

# **Interview with Piri Weepu**

**Interview by Dave Gibson**

## **What are your thoughts about not smoking and being a role model?**

Yeah, like when you do become a professional rugby player you don't really want to be a role model but you're pretty much tagged anyway because you're playing at a high level of rugby and any kid who watches rugby or loves rugby or even league, you know, they watch players play.

If you're one of those players, kids love you straight away so it's important as a role model to make sure that like you're not doing a lot of bad things... well a few of us have been caught out. But you know, you have those moments in life, but just as long as your main focus is to try and give out the right message to younger kids. Smoking's pretty much one of the main things. As a role model you don't want those kids to go along that path of being a smoker, you want them to go along the right line as we say, and you know, live a healthier life.

## **If a mate of yours is trying to quit is it good to support them?**

Yeah I think it's better if someone takes your mind off something, then it's a lot easier. That way you're not thinking about it the whole time, you're just talking to someone about random shit. I think it's pretty important to support your friends, have a chat to them, take their mind off wanting to have another cigarette. It's very helpful and important.

## **Do you have any advice for people trying to quit?**

Yeah, don't be afraid to ask for help, it's always there and I know that family members that don't smoke are always keen to help out other family members in terms of whatever they want in life, whether it's support to quit smoking, or if it's support to quit anything then it's always good to ask whanau for help or anyone really. Kauga e whakama, don't be afraid to ask for help.

## **For people who quit smoking, do you see it as a real achievement?**

For someone who's been smoking for a long time I think it's a pretty big achievement. It's like the same as someone who's overweight, and losing that first kg is an achievement for them because they're going on the right path to being healthy.

## **Do you think using help like Quitline and nicotine replacement products like the patches means you're too weak to quit by yourself?**

I don't think that. I guess it's another form of support in terms of trying to help you quit. Like with the Quitline, although it may not be immediate whanau or friends, having the advice of other people away from your whanau could also help you as well. Because talking to someone who's a total stranger to you, they're not in front of you and it's over the phone it makes it a lot more comfy for the person to actually open up. Like if I was talking to a total stranger I wouldn't open my mouth but over the phone I might be a bit more relaxed about it.

## **So you definitely would say that a smoker is not a sell out if they ask for help, ring Quitline or use patches?**

No not at all. It's just another form of support. You might not be getting the right help you need from your whanau and your friends and hearing advice from someone else that's there to support you could be a bit more beneficial for yourself. Using nicotine products like patches is another form of support and that's all good.

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

I'd probably sit them down and say to them, "Why you? What's made you start smoking, even if it's socially - is it because your friends are smoking?" I guess if I had a little brother or even a little sister, actually I'd probably kick their ass but I definitely want to sit down and ask them questions about why they tried smoking.

**Do you think it would be a good thing if we could have more smokefree/auahi kore marae?**

Some marae are smokefree. I know the one in Wanganui you're not allowed to smoke inside, everyone has to go outside but they've got little ashtrays around the outside. It means they have to bugger off down the road.

**Have you ever thought whether we should get rid of cigarette displays in dairies?**

I think hiding them might be a good idea and maybe have one sign that says that they do sell smokes there but you know it's not on display. It would be good to hide the cigarettes and not have them on display.