

Part of an interview with a woman, 21 years old- about tobacco smoking

Researcher (R): Well, as I told you earlier, I would like to talk with you about your experiences and thoughts about tobacco smoking. Will you please tell me how it happened that you started smoking cigarettes?

Informant (I): I started when I was 13 years old and it was when I came to a new school. All the new friends smoked and I wanted to be kind to them so I started myself.

R: You wanted to be kind?

I: Well, it was a rather tough style at that school and there was a group of youngsters who were so cool, you know. In a way you can say that they influenced the other youngsters at the school, because they were cool and trendy and decided how we should behave. So I just wanted to do as they did. They were a group that I really wanted to belong to and in that gang everybody smoked and drank alcohol.

R: How do you feel about that now?

I: Well, we had a lot of fun and I really don't regret that I started going out with them. It was so nice and they were all so good to me. We had a great time together, with a lot of crazy parties and boys and all that, you know..... So, everything changed for me when I became part of that group.

R: In what way did everything change?

I: I just became accepted in a way that I wasn't before. I was one of the gang and it felt so good. The smoking was just part of it, I never thought about it really. And besides that, my daddy and mum smoked and my big brother did too, But of course, from the beginning my parents didn't know what I was doing. Gradually they came to know about it, but at that time I was about 15-16 years and they didn't really bother. They accepted it in a sloppy way, even if they told me not to do it. But I never really listened to them. And in school we got a lot of information about smoking, but even so, many of us started.

R: What do you know about tobacco smoking today?

I: Well, I know that it is dangerous, don't think anything else! But sometimes you get so fed up with all the propaganda about all the risks that surrounds us. There is

always something on TV about how bad it is to eat that and drink this and do that..... (seems to be angry).
Everything is dangerous if you listen to all the doctors talking on TV! Soon it is too dangerous even to live your life, so sometimes you distrust and think well, it is better to live hard and die with a happy smile in your face. No, but seriously, I'm not so sure that the doctors really know all about it..... How come then, that so many are healthy even though they've smoked for decades??? It just doesn't make sense. I like smoking and I have no plans to stop. I am still young and I want to live an exiting life with a lot of adventure and fun. Smoking is just part of my life style. Almost all of my friends smoke. And besides that, it makes me calm down and relax when I feel stressed.

R: Okay, I would like to ask another question that you can think about. Let's pretend that you change your mind and decide to stop smoking. What would actually make you stop smoking?

I: Oh,(thinking for a while) Well, I don't know..... Maybe if I got sick in some way..... Or maybe if I get pregnant..... I know that the child could be hurt from my smoking..... But I don't really know. At the moment none of these situations are relevant, so I really don't know

R: We know that many young people start to smoke nowadays – especially young women. We also know that tobacco smoking is unhealthy. How do you think a good prevention programme for these young people should be designed for them to be influenced by the message?

I: Oh, that's a difficult question! I don't know, maybe it could focus on how smoking effects the skin and the teeth and such things. I heard something about how cigarettes make you look older. I don't believe in scary propaganda about diseases, lung cancer and the like. Young people don't listen to such things. But they want to look good, so that might be one thing.....