

Interview with Jessica Speechlay

Interview by Dave Gibson

Alright Jess, welcome, thanks for coming along and sharing your views. Smoking has affected some of your friendships – do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

I think it was just cause I choose my friends wisely and so when, say if I found out that they smoke, then I would kind of think of them differently. Especially if I've known them for a long time and then it's like, hey I smoke and it's like oh wait, hold on, it changes my perspective on who they are to me. I don't really wanna put myself into that sort of situation where I have to choose friends.

What is the reason you don't want to have smokers, you know, close to you or in your group?

I think it's cause, say they are my friends right, I want the best for them and so if they're smoking and then that's really not the best for them. So yeah, I think it's just making sure they are living their life to the full and by smoking it kind of cuts down what they want to be in life. Like, seeing themselves in 10 years, where are they going to be, sort of thing.

So, a lot of your family smoke, is that right?

Yes.

And how has this affected your opinion on smoking?

A lot of my family, when I ask them why they smoke, they would be like oh, I quit, I quit. It's like, I don't think its happening. But, yeah, I think it changes my perspective when I see them and they're complaining about it, I know that it's not a good thing and so it kind of puts me off even more.

Maori and Pacific Islanders are over-represented in the smoking stats, unfortunately, what's your thoughts on that and how do you think, you know, what can we do to try and change that?

I think seeing the stats, we kind of got it really hard since we're born, we're more likely to got to jail, what else, have diabetes, health statistics and then smoking and crime. It just puts us into that category where we are starting off

low and we're fighting to go higher and so with smoking, I think, society is doing to a lot, like to bring down the statistics and I think it's just in the individual.

I think society is doing a lot to help, like Maori and Pacific people give up smoking, you know you see it, like it's in front of you. I think it's just making them aware that everyone's there for them and there's so many people that can help within society or even in their communities.

Have you had any friends that have tried to use the Quitline?

My friend who's in his mid 20's, he was telling me about it and he was surprised that he could actually ask people, like different people. Like I think a female answered the phone and she asked if he wanted a male and then, cause he's Maori, asked if he wanted a Maori to talk to and I think that's really good cause they can feel comfortable with who they are sharing with and talking to.

Yeah, that's pretty cool aye. Have you ever smoked?

I tried it you know and then cough, cough, splutter, splutter, yeah and I was off straight away.

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

I don't think it is, it's kind of dropped and not so many people in my life are starting and more are quitting and so, yeah.

I think, across the board it is decreasing. Like I see, maybe the statistics where it's coming down, like I think it was like a couple of years ago a third of Pacific Islanders smoke and now it's kind of like a quarter, so I think it has come down quite a lot.

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

J: No, I don't think so. Because, say if we were at a party and someone would be smoking, the non-smokers will kind of come back and see them and we're like, oh smoking's not that cool. Especially if, like you are sitting somewhere eating your lunch or something and someone comes and lights up right next to you, that's not cool.

I think we've also found too, because we've interviewed some smokers as well and one of the things that they were saying is they are constantly just feeling bad, sneaking away, having to leave the situation and having a smoke away from their friends, you know. Why do you think some people are still taking up smoking?

I think with teens my age, a lot of it is to do with peer pressure and I think peer pressure's one of the biggest things we have to go through during school and during college and that. It's always there, when you step out of the school, it's there in front of you, they are pressuring you to do something or they're telling you not to do something and like the teachers, the teachers tell us not to do stuff and our parents tell us not to do stuff but we still do it and it's kind of like they tell us to not do it for a reason, but we just don't see that reason and we do it anyway.

If you find out a person's a smoker, what do you think about them?

It would probably make me think twice about when I'm hanging out with them and especially if, what I said before, if I knew them for ages and ages and then suddenly I find out that they are a smoker, it kind of puts me off. And especially when, maybe we're sitting somewhere in the mall and then they are like, oh hey I'll just go out for a smoko break and we'd be like hey, you're spending time with us. Like, going every what 20 minutes, just for 5 minutes and then come back.

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

Support is the biggest thing for them to quit, just telling them, like yo, I'm here for you so, like if you're in trouble, if you need help, then you can just come and talk to me and there are people out there, like talking to your teachers or your family members, calling quit line, there are so many things out there to help them, you know, break away from addiction or smoking.

Would you consider quitting smoking a real achievement?

Yeah, of course, I mean, I've seen some people trying to break away from addiction and sometimes they've failed, sometimes they've succeeded, but you can see how hard it is to break away from something you've done for so long. Like seeing from my perspective, from friends who have given up, I can see how hard it is, like them going quiet and you know, not saying much cause they're thinking about it. Yeah, I'd consider it has a big achievement.

We talked about the quit services a little bit before. Do you think using those services like quit line or patches and gum, do you think that means you are too weak to quit by yourself?

Not at all. I think it's actually a real step to take to acknowledge that hey, I need to give up smoking and so, you know, just picking up the phone is a big achievement in the process of stepping away from smoking. You know, they are there for a purpose, it's not saying you're weak and using the patches and gum, you know, it's not obvious, it could be normal gum or it could be, you know to help with staying free from addiction.

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

I think, I'd put it right in front of them. I would ask them why would you take it up, I love them and I want the best for them and I want them to live their life to the full and smoking doesn't give you that long life and you are not living your life to the full, it cuts it short. And yeah, I'd tell them that I don't want them to do it, out of love and respect, I would really put it out to them.

So obviously it's legal to smoke cigarettes in New Zealand and the tobacco industry makes millions, probably billions of dollars per year, for selling this product that kills basically one in two people. Do you have any thoughts or opinions or views on the tobacco industry?

I don't really know much about the tobacco industry, but I know that they are probably trying their hardest to get it out, without letting people know the consequences. Like on the packet, you see so many warning signs and you see the pictures and they are there for a purpose, but they are still selling and so, in New Zealand I hope, you know, in the long run that it will be illegal to smoke and people will live their life longer and we won't have this product that kills one in two users.