

# **Interview with Emah Matiu**

## **Interview by Dave Gibson**

### **So you grew up in a family where smoking was normal?**

Yeah, my dad smokes and my step mum smokes and mum smoked when I was little, all my grandparents smoke, and all my cousins. It's just the way that it is.

### **How do you think that affected you growing up?**

Well I didn't really like think twice about it because everyone was doing it but then I kind of thought about it and thought how gross and stupid it is. Some of my family have had lung cancer and then they passed away and they could still be here and still be looking after their grandchildren if they had never smoked.

### **Do you have friends who smoke?**

Yeah, I have heaps of friends who smoke and I used to hang out with one crowd and they all smoked and they would offer smokes to me all the time. I would be like, 'Oh yeah yeah yeah' and then I would put it out and I thought I was cool for putting out their smokes. They didn't think it was actually that cool. If you are inside hanging out and they have to leave to go and have a smoke it's a buzz kill.

### **How would you describe your smoking status?**

A non smoker completely. I did it once and it was the most horrible thing I did. I don't understand why they do it, it doesn't taste good and it's not fun and it's not good for you. It didn't cross my mind, 'Oh this might be cool, let's put poison in my body.' It's all about yourself and how you feel about yourself and you don't have to conform and smoke because it shows that you're not your own person and that you have insecurities and I think that's why people smoke.

### **Do you ever get tempted?**

Never. I'm never ever tempted to smoke. I will see people doing it and my brain is going, 'Why are they doing that?' It's stupid and it's gross and I am never tempted to smoke, even when everybody else leaves to go outside to smoke, I am not tempted to join them just to be with the crowd cause it's not cool.

### **Do you think smoking is as common now as it was say a few years ago?**

No definitely not. Everyone is starting to realise that smoking is not as cool as it used to be, like even on TV there are less people in movies smoking and when they are it's usually the bad people who are the ones who are smoking and all the good guys in the movies are the

non smokers and so people are kind of realising and everyone is stopping smoking. Especially now cause they can't afford them. Yeah I don't think it is as popular now because most of the people who smoke are older than me and they probably started when they were young and people my age now aren't starting when they did and so it's becoming less common.

**Do you think it's as socially acceptable to smoke now as it used to be?**

No, like when you walk down the street, you're in a bunch of people and then you see the people smoking and you kind of cross the road to avoid them because it just isn't cool.

**Why do you think some young people are still taking it up though?**

I think because of the environment they grow up in, people who have seen their parents and all their siblings smoke would probably be more likely to smoke because they think it's acceptable because everyone else does it and it's probably easier for them to get the cigarettes, whereas people who haven't grown up in an environment like that wouldn't have access to them and so they wouldn't be smoking as much.

**What do you think smoking says about a person?**

I think it says that they don't have enough courage in themselves and that they need to hold on to something, like a cigarette in their hand so they are just taking out their frustrations by smoking and that they don't really care enough about themselves not to smoke.

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

The smell to tell you the truth. I really don't like the smell that smokers have, it's always lingering on them even after they have a shower. It's soaked into their skin, like you can cover it up with perfume or whatever but it's still going to be there.

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

Pretty much. Well you can see it in their skin, it kind of gets all dull and their hair looks all dull and you can see it in their eyes that they are just less healthy.

**In what ways can someone support a friend or family member who is trying to quit?**

Not talking about it too much probably helps because then they are not consciously thinking about it. I think the more they think about it, the more they will start wanting it and so if you say, 'Oh so how's it going? How's it going?' all the time, then it gets annoying. Like every now and then is okay and try to take them to places where there won't be people smoking because if they see other people doing it then they will think about it.

**Would you consider quitting smoking a real achievement?**

Yes, definitely. I think to give up something that addictive would be a real achievement. Quitting smoking would be an achievement like right up there with getting married and getting in to university and all those great things that you work towards for your whole life.

**Do you think using help such as quit services like patches, gum, or lozenges means you are too weak to quit by yourself?**

No, if you were doing it by yourself you don't have as much support and I think everyone would need as much support as possible because doing things by yourself is never fun. For example, girls always take another girl to go to the bathroom, it's kind of the same thing, you need other people there to help you and I think that's where things like the Quitline are real good because there is always someone there who you can tell them what's happening and they know how to help you. And it doesn't mean that you're too weak, that you need someone else, it actually shows that you are strong enough to ask for help.

**What advice would you give to a younger brother or sister who had started smoking socially?**

I would tell them that it's not fun and it's not cool and that I am pretty disappointed in them because I think if my brothers ever started smoking I would be hugely disappointed in them because they know better than at.

**Do you have any views on the tobacco industry?**

Yeah, I read something today that 350 New Zealanders a year die just from second hand smoke. That's like a person a day dying from something that you're doing. It could be like your best friend or your brother or a family member and it's not their fault at all, but one New Zealander a day pretty much dies each year from second hand smoke. That's really sad, that stuck with me, I thought about that for like ages.

**What would you say to the tobacco industry?**

Well the tobacco industry is killing innocent people and is causing them to die for nothing. It's just not fair.

I was in the supermarket and this family came in and they had a WINZ voucher and they went like \$10 over and they still had to get their cigarettes and they were like, 'Okay well we will put the baby food back and buy the cigarettes' and I thought that was so sad.

**What are the benefits of being smokefree?**

I can hold my breath longer than my friends who smoke. When I was driving to Thames and there is like this big long bridge and I had to go and drop my brother off and I took my friend with me and she smokes sometimes and we hold our breath over bridges, like for luck or whatever, I totally won because I didn't smoke and she does.

**So non smokers are luckier?**

Yeah well they are. They actually are because they get a longer life and less health issues and they smell better.

**Do you think there is more that can be done to stop people smoking?**

I think cigarettes should be hidden under the counter so people have to think and go in and ask and they shouldn't be displayed because they are usually big displays and they are bright and they are colourful and they draw your eye to them and they are in amongst the lollies so the little kids will be looking at them. I think they should hide them or make them less noticeable, put them at the back of the shop or something. And I think it should be illegal because it's a drug and it's addictive so why shouldn't cigarettes be illegal? Tobacco kills more people than illegal drugs.