

Interview with Caitlin Murdoch-Tipene

Interview by Dave Gibson

How would you describe your smoking status?

Never smoked.

Never smoked?

I've never smoked and I don't intend to start.

You said that a lot of your family smoke or smoked. Tell me how that has influenced your position on smoking?

Pretty much everybody in my family smokes and like, they smoke in the house and I've got really bad asthma so it makes me sick. I've never liked smoking and then when all of them are smoking and telling me not to smoke, it's like, 'Well why don't you try and stop, you know? You're telling me not to smoke and it kind of makes you hypocritical.'

So you said that if your mate was trying to quit, that you were the kind of person who would really support them?

Yep. If they are trying to quit but then hit a rough time it's good to just try to kind of calm them down, talk it out with them and say it's not really worth it because you're just going to start up again and then you're going to go through exactly the same thing in a couple of months. Just because you're going through a rough time it will not last forever but if you keep smoking that will last forever. This rough time might only last a week or two weeks but that one smoke can just lead to months and months, even years, of smoking.

You mentioned that you are worried that your younger sister might start smoking too?

She's hanging around with some mates who smoke and even though she was brought up with the view that you shouldn't give in to peer pressure, I'm just worried that she's going to start smoking and if she starts I know she's not going to stop.

So what have you said to her about that?

I've just said, 'You've seen what it does to your mum and dad and your sisters, do you want that to happen to you?' kind of thing.

Do you think smoking is as common now as it used to be even just a few years ago?

No. Not since the new no smoking laws in pubs have come in. People have definitely cut down on smoking and are trying to quit. I mean in my mum's day, everybody was smoking.

It was cool to smoke but now people have seen what it can do and they've thought, 'Hey, that might happen to me, I've got to try and stop this.' When I first started college I was hanging out with a group of people who smoked but now as I've grown older I've seen how stupid it is and now I have only one out of 15 of my closest friends who smokes. So that's a big ratio of one smoker, 14 non-smokers.

What did your one friend think when they found out you were going to be part of this?

He was pretty excited because I was getting interviewed by Dave Gibson and he says to say hi. His name is Liam.

Say hi back.

I definitely will. Yeah, nah he thinks it's cool that I am trying to get my word out there. I might not be as important as other people but I kind of hope I count.

You are that important, you know.

With less people smoking, why do you think that young people are still taking it up?

Because people my age have grown up with smoking and in the last five years it's just started to cut down but when they were little all these people around them were smoking and they thought it was cool so they said, 'Well when I get old enough I'm going to start smoking' and they're doing that. I think they've grown up with it but now that it's changing they're still not changing. Kids my age don't really see the world as adults though, they just see right now. Some of them think about the future but most of them are just thinking about a couple of years, like they're going to do next year or next summer or something but they don't think about the long run.

Hopefully there will be less smokers and they will eventually influence less people?

Yeah. When I was 10 years old, people were smoking but hopefully 10 year olds now are seeing that people are cutting down and they're thinking that's not cool because people aren't starting to smoke anymore and hopefully it's just going to have that kind of chain effect and in the end no one will be smoking.

I hope that is the case.

Yeah same.

Is it ever uncool to refuse a cigarette?

No. I think it's one of the best things that you can do as a teenager to say no to a cigarette and having that confidence to stop the peer pressure.

Have you ever been pressured to smoke?

Oh definitely. Even a couple of weekends ago people were like, 'Oh have a smoke, just one' and I just know how it would play out, like, if I have one then I'm going to have another one and I'm just going to keep going from smoking every now and then at parties but then it might cross over to normal day life and if that keeps happening well then you're a chain smoker in the end. So I definitely encountered that, like all my friends have but I just try to stay positive, say no and just laugh it off, like, 'Oh nah mate that's cool'. But you know some people can't do that and I think that's why they get started on smoking because they don't have enough confidence to say no.

What do you think smoking says about that person?

I think it just says that they've made a bad choice one night or one week and they've just stuck with it. I mean somebody who smokes could be the nicest person in the world so you can't really judge people on if they smoke or not. If I see somebody walking down the street smoking I don't profile them just because they smoke. If you've made a bad choice then make a great choice and quit.

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

The yellow teeth, the yellow fingers, the bad breath. What it does, how it affects you, your teeth start rotting, the smell clings to you like it clings to your clothes and your hair and you constantly smell like smoke and I just wouldn't want to smell like that every day.

Have you got any advice for someone trying to quit smoking?

Just to keep at it, you know? Keep trying and try not to give up on it. Quitting smoking can be one of the hardest things you do in life but you've just got to keep at it.

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

I probably could because of the smell. There would definitely be, for a heavy smoker there would definitely be a smell of smoke on them.

What ways can someone support a family member or friend to quit?

Just keep supporting them through it and keep saying, 'You can do this, we're all here for you just keep at it.' They need a positive atmosphere to be in because if they're not in a good environment they're just going to keep thinking, 'I want a smoke, I want a smoke, I want a smoke.' But if everybody's laughing, having a good time and just always in a positive environment that craving will eventually go out of their head.

Would you consider quitting smoking a real achievement?

Yeah definitely. Especially somebody who has smoked for a couple of years. If they managed to quit and keep with it that would be a real achievement for them.

Do you think it means you're weak if you have to use nicotine replacement products (like patches, gum, or lozenges) to quit?

No definitely not. It just means that you want to quit more. If people go out of their way to call the helpline or get patches or get gum or whatever, they're really trying to get there.

Do you think there are other things that we can do in New Zealand to get rid of tobacco?

Yeah definitely. Stop selling them right behind the counter. I mean that's out of sight, out of mind. Kids walk up to the counter and see lollies ice-cream, smokes. They're always there whenever you walk into a shop so I reckon you get rid of them from behind the counter.

What do you think of the tobacco industry?

I tend to ignore the tobacco industry as much as I can. They should stop trying to force smokes on people. I was reading something the other day and it said that they don't smoke smokes they just make them. It's like they're not dying from them but they're just making everybody else die.