

INTERVIEW WITH BRYCE CASEY

What made you decide recently that you wanted to quit?

I just didn't want to smoke any more. For the cash. For a whole lot of reasons really that I just didn't want to smoke any more. My brother who had also been a smoker, who actually smoked as much, if not more, than me had given up at the same age and he's about six years older than me. I'd always found it amazing that he'd been able to give up whereas I kept smoking. I thought if he could then I could. I was nearing my birthday, which is the same age that he gave up and I thought, 'I'm going to do it then.'

What's been the hardest thing about quitting for you?

When other people have cigarettes when you're out having a few drinks. I tried to give up a couple of times and that didn't go so well because I started again every time that I started drinking. But then I read this book, that I think heaps of people have read and there were heaps of things in it that were really good.

I thought I was going to have heaps of times where I would be thinking, 'what am I going to do at all the usual times' that I have ciggies but then I realised after reading the book that you just don't need them. The fear sort of goes once you're stopped...

Have you had any support from people?

A few mates trying to tell me to start again, but they're the ones that do. Good support from a flatmate that I live with, he gave up at the same time so that made it good, doing it together, because he's the only dude that I live with. All the usual times that we'd go out to have a cigarette we just don't now so that's been a big part of it. And the fact that, like I said, my brother had given up and my parents didn't want me to smoke in the first place. Both their sets of parents died from it so they were pretty happy to have me not smoking.

Do you still get cravings when you see someone have a cigarette?

Yeah, I used to waste heaps of time at work by having a cigarette. Now I still just waste time but I just don't go out for a ciggie any more. I don't really get cravings, like with those first few times I tried to give up.

What have you noticed about yourself since you quit?

I can taste food now, which I didn't really believe was true, but I can. I don't wake up with a whole lot of shit in my mouth in the morning. I used to try and put the blame on something else but clearly it was that. I've been doing a bit more fitness which is probably a good thing as well.

Mentally and socially, when you're out and about you don't have to get up and stop

things half way through to go and have a cigarette. At the time I never had a problem with it, I'd be like, 'I'll be back in a sec' and go and have it. You never think at the time that it's a bad thing, but now when I see it happening you just wonder what they're up to.

Have you got more energy?

Yeah, and the real good thing about it is at concerts you can't smoke anywhere in places now. Everyone's excited to be there and then dudes will go out halfway through to have a cigarette which I now find ... like I remember doing it at the time thinking 'I've been in here an hour and a half, I need to have a cigarette.' And now I just sort of think, 'what the fuck are you up to? If you wanted to see that band, why would you be going out half way through it?' Which now is something that I never have to do.

How many times did you try to quit before this?

A couple of times, and they didn't really last. I would do it for about two to three days and then I would have a few drinks and as soon as I had a few drinks I would start again. People think you sort of have to when you drink. After reading that book, about how you don't actually *have* to have cigarettes, that sort of got lodged in my brain. So once I'd read that book I haven't had one since.

I think the habitual thing was the biggest part of it. The more you have it, the more you keep feeding the thing that makes you want another one. After you've had a feed everyone goes outside and they have a cigarette. When you're having a drink, you've got a cigarette in the other hand or when you're driving, people have one. So when I was giving up for the first two weeks, they were the hardest parts.

When I was driving to work I'd be used to having a cigarette in the other hand or after a meal I'd be wanting to have one but once you stop ... what I'm trying to say is, it is like a little monster that you have and the more that you have, that just speeds up the process of you wanting another one. So the longer that you can not have one the easier it gets not to keep wanting cigarettes.

I felt like the first couple of weeks were pretty hard. I wanted to have them in those times, especially when I went away. I drove down to see my family and kept on wanting to have one because that's what I would usually do, but I just drove down there a couple of weeks ago and didn't even think about it because I was used to not having them. People get used to smoking, you've just got to get used to not smoking.

When did you try your first cigarette?

My pop smoked and I stole one of his cigarettes but I didn't know how to roll it so then I just went and smoked it. I didn't know how to smoke it but still smoked it. I think I stole a few more and kept smoking them. That was when I was about twelve or thirteen I think.

I remember the smell of it, the feeling of it going out my nose. In fact, when I just had my

last cigarette recently, that was the same thing that I remembered, the same feeling came back from that first one that I had, which was quite weird.

I remember seeing my granddad when I was about fifteen or sixteen, and I smoked then and he had just had both his legs cut off and I remember seeing that and yeah, I still smoked which was pretty stupid.

I mean obviously you were a bit younger then but why do you think you can see something so full on and still not click?

I think it's probably just because I was young. It's real easy now to go, 'that should've been enough' but I don't know. I think it's just that everyone else at the time was smoking so you think you sort of should keep smoking, like 'that won't happen' but now, years later, it's pretty obvious that it does. I can't explain why I didn't click.

Did you and your mates encourage each other to smoke?

Yeah, there was probably a group of about three or four of us who smoked and we'd go and have them like little knobs, standing there at the school.

If you could go back and give your young self any advice about quitting, what would it be?

I guess I would say, 'it really is as simple as saying that you just don't need to smoke'. It's not as hard to quit as what it's made out to be. It can be, but it's a lot better when you don't smoke. I know that.

Are any of your mates who smoke trying to quit as well?

A couple of mates have tried to quit and I think that's because they didn't think that I would, or could. A lot of mates who live in different places don't believe that I've quit either. They're still waiting to see me having a few drinks, just because I used to smoke so much. But a few mates have definitely tried and some of them have been successful and some of them haven't. But quite a few of them have at least been talking about it. Some of them have set dates as well, which is good if they're at least thinking about it.

Quitting smoking is an achievement. Do you feel proud about where you're at now?

Yeah absolutely. I wouldn't have thought when I started the year that by the end of the year I wouldn't be smoking. It was such an everyday part of my life. I'd get up every day, and the first thing I'd do would be have a cigarette. If I didn't have one that's all I'd be thinking about. Sounds like a mad thing now to think about but I am stoked now that I don't. It's a good thing. And my clothes don't smell too, that's a good thing. I don't have to put shit in the laundry basket straight away now. Yeah, I'm definitely stoked that I've given up this year. It's pretty awesome.

What would you say to those people who are keen on giving up but are finding it hard?

I think first and foremost, I always had good intentions of giving up when I tried those first couple of times. There's a big difference that I've realised with people that have given up and people that haven't. There's a difference between having an intention of giving up and actually just giving up. I've noticed that you've really got to just *not want* to smoke any more, because those people that try to give up and then start smoking when they're having a few drinks, I don't think they really wanted to stop in the first place.

I really do think that if I gave up then anyone can give up. Because I really did smoke a lot, I was a person who always smoked, so you definitely can stop smoking.