

Interview with Brad Watson & Sharyn Wakefield

Interview by Dave Gibson

Part I: Interview with Brad Watson

How would you describe your current smoking status?

Smoker, not very heavily though. I mean I smoke maybe five to six a day. I don't know if that's heavy or not but you know, come the weekend, different story.

So you describe yourself as a heavy smoker in the weekends?

Yeah definitely a heavy smoker. Get a beer in me and it's all over. I'm talking like 20 plus a night and it hurts the next day.

Tell me a little bit about how it feels in the mornings after you've had a big night on the tobaccy?

It's horrible, your throat's dry, you wake up and your tongue's stuck to your mouth. It's not good. If there's someone there with you, you're like, 'Shit I need to get up and get rid of this taste in my mouth' and I think it's actually the worst part of a hangover, is the smoking and the horrible chest feeling and yeah it's gross.

Do you think smoking is as common as it used to be a few years back?

Definitely not. With our audience we get a lot of kids when they find out we smoke giving us shit about it. A lot of kids at school sort of look down on people that do it and yeah if we get seen in public smoking we get the evil looks. I'm sort of the same too, if I see people smoking, especially young kids when you see them in uniform around malls smoking it's just a really bad look I reckon. I used to do it but then I realised how stupid you look.

Do you think smoking is as socially acceptable as it used to be?

It depends where you are and who you're with really. I mean at work I think Sharyn, myself and Mike are probably the only smokers so when we go out to things we're the weirdos that have to take off and smoke and you actually feel bad because the non-smokers look at you like, 'you're bad'.

Seems to be a bit of a recurring theme, Sharyn talked about it too, a huge amount of guilt that smokers have to put up with these days to be a smoker.

Well I don't like smoking during the day at work. I wait till everyone's gone at 5pm because I hate coming in and smelling like smoke in front of people. Like I hate

walking in after having a smoke and the whole office all of a sudden smelling and just people looking at you because of that smell. It puts me off.

What are some other things that you don't like about smoking?

The cost. I just don't like the smell and the looks you get.

Do you consider yourself to be addicted?

Definitely, yep.

You sound like you are definitely at that point where the romance of smoking is gone?

Yeah it's gone. I stopped for three months a little while ago and just the way I felt and the energy levels I had and just feeling good because it made me get up and go to the gym more and sort of felt better about myself and work and everything was just better, so keen to have that again.

Can you talk a bit about that quit attempt?

I think the first time I tried to quit I just stopped and that didn't help. I got really shitty, almost broke up with my girlfriend because it just changed me. I got grumpy as hell. So the second time I was a bit scared of doing it because of that but with the Allen Carr book the way it taught you to do it made it more fun, made it easier and I found it really easy. I just stopped and didn't need to do it again basically until a rough day. I think I had a cigar actually, someone was like. 'have a cigar, it's alright' and that ended it aye. Next day I was like, 'I need a smoke'.

But you found it easy to stop?

I found it easy. The crazy thing was I couldn't believe it was that easy, like it took me 10-11 years to make me realise I could quit. I wish I'd realised earlier how easy it was.

Do you feel like you have been on a bit of a journey with quitting?

Definitely yeah. Especially after all the stress of quitting the first time and just the excitement of the last quit attempt actually, the three months of stopping, just knowing that I could do it, even though it only lasted three months just knowing I could do it was cool. Knowing that I could quit was exciting.

How long have you not been smoking for?

Almost two years now, since September two years ago.

In your opinion what's the worst thing about smoking?

Definitely the health, I mean I haven't noticed too much from it but I know that it's coming if you keep going, which scares me. And the social thing I guess, the stigma, the bad looks you get now as a smoker.

Would you go out with a smoker?

I have. If I had stopped I don't think I'd want to. It doesn't help with quitting being around a smoker.

Do you think you can tell a smoker from a non smoker?

I reckon you can with older people, like Irene off Home and Away, when you look at her lip you get that smoker lip it goes all like crinkly. Yeah I think you can, even guys, something about them, more withered.

How do you feel about the tobacco industry?

I think it's pretty evil, pretty selfish but what can you do about it? They're making money and they'll keep making money.

Is it always socially acceptable for people to be smokefree?

It's definitely cool. A lot of people you see going for the straight edge kind of thing and being more positive on life rather than trying to be a bad ass and they get the cool status that way. Like we had kids in the other night, we had 30 kids in the studio and two of them smoked and it was just horrible seeing them doing it and pulling the filter bags out and it just looked gross and yeah, you instantly sort of looked down on them more.

What would be your advice to those young people?

Just don't have that first one because it's just going to get worse for you. You'll end up smoking for the rest of your life.

Have you supported anyone else to give up, or Sharyn gave up and stuff?

Yep yep Sharyn, like when I quit last time my ex girlfriend quit at the same time so we sort of did that together as well and made sure that we didn't have smokes on us and just said come on you'll be alright you don't need to have it, same with Sharyn which is good that we're doing it together this time.

Do you plan to quit again soon?

Yeah yeah definitely now, I want to start the book again.

It sounds like for both you and Shayrn, you almost need something to replace smoking.

I don't really want anything to replace it though.

Faye off Shortland Street used knitting to replace smoking. You look like you could be a bit of a knitter.

You reckon I could knit? A guy at work does a bit of crochet. I could start making beanies. In the book though it says don't replace it with anything aye because you will get addicted to doing that.

Part II: Interview with Sharyn Wakefield & Brad Watson

How do you find it both being smokers when you're trying to quit?

BW: I guess it's just good having someone else because you can say to each other, 'You know you don't need it now, you'll be alright, have a drink of water, go outside quickly, whatever.'

SW: We have tried to give up smoking separately before and it's kind of hard because Brad would go for a cigarette and come back smelling delicious of cigarettes and then I would go for a cigarette when he was trying to give up smoking so yeah it will be better that we're both not doing.

Are you both currently trying to give up?

SW: I'm quitting from Monday.

BW: I'm quitting as soon as I've read the book again so however long that takes me.

So would you think about having someone to quit with makes it easier or harder?

BW: I find it easier, just knowing that someone else is going through it.

SW: I find it harder but I have non-smoker friends around and that make it easier. I tried to quit with my best friend who smokes recently and we were both just not hard enough with each other. We were both like, 'hehehe let's go for a cigarette, don't tell anyone'.

BW: So that's why you find it easier to do it by yourself.

SW: Yeah I just find it easier because if I do it on my own I've got my friends who have already given up smoking that help me rather than someone that is going through the same thing as me, somebody else making it okay for you to cheat because they're doing it too so it's okay if we're both doing it.

Do you have any advice about what works when trying to quit?

BW: I'd say go with the book. I keep saying that to everybody. The Allen Carr book and just be really honest, don't sneak smokes.

SW: I think that's probably it, don't sneak and when you go drinking for the first time and you haven't been smoking then definitely do the water between because I couldn't figure out why I was getting so drunk when I had given up smoking and that was why, because I wasn't going outside for 10 minutes.

BW: The last time we quit I did a blog about it and I think it got about 10 people quitting, which I was stoked about. It motivated me even more knowing that people were doing it just because of a silly blog on the internet.

Considering that you're both in the public eye, and role models to young people, do you feel an added pressure that you smoke?

BW: I think so aye, cause when we're hosting concerts or just events at schools, if you're seen smoking it's really bad because you're hiding away and just the looks you get make you realise that the kids are like, 'Wow, I didn't realise you were a smoker' and they get disappointed.

SW: It's no way to live, hiding out the back of a hall.

So what do you think are the key factors to quitting successfully?

SW: Not sneaking and, you know, you guys are the only ones that I've told that I'm giving up on Monday cause some of my friends would be like, 'Let's go for a cigarette' 'Do you feel like a cigarette?' 'Do you want a cigarette?' and people at work would just be like, 'How's the quitting going?' 'Do you feel like a cigarette yet?' every time they walk past. The best thing you can do is be supportive but not in their face about it. Like I don't want to be reminded every five minutes that I'm giving up smoking because that makes me think about smokes every five minutes.

BW: Yeah, I don't have any key tips I'm just going to see what happens again, try my hardest.

SW: I'm just not going to get so drunk that I need a cigarette.

What are some of the things that don't help when you're trying to quit?

SW: People that think that they, not people that think they know everything but people that tell you how to do it instead of giving you the space to just deal with it yourself. Like I hate being told that I'm doing it wrong or I shouldn't do it like that and I should do it like this and I'm kind of like, 'well this is working for me at the moment', so yeah. Whatever works for you when you're trying to quit is the right way to quit.

BW: Yeah I guess the unsupportive friends around you and the situations you could find yourself in. Like Dave said the people egging you on saying, 'Ha, ha you're going to have a smoke soon', that is really really annoying. If you've got support it sort of eggs you along and makes you feel good about doing it and proving a point to people, and to yourself that you can do it.

Have you ever thought about how much money you spend?

BW: Hell yes. I reckon I'd have a house by now. I'd have a sweet house and a car that's got a warrant and a rego.

SW: Do you not have a warrant?

BW: No I got a \$200 fine the other day all because I smoke.

If you could go back in time would you start smoking again?

BW: No way. Hate it.

SW: Nah.

BW: No way. I remember having my first smoke and wish I didn't.

Do you have smokefree homes and cars?

BW: Yeah, definitely, even though I smoke my car has to be smokefree. I hate people smoking in it and at home my flatmates are all smokefree. I just don't want that smell in there aye.

SW: I have a smokefree house but I don't have a smokefree car. Yeah last time I gave up smoking I got my car valeted so it didn't smell anymore.

BW: I just hate it when my car smells like my nana's car. Like smokers' cars just remind me of my nana's car.

Did you have a lot of people in the family that used to smoke?

BW: Yeah both my parents smoked. My dad doesn't anymore so I guess that's probably why I now smoke.

SW: My dad smokes and my mum has never even had a puff of a cigarette before.

Do you think their smoking influenced you to become or continue to be a smoker?

BW: I think in a way it probably has.

SW: Growing up, as I said before, I was really anti it and would burn my dad's cigarettes and stuff but now it's like, 'Shall we go for a smoke Shary?' 'Alright'.

BW: I'm kind of gutted my mum still smokes. She went to hospital recently for something and couldn't smoke for about six weeks and I really hoped that would stop her and I sort of said, 'You've done it for this long, try not having more'. And I've got a younger brother who's about 13 and it kind of guts me that he's growing up to possibly be a smoker, seeing mum doing it and me and my brothers do it so yeah. I hope he doesn't.

How do you deal with smoking cravings when you're trying to quit?

SW: The best way that I found to deal with my cravings was to eat lollies and I made a playlist on my iPod that every time I was feeling annoyed with somebody or the times I'd have a cigarette, instead I'd just listen to that playlist.

BW: Yeah when I got cravings I just sort of thought, 'this is awesome, I've got a craving, I'm not going to have one because in five minutes it's going to be gone' and if I keep doing that I'll be sweet basically. I didn't replace it with anything, I didn't want to. Just wait, your craving will pass and it will become easier.