

Interview with Richard Kahui

Interview by Matai Smith

How would you describe your smoking status?

I am a non smoker. Never even had a puff actually. Just cause I hated it.

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

No, I don't, you don't see everybody smoking like you used to and certainly in clubs now that you can't smoke, you notice it less.

Why do you think that is?

Just because it's not seen as cool the way it used to be. Who wants to go stand outside in the rain and smoke when everybody else is hanging out inside? I mean that's probably a big reason for 18-24 year olds.

Do you think it is socially acceptable to smoke now?

No I don't think it is. I think people are starting to wise up that there is no point in smoking, you don't get anything out of it and you know it's a pretty expensive, bad habit. With my line of work I like being pretty fit and healthy and smoking is something that doesn't help me in any way or help guys in my team in any way so the more people around me that don't smoke, the happier I am cause I don't enjoy it at all.

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

I don't know why young people take up smoking. I have never seen the point in it, never been interested in, maybe they think it's cool but you know it's quite the opposite.

What do you think smoking says about a person?

I am not sure what it says about a person but looking from the outside you can almost look at them as if they are a wee bit maybe dirty, if you can say that, just cause it doesn't smell good and it's just a bad habit to get hooked in to.

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

Well, your health. The thing is, there's nothing good that comes from smoking in terms of your health, it's proven to be bad for you, and the other thing is just you know, the smell and the way it makes people smell. You get someone that is all dressed up to go out to dinner or something and they have a smoke and they don't smell nice and it's a bit of a put off. It's proven that it takes years off your life and it's sad to lose family members because of smoking related diseases so it's certainly not something I would ever look at doing. It's a game for losers.

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

It doesn't fit in with my way of life. Obviously I like to be healthy you know and I need to be fit to be a rugby player so it doesn't fit in with me and I notice with some of my friends who do smoke and play sport, you can really notice when they are coughing away after a game. It's not doing them any favours.

Would you go out with a smoker?

I think I would, but I would certainly encourage that they didn't smoke cause I don't like it at all. My mother smoked and I used to go outside when she was, so if the person was, I would certainly put the effort in to try and to get them to stop smoking.

Do you have a lot of whanau around you who smoke?

I'm relatively lucky, I don't have people around me that smoke other than my mother. At the moment we are halfway through getting her to quit so that's a real positive. Cause once she gives up we will be a smokefree family.

In what ways can someone support a friend or a family member to help them quit?

I think there're a lot of things out there that can help smokers quit now, you know there is the Quitline, things like that and I think it's obviously a pretty tough thing to quit you know. Get as much support around you as you can cause we all know it's a big thing to do so the more support you can get and more help you can get the better. It is very addictive so it's just giving that person support. I try ringing my mum every 2 or 3 days to ask her how she is going and just give her a pat on the back just to keep her going.

Would you consider quitting smoking a real achievement?

Yeah I would say it would be a massive achievement. There're a lot of people out there that really struggle, so if you're able to quit such an addictive habit it would be worth getting a few pats on the back for.

Do you think using help like Quitline and nicotine replacement patches means you are too weak to quit by yourself?

No I think it's going out and getting help cause like I say it is a very tough thing to do by yourself. You know I have seen my mum try to quit plenty of times and she hasn't been able to and she has got the patches and she is doing those sorts of things. I think any external help you can get to quit smoking is not just good for yourself but good for everyone around you that's trying to help. If you are trying to quit use as many of the services that can help you.

What advice would you give to a younger sibling who had started smoking socially?

I think at the start of anything is the time to nip it in the bud. So that would be the time where I would say to them you know, look you are not getting anything out of it, why are you smoking?

Just ask them the questions so they can make their own decisions, but certainly encourage them against it because you know it's not part of our future.

Do you have any advice for friends and whanau who are trying to quit?

I think just stick at it. It's never going to be successful straight away. You know a lot of people try upwards of 10 times to quit smoking, it's just about being persistent. Keep supporting that person, they're going to trip up now and then so the longer you stay with them and keep supporting them, the more chance they have of quitting.

Do you have a view on the tobacco industry?

Yeah it's obviously a very expensive habit to get into and I think they are making some good money off something that is not helping people in any way. It would be good if they were all gone but it's just about probably trying to limit people starting so these companies don't make all that money and keep doing it.

What age were you when you worked out that smoking was not your thing?

I was about five years old, travelling to Whangamata, locked in the back of the car with mum smoking, getting car sick. I don't smoke cause there is nothing in it for me, in terms of my health, my fitness and the way of life I want to lead there is just nothing in it at all for me.

Why do you think you never smoked when others around you obviously smoked?

I think just because growing up with my mum who did smoke and I realised from a very early age that I didn't like it, I didn't enjoy it and it wasn't going to be part of my future so I just never started and never surrounded myself with people that did.

How did you avoid that temptation?

I just think because I always had other goals and things I wanted to do with my life. I always wanted to be a successful sportsman so health and fitness was a massive part of that. So smoking didn't quite fit in to the equation so it was really an easy one for me to stay away from and not get into. It's the smell that's always reminded me of being car sick and just dirty, it's always brought up sort of bad memories for me so I have never had any interest in smoking.

What are the benefits of being smokefree?

I find there are a lot of benefits from not smoking, obviously money is a big thing, it's an expensive habit to start. And your health, you know, I am healthy so smoking was never going to be something I took up.

What do you say to young kids who aren't in your position and may find it harder to avoid smoking?

You don't have to be an All Black to have a healthy future.