

INTERVIEW WITH TE AWANUI REEDER

Why do you choose to be smokefree?

I was around it for years growing up and I just didn't like it. It smelt really bad on your clothes. It's the second hand smoke too which is killing people, so man I'd be pissed off ... because that would be pretty stink if I got throat cancer and I don't even smoke.

Smoking is also expensive, most of the cost is tax and we get taxed enough as it is. You get taxed before you even get your money if you're working and to pay extra tax on top for cigarettes, come on families, doesn't make sense. Then there are the health effects. There's no benefit at all. I'm not trying to promote weed but you can't even get a buzz off smoking cigarettes, what's the point?

The other thing is that it can't be part of the work I do. I can travel with what I do and I can meet wonderful people and have wonderful experiences and if I smoke that will affect it and I don't want to do that. My life is pretty good.

Do you think it's okay these days to be smokefree?

All the top sports people are non-smokers. All the top celebs that I know don't smoke. I think you can see it in people. Typically their skin's a lot nicer and they don't wear makeup, they're always in the crowd because they're not having to go out and have a smoke, they're always in the scene. At the end of the day who really cares what they think, you know what I mean? I think the thing with being in the music industry, is if you worry about what people think you wouldn't last long. So you just have to not give a shit basically and just be you and if you feel good then sweet. For me that's not smoking.

What is your first recollection of people smoking around you?

Well, my family likes to party, lots of guitars, singing, alcohol, smoking. My mum smoked, my dad used to smoke and it was just what you did because they came from rural backgrounds, very country backgrounds. There's not much to do in Putaruru and Tauranga, so that's just what happened.

Did you try smoking when you were younger?

Yeah, of course man, because all my friends at school were trying it. I thought, 'oh wow, my mum smokes, I'll just steal a couple of her cigarettes and have a go.' The first time I had this head rush and I was like, 'oh man, this is pretty out of it.' I think at the time I was doing it because the fact I could get caught was kind of cool. Then I just didn't like it, the taste is yuck, and I didn't want to get a hiding.

The first time I ever smoked at school I got snapped by my PE teacher. All my teachers that I had are wonderful people and I looked up to them, they were like my mentors. So

she told me off and she just went, 'oh, you know, I'm really disappointed.' My mum found out and I thought I was going to get smashed but she just told me off and she said, 'I'm pretty sad' and she cried so that was pretty much the end of that.

Do you ever have cravings for a cigarette?

If I'm honest, I think when I had a couple of drinks I'd just want that puff. A couple of the boys in our group smoke and it was just cos they had one and I was like, 'oh chur bro, can I have a try' but that was it. They're pretty protective of me, our boys. Honestly, they will smash me if they see me smoking and they tell everybody that. They're quite conscious of the fact that I don't particularly like it but that's what bros are for aye? My brothers, too much.

Do you have the odd word to them about smoking?

Yeah, see when they were younger they'd go, 'I'm not addicted bro, I could stop if I want,' five years later, still smoking. I don't think so my cuz. Everybody has their vice, all you can do is just let them know that it's not good. I think that's the main thing. You want to live long, you want to be there for your kids when you have them and you want to be there for when they have kids, that kind of thing. And you can get emphysema, and cancer comes from it, so it doesn't make sense. It's all bad.

What would you say if your mate was trying to quit?

It's tough man, it's tough. I know my mum tried to quit heaps of times, she did alright for a little bit and went back to it. So I know how hard it is because she's probably the toughest person that I know. I'd just be there for them. Have patience. I think that's a big key, know that it won't happen straight away, you might smoke again, sweet as, as long as you're seeing an improvement. It's like working out, you know what I mean, you can't get that body like Arnie in one hit, you can't just do it. I think it's a long term goal, it's a long term process and it's a life process. You're trying to better your whole life. I guess I'd just tell people to be patient, work at it, ask for help if they need it and there are also the [patches](#) right? They're subsidised by the government, which is awesome. I think listening to Nesian Mystik albums help, all of them and maybe going to the website too, that might help as well. Haha.

Do you think kids are still trying smoking for the same reasons you did?

They're wanting to be a part of what their friends do, they don't actually want the cigarette. There's definitely some form of insecurity there in some part. I think most people know that there's no benefit to smoking. However they want to be included and sometimes their friends smoke and that's the only way they can get in that circle. But with all the laws changing, you can't smoke at clubs, you can't smoke in restaurants, which is awesome. I think it's just common sense to stop, you know what I mean?

What would you say to young kids who are experimenting with smoking?

I think it's inevitable that our kids are going to try stuff, I mean we have to be honest and open about that because it's better to just get it out of your system than to pretend that you're a Minister or something. I think if you are going to have a go then know the full picture as opposed to just being naïve and ignorant. Read up on the facts, know that it is harming you, whether you like it or not and especially for our women. I think on 'Whale Rider' they say it the best; that it effects your child bearing properties, so good on you Keisha, too much.

Do some research, don't be lazy with it, you know, and don't smoke if you can't afford it cos you end up looking like a scab.

What do you think about the high percentage of Maori and Pacific people smoking?

Well I think from birth we've got it pretty hard straight up. We're more likely to get diabetes, go to jail, be poorer, have cancer so you're not helping yourself, that's for sure. It's really important, especially for our people, to be mindful of their health, if they want to pass on the knowledge and the culture and te reo to our kids.

As someone in the entertainment industry, do you think smoking affects a performer's ability?

Oh definitely. That's one big reason why I don't smoke because that's my salary and it's my opportunity to do better from where I've been. Our industry is known for smoking and alcohol but the culture is changing. I think, especially for Maori and Pacific Islanders, if you do well it's kind of implied that you become a role model, that's just how it happens. You know the kids are looking up to you so you kind of have to be a bit more mindful.

What do you know about tobacco industry?

They're kind of like McDonalds and Starbucks. They've been established for a while, they can afford top marketing. The big thing I can't get over though is that it has the warning on the box and people still buy it. And it's expensive man, I mean, \$11-\$13 for each packet, that's bread and milk and eggs and you could feed the whanau for almost a week with that.