

Interview with Jono Pryor

Interview by Dave Gibson

Tell us a little bit about how it's been going for you trying to quit?

Oh geez I won't lie, it's pretty hard aye. Like I'm 27 now and I've been smoking for over 10 years and now I'm four days into it, realising how hard it is to give up. I'm sort of wishing that I never lit up that first cigarette all those years ago you know.

I'm pretty sure I heard somewhere that it takes about a week to get the nicotine out of your system or something like that.

Yeah well there's so many ways to give up now aren't there? You have hypnotism, that Alan Carr book, and nicotine patches obviously. But then I've spoken to my old man, he used to be a smoker he just said just one day he stopped so I thought well if he can do it anyone can stop.

So how would you describe your smoking status?

I'd describe myself as a smoker who's trying very hard to give up.

Do you think smoking is as common as it used to be?

No. In my job you deal with you know, young people, and a lot of them are just not smoking now aye. Like a lot of my friends gave up when they were in their early 20's and there were only a couple of us in the group left as the smokers so I think if you give up at an early age it's better than trying to give up at a later age when it makes it ten million times harder.

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

No. I don't think it is. I think that really changed when the law about no smoking in bars and restaurants came into play. I think probably the best thing that the government could have done is ban smoking indoors because you go to the pub and even if you weren't a smoker, like my wife, you just smell her clothes the next morning and it smelt like she'd been smoking all night. You feel bad smoking even outdoors now around people who aren't smoking. If you are smoking you need to be aware that you should get as far away as possible from people who aren't smoking.

You talked about when government brought in that law around having smokefree bars and restaurants and things like that. What else do you think could be done?

I think if the government keeps putting the price of cigarettes up the amount of smokers is definitely going to drop. I mean no one wants to be paying \$20 for something they get rid of in a day you know. I think in Australia they've just put them up even further haven't they? I mean ultimately you're going to end up paying \$25 bucks for 20 cigarettes and that's disgusting financially and health wise.

If a kid walks into a dairy and buys some lollies and then sees cigarettes, they're going to constantly see those right throughout their childhood growing up. But if they're not there they're not seeing them so I guess that would help too.

You mentioned that young people don't seem to be smoking as much but obviously there's still some going on. Why do you think young people are still even bothering to give it a go?

I know when I first started, it's very clichéd, I thought it was cool and then it quickly turns not cool ten years down the track you know. I think maybe the price of cigarettes might be a part of the fact as to why young people aren't smoking much nowadays. It's \$11 bucks for a pack of smokes pretty much. If you're having a pack a day that equals a lot.

How much money do you think you would have spent on cigarettes?

Oh geez. Okay so let's say five packets a week so that's \$55 times...for one year how many weeks in a year, 52 weeks...for ten years...

\$28,000

Wow okay, fuck. In ten years I spent \$28,000 on cigarettes. I could have brought a Ferrari or maybe not a Ferrari but a nice Toyota Corolla or something, or some pants, yeah or some really nice pants to wear while driving my nice Toyota Corolla. Fuck that's a lot of money aye? I don't want to think about it.

You'll notice that money mate. It's good motivation, imagine what you'd spend if you smoked your whole lifetime, over a hundred grand?

I'll make a little sign saying \$28k, and put it in the car.

Some people say it can be hard to refuse a cigarette. What do you think about that?

It's never uncool to refuse a cigarette, it might be hard especially when you're getting peer pressure from friends but it's never uncool. I mean if you look at someone who's been smoking for 30 years you realise how cool it is to say no.

Do you think the perception that smoking is cool wears off pretty fast?

Yeah the cool factor wore off. Through the teenage years you're smoking cigarettes you think you're cool in front of the ladies then it wears off by the time you hit your 20's then it becomes more of a burden, more of a ball and chain on ya. You're always wondering where your smokes are, you get anxious if you don't have a cigarette ready to go. I went out for dinner with my parents, I left my cigarettes at home and I started stressing out that I couldn't have a cigarette you know for like three hours which is stupid.

When you're a smoker you have this perception that everyone is smoking but as soon as you stop you realise no one does.

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

For me I think the worst was my health like I've got a mild case of asthma, which makes my smoking ten times more stupid. I've started going to the gym and I started noticing I couldn't run for 5 minutes because I'd start wheezing and stuff, it's pretty uncool. It seems bizarre that you'd smoke something that would ultimately kill you.

So your wife's not a smoker?

No...she's pretty cool about it aye but she's just like, "you've got to do it some stage it's pretty stupid."

Do you think that support from other people is helpful for someone trying to quit?

Yeah I think support is helpful, but at the end of the day it's you who's having to give up you know? I mean if you're friends with someone who does smoke you can't tell them that they've got to give up with you, but I guess the best thing that they could do is try not to smoke around you.

Would you consider quitting smoking a real achievement?

Yes I would consider it a real achievement and I sincerely hope this will be the last time that I have to try and do it. And gee it would be one of the biggest achievements of my life.

Is this the first time you've tried to quit?

Oh I've tried to quit a number of times before but I'm determined to make this the last time.

Did you know that using nicotine replacement products like patches makes it twice as likely to quit?

I didn't realise that.

Do you think that would change the way that you try to quit?

Yeah I don't know. I think at the end of the day it's down to your mind ultimately. But anything that helps you give up is a good thing really. I know the previous times I've tried to do it I've had doubt in my mind. I think you just need to take small steps okay I'll get through this day, three days, a week, three weeks - and I think that's hopefully how I'll do it and do it successfully.

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

Don't even bother. It's just not worth it. Socially smoking just turns into full time smoking. It's like I said before, I regret lighting up that first cigarette. I've tried to give up Monday to Friday but then on Friday night if we go out I'll have a couple of smokes and that never works at all. Because it just starts to creep back in. All of a sudden you're smoking again. They just don't need to be in your life.

Do you have any advice for friends or family of people trying to quit?

I think try and be as supportive as you can. For friends and family of people who are trying to quit, just be aware that they're trying. You probably don't have to go so much out of your way to help them but just be aware. I mean if you're a smoker try not to smoke next to the person who's giving up.

Anything else you want to add?

I just wish I'd never lit up that first cigarette all those years ago it's just become a burden on my life.