

Interview with Ido Drent

Interview by Lewis Whaitiri

How would you describe your smoking status?

A definite non smoker yeah.

What about in the past? Have you smoked?

Yeah like when I was in 5th form everyone kind of smoked. I had a couple of cigarettes here and there but I was never into it because I was always quite healthy and quite sport focused. Definitely not a smoker anymore. I dabbled in it because it was a fun thing to do with mates you know, sneaking out of home late at night going for a cigarette. When I was in 5th form we got caught and that's the last time I smoked I guess. So I'm definitely not a smoker.

So do you think smoking is as prevalent as it used to be?

I don't think so. It's lost a lot of its coolness and it's probably because we actually understand that it's killing us, it's like eating rat poison. So yeah I think most people understand that it's not cool, it stinks, and it's not something you can do socially anymore as easily. Yeah so no I don't think it's as common.

Do you think it's socially acceptable to smoke now?

I think it's becoming less and less socially acceptable because people feel they actually have a right to say, 'hey look, can you please not smoke around me.' You can't do it in bars and clubs, and we understand that it's killing us and it's not only doing you damage but it's doing me damage. I think people are more respectful of non smokers and of not smoking around them.

Why do you think some young people still take up smoking?

I think peer pressure is involved obviously but yeah I don't know why, it doesn't make sense to me you know? It's quite simple. It's killing you so why would you? For me it was the peer pressure of it, you know the mates doing it and the excitement of trying this thing.

So do you think it's ever uncool to refuse a cigarette?

Nah I think you should be respected for making those decisions, and I don't think it's uncool to ever do something that's not part of you. So if you don't want to, don't do it. But I guess a lot of kids do feel it's uncool to refuse and therefore they do smoke. I think peer pressure is a joke and if you don't want to do something, don't do it. If it's not you, don't do it.

What do you think smoking says about a person?

Yeah, without offending my smoker mates, I think it shows some weakness to be honest. We all know it's bad for you so why don't you stop you know? It's like a crutch. It's like a dependency so to me it shows lack of character. It shows weakness you know in the nicest way possible. I just think it's weak, it's a lack of substance in someone you know. If smokers all want to quit but no one actually can cause they've become so dependent on something that's what it shows to me. A lack of self value. If you really care about yourself and really care about your body and really enjoy life why would you do anything to cut it short?

As an actor, what are your thoughts on smoking and how it affects your performance?

Well my voice is important, as an actor it's one of the most crucial tools I have right? Why would I want to compromise that for a mindless cigarette? I definitely want to stay away from that because I want to have a long career.

So do you hang around other actors who smoke?

I know some actors who smoke. I try not to hang around them when they're smoking because it stinks and I just don't like the smell. I try to move away into an area that's obviously smokefree. I don't like to discriminate against anyone so I'm quite accepting of people as long as they respect my space and respect the fact that I'm not a smoker and I don't want to be inhaling their second hand smoke you know.

How does being a role model impact the decisions you make?

I did an interview with a school yesterday and there were 400 young girls going 'aaaaahhh' so I know that people see me as a role model and therefore I want to portray the things that I think are good to do. I don't want to smoke because that's giving them the impression that it's alright to smoke when I don't think it is.

Would you go out with a smoker?

No. For me, going out with someone means I look at the values they hold and I think smoking is evidence of like, lack of character or not respecting themselves and it stinks. It seriously stinks. Who wants to kiss a girl that smokes? Yeah totally, I wouldn't go out with a girl that smokes because it stinks.

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

Yeah for sure. Like, firstly by the smell, by their voice and their skin you know yeah. A friend of mine, he's been a smoker for a while and he's got quite yucky skin. And they stink.

Do you have any friends or family that smoke?

My grandma used to smoke in secret. I remember as a child she was smoking and I walked in and she didn't want me seeing it so she put it in her drawer and closed her drawer and smoke was just leaking out the side of the drawer. But yeah, why didn't she want me seeing that smoke? She had emphysema and it was killing her you know.

How would you support someone who was trying to quit?

Yeah. I think like encouragement but also understanding. A friend of mine, he's got a very addictive personality and he used to smoke and tried quitting for ages and I think support is really critical. Just not being judgmental about it and by giving some understanding. Yeah the best way is just through love and understanding. A couple of my friends have quit but like I said before, for some of them it's been a really long journey and for some of them they are still struggling to give it the final flick you know.

Do you see quitting as a real achievement?

Yeah I do think it's an achievement once you're there and in that place. I have a non addictive personality so I'm always like 'what's your problem, just stop.' You have to make so many decisions to keep smoking. Like you get in your car, you go to the service station, you pull out

your eftpos card, you ask for a packet of cigarettes...there are so many opportunities to say 'no'. So if you're so trying to quit, why are you buying cigarettes? Why do you keep carrying them around with you?

Do you think using services like nicotine replacement patches and Quitline is a good thing?

Any help is good. Like not all of us can just say 'no'. The fact that they're trying shows strength. I think getting help is a very strong thing to do, it's not showing weakness it's actually showing strength.

Do you have any advice for young people who have started smoking socially?

Yeah, stop, it's simple. Stop as soon as possible or try and quit as soon as possible. The longer you do it, the harder it becomes and the more devastating it's going to be.

Do you have any views on the tobacco industry?

It's crazy how they are allowed to sell something that actually kills people and profit so much from it. I was talking to my flatmate about this last night and it's actually quite ridiculous that we are allowing people to make millions and millions of dollars off people's weaknesses and by selling them something that they know is killing them. I read that 50% of smokers die from it you know. If 50% of cars exploded randomly they wouldn't be allowed to sell those you know what I mean? That's kind of how I feel about the tobacco industry.

Why don't you smoke?

Because I love life and I don't want to do anything that compromises it. Yeah, I love my life and I want to live it as long as possible and have great times so why would I want to cut that short?

Not even tempted?

No, not even tempted.

Do you think as a country we can do even more to stop smoking?

I think so. I think you can even go further with that, so you've got like bars and stuff but then outside at cafes when there is nice fresh air and people are still allowed to smoke outside. So that kind of stuff I would love to see cut out because I love sitting outside enjoying the fresh air but I hate it when a waft of smoke comes. So I think going further with the public place stuff and doing it in like sports clubs and all that.

Lots of people have said 'it's so bad, why don't they just ban it'?

I thought to get people smoking as little as possible would be the most desirable outcome right? So if you could ban it in 90% of places so that smokers actually can't have it as part of their lives then that would be good cause then they're only left at home. But even that isn't cool because at home you've got little kids and why would you smoke around little kids who are just helpless and they can't tell you not to smoke because they don't know it's bad for them. It's a big nut that one.