



Makara patapa / quit smoking

Podcast transcript

Introduction

The makara patapa program is a TAC initiative, as part of our holistic approach to health and wellbeing, supported by the Department of Health Tasmania.

Episode 9: Brendan Murray

Introduction:

Ya everyone. Nunami here, in 2022, I was asked to travel across Lutruwita and record our community stories of quitting smoking.

I heard so many great success stories of our people who managed to quit and got a good picture of why our people chose to quit, how they did it, and what supports they were able to access along the way.

This is the makara patapa podcast.

Brendan:

Hi, I'm Brendan Murray.

So currently I'm the Aboriginal community engagement officer with the Riawunna Centre up there in Burnie. I'm from originally Cape Barren Island are I'm from the Mansell's and the Thomas's on Cape Barren Island. Uh, mutton birder from way back on Trefoil, you know, done about 17/18 seasons. I know, good old. Trefoil Island and a bit of a mature person now within the Aboriginal community on the northwest coast. Seen as a bit of a figurehead and stuff like that. Currently I'm the pataway branch president so I'm really relishing into that role. So that's what I'm up to at the at the moment.

I probably quit about two times in my life. I didn't start really smoking until I was in my sort of early 20s 'cause I was, I was pretty staunch as a young person, I wanted to play sport and get to the top.

I found out that I wasn't really gonna get to the top, so I was just playing normal sport and in the. Country and stuff like that. So, I started smoking and in my early 20s playing sport and everything like that.

But that's when I sort of got I've got close to 20 and I thought it's time to give up because I started having children. So, I could see value in sticking around for a few years, so I give up for a little while and that was for about 9 years I give up smoking.

But then I sort of went through a process called, uh, abuse in care, and I felt that now I wanted to find out my story and what happened to me as a kid, because I have limited memory. I started smoking again because things were heavy that I was reading. I was reading government documents and hearing stories about my childhood and stuff. And so, it was a bit heavy. So, I



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started smoking again because smoking was like that little mate that I could go outside with and have a little puff and he understood me that smoking and he looked after me. And yeah, you know, he's stuck around for another 10 years, I suppose. But then I got into my early 40s and that's when I felt. It's time.

I didn't want to be a mature age smoker and you know, there's two beautiful old elders that aren't with us here at the moment and I remember seeing them, Uncle Athel Burgess and Auntie Laura Maluga. They were sitting in Burnie Town, you know. Here's 2 old coes that were about 60 odd years old, and there I am walking through Burnie and contemplating giving up smoking. And then I saw them two old coe sitting at the bus stop. Smoke just billowing out. And let me tell you, it looked very odd to me to see 2 old mature aged people smoking. I thought, it doesn't look right. So after that, yeah, just smoking just didn't feel right for me. It didn't feel like it was a part of my life anymore so yeah, yeah, yeah. I just one day there I just did the old trick of screwing up the smokes and never smoked again.

Nunami:

So you went straight cold Turkey?

Brendan:

Cold Turkey, yeah, yeah, 'cause. I wasn't a huge smoker anyway. I was probably, I wouldn't have a smoke before lunch. You know that was that was always a given for me. I wanted to try and you know give my system enough time to wake up and start the day.. Then lunch after I have a bit of lunch. I used to have one smoke. I probably have two for the afternoon, but between tea and going to bed it's probably about seven smokes and that's all too much. That was too much, waking up with a little bit of a sore throat or. Or croakiness. And that's one thing that I do remember now. I don't croak when I'm sleeping now. My wife doesn't complain that I'm snoring or on croaking. It's because I don't have any throat problems anymore. 'Cause I'm not smoking.

Nunami:

So how long has it been since? You quit for the last time.

Brendan:

Oh, jeez. well I reckon it's coming up to near on 10 years it's coming up near on 10 years. Loving it. Yeah, loving it. Loving being a non-smoker and I and I don't like the smell and. I'm already advising my sons because I know they got my DNA in them and they've got they got the old Cape Barren Island DNA, which you know, isn't conducive to smoking cigarettes. You know, our systems aren't, accepting to tobacco and all those 4000 chemicals that they have in them. And I'm trying to say that to my sons. Now be careful of what you're doing because our blood tends to get the bit thicker if you're a Cape Barren Islander. And so, I'm trying on my three sons. Who are, two are just starting in their 30s now and I've got one in their mid-20s. And I'm saying to start thinking about quitting, yeah.

Nunami:

Is that one of the main reasons? You wanted to. Quit as well 'cause these kids are here.



Brendan:

Yes, yes. And it was ironically, it was my sons, one of my son's 21st birthday. Yeah. Yeah. Was his 21st birthday. I remember being at the shed with him and everything like that. I had a couple of smokes that night and then very next morning I woke up. And I went, that's it. Yeah, yeah, just screwed up the whatever I had left there, and I didn't tell my wife that I wasted that money. But it wasn't about wasting money, was about saving money, saving life. My own. That's how I was thinking. Plus, those ads on TV were very powerful.

Nunami:

Which adds.

Brendan:

Those quit ads, You know where, you know people were sitting outside. Those shame ads. I call them shame ads. There that quit Tas used. I think they're really good. Because those back in the days, they were really explicit. Yeah, you know, these days I think they're a little bit glossy, but back in the day when I've seen these some smoke ads, you know, they were. They got you thinking. Planting seeds and you know another few nights there last said the same ad again and start thinking about a bit more.

So, there's multiple ways done that I had influence in giving up. Yeah, yeah, I reckon, yeah. Every day, every day I wanted to give up, but every day I had an excuse to smoke. It's like I've had a big day, easy to say that. I've had a big day and I need to smoke.

Nunami:

What did you use once you start up? Like how did you stop yourself from having a cigarette after you filled out like?

Brendan:

Oh water, yeah water. But you know I took up a like of lollies yeah that's my little thing. Over the night-time I had me a little packet of lollies and stuff like that. Hence probably that's why I've got dental issues at the moment. 'Cause I've been eating a lot of lollies in the last 10 years.

But yeah, yeah, I'm not smoking. Yeah, and feels good. It really feels good. And you know, I still see people go out of the Cradle Coast campus or even here, you know, a couple of staff members and go 'just nicking outside'.

You know if you have to do that, 'Cause they're whispering, they're looking around you. Know it's like. Well, if you have to do that, if they're shame in that, why are you doing it.

It's habitual, it's habitual... It's like my old cousin Dean Newell that lives in Wynyard. And like he said to me, his wife, he reckons she will never be able to give up smoking. She gets up, she'll have a cigarette. She will do the washing up. She'll have cigarette, she'll do the washing. Have a cigarette. You know, that's her day. And apparently, she did try to give up once, but she



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couldn't because she just couldn't break those habits that have been there for 30 years. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Very habitual.

I didn't build up habits, it was just it was mainly overnight.

Nunami:

They say that's why cigarette smoking is so like it gets its claws into you 'cause you got the physical addiction. You've got the social elements, doing your friends and the habits and the emotional like you were saying. Like there's all those ways it gets into your brain.

Brendan:

That's right, that's right. And that's when they it, it turns into. I don't want a cigarette. I need one you know? And I always like to use those words: want and need, you know. It's like I want my children to come to me. I don't want my children to feel that they need to come to me. So again, you know, smokes is like that, you know? I think people. Yeah, finding, more excuses why they need a cigarette. Yeah, but do they really want one? No, I don't think anyone wants a cigarette. They'd love to quit. Yeah, yeah.

Nunami:

Are there any other benefits that you've noticed since you quit?

Brendan:

Financial, yeah yeah. I know my wife. She's complaining and yeah she's about a ten a day lady, so a packet of 20s will last her a couple of days. But yeah, yeah, that's an expense. But then my young one, he smokes at home as well. So, in the he'll smoke about the same. So more or less, they'll smoke a pack of cigarettes a day between the two of them. And that's \$30 a day. Times 300 and 65 that's a lot of money.

And when I say that to them they go, Oh yeah. I said yeah, couldn't you do with that 3000 or whatever money, how much money that is, can't you do with that in your bank account? Yeah, and that's why I can save now. That's why I can continually save now I can. I can get to the end of pay week and then there's another \$200 in there. But that would have been cigarettes for over that 14-day period. I would have spent \$200 on cigarettes so that \$200 is better off in my pocket. That's an incentive.

Yeah, plus my grandchildren list is really getting long and I want to be around and it's like, and I hate saying these things about colour. But five of my grandchildren, blonde haired and blue eyed, I know when they stand up for the first time and say I'm an Aborigine. Someone in that room is going to say, but you don't look it. I want to. I want to be around to empower them. I want to, I want to be around him and give them their tools, give them that ability to protect themselves and you know, to protect their culture

Yeah, yeah, I know. And that's why I want to be around. I want to be around for my little grandkids. I've got four older ones now. And I'm Chalky Pop, Chalky Pop. You know, they run to me and they and then like my wife says, I don't know why, Brendan and I think. Because they can feel my genuineness, that they're more mini-me's.



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Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I want to be around to be a pop 'cause. I saw a sad story not long ago. Like old Erica Maynard's ex-partner. He loved his grandson Malen, you know, Candy Bartlett's, little man Malen. He's going in senior primary school, so a little bigger now. But when he was a little feller, he loved his Pop. They went everywhere, you know? Pop used to take him on the golf course with him, but pop passed away when he was about two years old. And it was a shame how that old boy isn't in Malen's life anymore. And Malen's always going to have those feelings that there was a guy that was around in my life one time but where is he. I reckon that old coe he tried to quit smoking. But that's what got him in the end. It was smoking related cancer that got him. I know, I know. So, so you know little Malen's not gonna have Grandpa. And I don't want that story happening to my grandkids.

So that's a bit of an incentive when, losing committed community members with smoking related diseases. Plus, my beautiful old stepdad never had smoke in his life. But he died from smoking related cancers. 'Cause he was sitting around people that was smoking. Mum was a packet a day lady. And they were nippers, so I said, to dad, if you're not sitting in that mushroom, you wasn't sitting within that mushroom, you was walking around the house. I said, dad, your height, I said it was sitting right at your height. I said. And you, you lived in that. 'Cause Dad really struggled in in his early 80s of dying of smoking related cancers. It ate him. He's said son but I never had a smoke It's like Dad, I remember he was an ex-boxer and his left elbow went and took him to the hospital and the doctor said Laurie got tennis elbow. And he looks at me, he goes, I never played a game tennis in my life. Because Dad was a boxer and he was doing that all the time. So yeah, yeah, he had tennis elbow, and that's why I was trying to explain to dad. Sometimes you can get they, they, name these inflections like you got tennis elbow, I said, but yours is boxing because you were doing that all the time.

But, dad yeah, he struggled with yeah passing away from smoking related cancer. And to watch a man go from 90 kilos down to 30. It was just. Seeing my old boy. Old, Laurie Lowery. God, your mom loved him. Yeah, she loved my old dad. And vice versa.

Nunami:

Like the Generation Cup?

Brendan:

Yep, that's the named after my dad. He's my stepdad, but when I was about five years old and I'm 2nd generation stolen generation. So, I was given back to my mom when I was a bit over 5 and within a few months Mum started a relationship off with this little fella called Laurie and my biological father wasn't around.

I remember meeting my biological father for the first time when I was about seven at Christmas time once. I opened up the front door or Christmas Day once and there's his fellow standing and he reckons he's my dad. I just said no, no. He's in here. So, I went and got my dad and brought him out to say and meet this fellow who reckons he's me dad and it was very confusing day. But long story short, but little Laurie, He was stepdad but he was my real dad.

He was a legend. That's why they named the generation gap after him because he represented. Well, he was a fourth best bantamweight boxer in the world in any stage. Yeah, yeah, he was



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above Lionel Rose. 'Cause there was, yeah, he was number four. Lionel Rose was number three at that stage, I think. Dad tried to get a fight with the with the champion but champion wouldn't give Dad a fight but he give Lionel Rose a fight and Lionel Rose went and beat him and won the World Championship. That's why Lionel become all famous, and I used to say that to dad, when he got older, it's like, you could have been famous dad, you could have been famous dad. He's like nah nup, No, no. I don't think he wanted it because he was just an old guy. He was born on Green Island just out from Lady Barron.

You know where you stand on the Lady Barron wharf and you see that little island out there, that bald Island. That's Green Island well that was wooded, and that's where Dad was born, in a tent on there.

Yeah. So he had a few yarns. Used to tell us where when he used to live on Cape Barren. His dad was a non aborigine man, but it's called Tom Lowery's beach. And that's where Dad and them used to live at Tom Lowery's beach. Dad and Uncle Dougie and them. But Dad said that they used to do the salt drop. It was on the other end of the island. That's where the plane used to drive, Fly over Cape Barren once a month or something. They used to call it the salt plane. The plane would get low, but it wouldn't land, but just drop all this salt off for the Aborigines. Bags of salt.

Because back then if you're go and kill a sheep. And you'd salt the shape down and it's called mutton. Hence that's where they get the word mutton bird from. Because they're so salty. So salty plus once the mutton bird is broke down, it's that really brownie red meat, exactly the same as lamb when it turns down to mutton. So then, and hence that's why they called it called mutton birds, because the meat looked very same. Yeah, yeah, and taste very salty.

Nunami:

That's so cool.

Brendan:

So they used to do the salt drops and dad used to tell me when he was a kid. It was his job to walk from one end of Cape Barren to the other and grab a 20 kilogram bag of salt and carry that back all the way to the other end of Cape Barren. Yeah, so using it was. An original old boy. Old dad. Yeah, yes.

But having him in my life, not smoking it probably was a little bit of an influence as well. That's probably why I didn't smoke when I was early. I wanted to follow his path in into sport. I was no good at boxing. I wasn't aggressive enough for a fighter. I think I was more of a lover than a fighter, you know,. I'd rather be nice to someone than punch him in the face. And I'm still like that as an adult. You know, as soon as someone starts fighting, you're seeing me go the other way. 'Cause, I hate aggression, you know? Yeah, I was around that too much then when I was a young fellow. \Too much while and so, yeah. So quit smoking wasn't very hard, and nowadays I know I'll never smoke again. Never ever, ever.

Nunami:

What's one thing that you would what's one bit of advice you'd give to young people who think I'll never quit, I'll never.



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Brendan:

I'd say yeah, there's that financial one. I think most people do know there is a financial burden when it comes to smoking. Yeah, just health. Life longevity. That's what I like to use now. Wouldn't you like to live to be 90 years old instead of 70? 'Cause every smoke you have is lessening your life expectancy yeah just like to go down the healthy Road yeah, yeah.

If I'm trying to advise anybody or if anybody wants to ask me for advice, it's like. Oh, you don't smoke? How did you do it? Then I'll share that story with them. Yeah, but we're all unique. We all have our own story, yeah.

Nunami:

This will be good. For people to hear how you did it.

Brendan:

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I enjoy being a non-smoker. Yeah and I'll wear that badge with honour. Yeah. Being a non-smoker and if I can help anybody quit. Yeah, yeah.

Nunami Outro

Ya Everyone, Nunami again - thanks for listening to the makara patapa podcast. A podcast series by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre with support from public Health Services Tasmania.