself wanting more. (So of course, I ordered more of her work). It's truly admirable how bravely she reveals her vulnerability. In real life, the author is somewhat of a mythical character for aspiring writers who swarm her classes and workshops in hopes that through osmosis they can get published. The truth is, most people who study under her and take what she says seriously actually DO get published. Susan Shapiro is absolutely one of the top influential writers in New York City!

This book was an honest and provocative look at the life of an addict. Many people have different stories about how they cope with being an addict, but Susan Shapiro takes you inside the dark web of her addictions in a completely fresh and mind altering way! READ THIS BOOK! I LOVED IT!

as an ex-smoker, i found this fast-paced, fresh, hysterically funny take on addiction to be right on target. shapiro's got a knack for making keen, insightful observations, particularly on family and the nature of dependency - the hilarious scene where she goes back home to see her parents and brothers after getting clean really rings true. but *Lighting Up* is more than just a book about substance abuse - it chronicles the universal struggle to be a sane, functioning human being in this crazy world.

We're all hooked on something: love, sports, drugs, cupcakes. No matter what your addiction is, you'll profit from reading Shapiro's book. In it, she detoxes from the substances that are preventing her from living her fullest, best life (cigarettes, pot, booze, gum -- don't laugh...even bread & pasta, perish the thought!) With fearless honesty and self-deprecating humor, Shapiro walks readers through the process, which she tackled with the help of a brilliant addictions specialist (and wannabe writer) named Dr. Winters, who has plenty of issues of his own. You'll love the little Zen wisdom notes he gives her at the end of each session; feel the discomfort of withdrawal; relate to the negative reactions of those around her when Shapiro overcomes her addictions, one by one; and most of all, cheer her on as she confronts her demons. Packed with insights (and cheaper than therapy), this memoir should be required reading for anyone seeking to reinvent themselves.

Not only was this book enjoyable and relatable -- it actually provided new food for thought. I believe I learned a lot that will help me overcome my own addictions (in fact, I just ordered a copy of "Unhooked", as well). It presents an honest, realistic, hugely entertaining and reassuring look at what it's like to change your habits - drastically and without replacing them with something else - and still manage to keep on living (and succeeding).

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