

Interview with Paige Hareb

Interview by Dave Gibson

How would you describe your smoking status?

Never smoker.

I kind of had a feeling you were going to say that.

Really?

You know cos you obviously have to be pretty athletic I imagine.

Yeah.

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

No I don't think it is because of the law, how they took the smoking out of the pubs and stuff. It's just harder, I mean they have to go outside in the cold now and it just seems way more unsociable. I don't see it around as much.

I totally agree with you. Why do you think it is not as sociably acceptable now as it used to be?

I think the younger generation are actually starting to click on that there's just no point in doing it and so I don't think there are as many younger people doing it now. There're not as many people to hang out with and smoke with so it's not as sociable. I think a few years ago it was perceived as being cool but it's definitely going out the door. I mean you can still be cool without that.

But obviously there are still some young people starting smoking. Why do you think they are still, you know, lighting up that first cigarette?

I don't know, maybe just cos they want to say that they've tried it. But unfortunately some of them are still getting hooked on it after that one try, so I don't know. It's just not worth even trying it at the start.

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

No. I mean you choose what goes into your body, so why would you accept one cigarette? I mean any smoke that goes into your lungs is going to damage it, so why even bother?

What do you think smoking says about a person?

It could mean a lot of things. That they're insecure, stressed, want to try and be cool, yeah. Nothing good really.

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

Well, being a non-smoker you can just notice it so much more. Like when I do go overseas and walk into a pub that allows it and I mean straight away I'm breathing in, like the air's just smoke. I don't think Kiwis do realise how lucky we are. I mean I'm lucky enough to travel and I do see the bad stuff like how smoking's still allowed in other countries and I think us Kiwis take it for granted and we need to know that it's like one of the best things.

Yeah, like you don't realise actually it's nicer, even when I was a smoker, not having all that smoke inside. You know, we just thought it was too intense, cos my band went to England once and you can smoke everywhere and it's just like, 'This is just really gross. I'm going outside for a cigarette'.

Yeah, yeah. That's like my dad, he used to smoke and like he even notices it now when they allow smoking in pubs and he even thinks it's gross now.

Yeah, it's totally changed our conditioning.

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

I've seen a few other surfers that do smoke and they are out in the line up coughing and spluttering away and I mean it's just not worth it. You're out there getting a thrill off natural waves coming through so I don't see why you have to have a smoke to get your thrill off that. I've definitely had a few heats where I've surfed against people that smoke and I think it has helped me when it comes down to the fitness. Yeah. Being smoke free has helped me get to the top. If you had like a little timeline thing on a computer, if I was paddling against a smoker, you'd see me like twice as far ahead of them so...

Would you go out with a smoker?

It depends how hot they are. I guess if I connected with them well then, you know, I'd go out with them but I'd definitely encourage them not to smoke and they probably wouldn't get as many kisses.

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

I don't know. Not so much when they're young but I mean if they've been smoking for a few years then the lips are all shrivelled up like they've been smoking a cigarette their whole life, so yeah.

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

Yeah for sure. I mean everyone needs support in their life for anything and my mum and myself supported my dad to quit and yeah, I don't know, it just helps. I need support for surfing so they need support for quitting or not smoking.

How did you help your dad specifically? Was it just a matter of encouraging him?

Yeah, well my dad's way to quit was to eat or chew on a bit of chewing gum every time he felt like a smoke, so you know we'd always make sure that there was chewing gum around and then I guess my mum was kind of gnarly and made him go outside the house to have a smoke in the middle of winter, so he got over that pretty quick as well. So yeah. Bit of encouragement and a bit of...

Tough love?

Yeah. That's the one.

How long did your dad smoke?

He smoked probably 15 or 20 years, since he was 20 and he's given up for about 8 or 9 years now.

Do you think quitting is a huge achievement?

Yeah I think so. When dad first did it he was counting the first couple of years and he was pretty proud of it and now I mean he doesn't even consider himself as a smoker and he tries to forget that he was a smoker.

You and your mum must be pretty proud.

Yeah, I mean you know it sucks hanging around with a smoker. He's my dad so I want to hang with him but yeah, I want to be healthy as well.

Do you think using Quit services or nicotine products (like patches, gum and lozenges) means that you're too weak to quit by yourself?

I guess if you've been smoking for that long and you're so used to it then you know you probably do need a little bit more help just to get over the first couple of weeks. I wouldn't say no to them.

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

To stop. It's pretty simple. My sister did smoke as well and I always gave her shit about it and we even had a bet once for \$100 and I got the \$100 cos she didn't quit after a year. But then I just kept hassling her about it and she finally quit cos she's had a baby now as well.

Do you have any advice for people trying to quit?

Never give up. Winners never quit and quitters never win.

Do you have any views on the tobacco industry?

They suck. They're just money hungry and I mean they're probably killing some of their own family members as well. It's pretty selfish.

Why don't you smoke?

I don't smoke because I don't want to be putting something into my body for no reason and losing years off my lifetime for no reason. I want to live as long as I can so I want to stay as healthy as I can.

Why do you think you never started smoking when others around you may have?

Because of my profession and because I saw my dad and my sister. I just didn't see any reason or point for it, so didn't try.

Straight off, you saw smoking as a complete deterrent to getting where you wanted to get to in surfing?

Yeah pretty much and I mean I saw these Smokefree ads on TV and Smokefree sponsored surfing as well so I thought that was pretty cool.

You talk about, 'Oh I've seen that campaign', now you're going to be in that campaign. Is that weird in your head?

Yeah, it's pretty weird.

How old are you Paige?

19.

So when were your first memories of Smokefree campaigns?

I think I was in the Under 12 division when I was about 11 years old and Smokefree sponsored the Women's Nationals at the Mount so yeah. That was my first memory. Surfing's always been smokefree, I can't imagine it any other way.

Have you ever been tempted to smoke at a party or when others light up around you?

I've been offered a few times but I've always said no. I've still got the same friends and I'm as cool as I want to be without smoking.

Do you have any opinion about cigarettes being on display in shops?

I don't really see any point of it. I mean it's kind of like alcohol, they don't like kids going into the alcohol store so it should be the same for smokes for sure. The best thing is to ban smokes but yeah, they should be hidden away for sure and then hopefully people don't look at them and go, 'Oh I'll grab a pack'.

Do you have an opinion about making cigarettes more expensive?

Hopefully it would help the people that buy all the smokes to cut down at least. Think about it. You can save that money to buy so much other cool stuff.

Can I just get you to talk a little bit more about what being smokefree means in terms of your ability to surf?

Well pretty much the whole surfing scene is the lifestyle and being free and in the natural environment, so you know I don't see why you should bring smoke into the scene and ruin that. I just get my natural thrills out of being in the environment and I don't need anything else.