Alvin: Can you introduce yourself?

Riku: My name is Riku Furuya, I am a sophomore at Western Washington University.

Alvin: Alright, when did you start smoking?

Riku: I started smoking my uh, probably around the end of my senior year (of high school). I started off going to a hookah bar with my friends because I just turned 18. And from then on, I started buying packs of cigarettes occasionally. I wasn’t too heavy into it at the time, but I was also surrounded by a bunch of my friends who were smokers and I, it would be hard for me to refuse cigarettes and it just kind of grew into where I’m at new where if I really want to buy come cigarettes like if I’m stressed out or something then I’ll do that and um that’s how I started off.

Alvin: Alright, how do you feel about your current smoking habits?

Riku: Um currently, I don’t feel like that good about it. I’ve been smoking cigarettes a bit more often recently, and I’m in the process of trying to quit. Its literally been 2 days since the last time I’ve had a cigarette and I really want cigarettes like right now so it’s like not, that’s not the feeling that I should feel so I guess I’m pretty dissatisfied with the way things are going.

Alvin: Okay, how many times have you tried to quit? And what were those experiences like?

Riku: I have tried to quit multiple times. I have tried to go with vaping (vaporizing) and you know sometimes I would like smoke a cigarettes and go back into the house and proceed to vape. So it was like a never ending cycle. I would always constantly want to be buzzed off of nicotine for long periods of time and uh every time I tried to quit it, it was because physical activities would be hard. Running and stuff like I would get out of breath really quickly or people would always be like “Bro, you stick man” like that is the cigarette smell. And um, gosh cold turkey is just like really really rough. I the only effective way I could like temporarily stop smoking for a little while is if I broke down like the amount of cigarettes I would limit myself per day. Like it would become less and less as each day continued and hopefully I would be down to like one cigarette a night and even then probably about like even a month later I might go to like a hookah bar again and get right back into it.

Alvin: Okay, what difficulties would there be if you tried to stop smoking?

Riku: Um the difficulties is uh just probably the addiction to it. It’s more like that oral fixation like I just want to put something into my mouth like something just burning. Like um, it’s the longer I go without it the more I feel like headachy and I’ll have like pains in my stomach and I know it’s just my body like having a lack of nicotine and tar and it’s just like pains that are just like really really annoying and ill grind my teeth and by like “f\*\*\* I really need a cigarette!” Um I mean it’s just hard I guess.

Alvin: Okay, so you mentioned that you wanted a cigarette right now?

Riku: Yeah.

Alvin: What causes that urge, or puts that idea into your head to make you want a cigarette?

Riku: Uh probably uh um it makes me think that I am feeling a lot better? It’s not like I’m feeling bad. It’s just that in my mind I always think if you were smoking a cigarette right now, it would make the situation better. Um smoking a cigarette would make anything feel just that much better, even though I know it doesn’t. It just relaxes me, slows me down a bit more, and um I don’t know it’s more oh like a craving than anything else I think.

Alvin: Okay, would it help to have a buddy or a support buddy who is also going through the same experience?

Riku: Definitely. I can speak especially with the friends that I like smoke with, who are also trying to like quit and they will sound very convincing and be like “hey man I haven’t touch a cigarette in like months” and then next thing I know it’s like if I buy, they’ll buy a pack. But if that friends or home is telling me that like they are trying to quit, that would make me want to quit so much more, like if were trying to quit at like the same time like, I think that it honestly does help. It’s very encouraging especially hearing from people who you know smoke more heavily than you do. And to know that they have gone longer than you did, it makes you feel like I can do better than this. I can go a lot longer. I might actually be able to quit this time. And it definitely helps especially if people, if your friends are smokers and they’re trying to quit like it makes you think that you can quit too.

Alvin: Okay, would it help to quit if quitting was turned into a game with some sort of competition and if there was a reward to it?

Riku: I think, I think yeah. I think if there was a reward to it, it definitely contributes to it because that’s how I think of like smoking in the first place. It’s like you’re giving yourself a reward so once you are being told that you are just hurting yourself than its kind of like you’re trying to change that in your mind and to think that like “ehhh it’s not that bad just cause everyone is like telling me it’s bad” but if I’m in the process of quitting and um if I were to get like a reward like I think it would help because I always think of smoking as like one kind of reward so if I find a different reward that like overcomes smoking then I think that would be like a good motivator because the hardest part of quitting smoking is you feel like there’s no reward at all. You feel like you are just going to be a worse off person by the time like while you’re trying to quit smoking so I guess if you were to tell someone that if you do manage to quit smoking, like your kids would be happier like if you were in a family or something like that or people would treat you with more respect. Like those are kind of rewards too but since it’s not as like since you don’t see it as much, it’s hard. But I think if there were rewards, it would help.

Alvin: Okay, do you think technology could play a role in smoking cessation?

Riku: Um yeah! Uh I think already currently if anything to a certain extent, it helps a certain kind of person quit smoking but on the other hand, I think it could also introduce people at a younger age to go into it. Probably not as significant, but I think with our current technology, there’s ways of like going about it like I know people use like phones a lot all the time like especially while smoking. Like I don’t know how you would pull it off but like yeah.

Alvin: Okay, have you ever had any experiences with smartphone apps related to smoking cessation?

Riku: Uh no I have not. I have not really ever gone across anything like that, especially a mobile app.

Alvin: Okay, so you mentioned that usually, or a lot of the time, when people are smoking, people are on their phone. So do you think that smartphone apps could be effective in helping to stop smoking?

Riku: Oh yeah. I think it can. Especially like I think people forget like just how long it’s been since they’ve had a cigarette or if they had some way of just like I don’t know being reminded or have some sort of plan to follow through or like have X amount of cigarettes on this day or like some … even like something as basic as like messages popping up telling you like “you’re doing good!” like it’s gonna happen like I think people buy into that so much like especially now when like all you ever do is look at a screen. The best thing you could have is something telling you that it’s working because a lot of the time you’re just thinking about it in your head whether you’re not like am I actually quitting? Is this working? And I don’t know I think that it could help.

Alvin: So you said earlier that having your friends or knowing their progress if they are trying to quit with you, motivates you to keep trying not to smoke as well. Do you see that as kind of a competition like do you want to do better than them? Or is that just because they are doing it as well and that you want to follow in the same way.

Riku: Um I think it starts off like I want to follow then because they’re doing it but I can definitely see it becoming a competition like a competitive environment like I mean it’s, you don’t want to like tell your friends that if you’ve been trying to quit that like “hey man I just like ended up buying like a cigarette” I mean they’ll say things like “oh well don’t worry about it” but in reality they’re thinking like “damn dude you wasted that, you’re f\*\*\*ing right there and you just had to do that?” I think that when I try to quit with my friends who are also trying to quit, uh I think it could be competitive for sure but if especially if they give in earlier, then sometimes instead of me thinking “oh maybe I should give in too”, I definitely think I could go way longer like you kind of see like I don’t know it just feels good. You’d do anything in your mind to think that you’re on the right track and if you see that like your friends you’re trying to originally quit with, like if they ended up giving in, you’d probably want to cut them off at that point if you’re really trying if you’re really close to actually quitting then I mean like it’s unfortunate but like those friends of mine are going to have a lot harder of a time quitting and I know that if I take if I understand that I’m not as heavy of a smoker then I have a much better chance of like keep continuing.

Alvin: Would you consider paying to use a smartphone app of this kind if it had the reputation of being successful?

Riku: Definitely. Definitely! F\*\*\* I pay ridiculous amounts of money for cigarettes in Washington especially. And when I hear my friends going to like different colleges in like Michigan where they pay like half price that I do here, it’s just like it’s already so unreasonable you already feel so guilty spending like ten dollars on a pack like spending money on an app would be like practically nothing. Everybody like already gets apps anyways. They’re cheap so I think it’s definitely reasonable spend money on something that you are probably going to at least run into like every day and if you can’t justify spending a couple bucks on an app then how are you going to justify spending like a lot of money in a short amount of time on cigarettes?

Alvin: In having a buddy to help you curb your addiction, would it matter if that person was your friend or if that person was a random stranger? Like would the effects still be the same? Or would you be less motivated?

Riku: I think I would be more motivated if it was like a friend like a buddy because there is like that personal connection. I think maybe out of curiosity I would uh want to know how a stranger would be doing just because like I mean when I try to quit its always like I don’t know how well I’m doing like cause its relative to what like its relative to myself but I don’t I wouldn’t know that because I don’t know what it would be like if I was that much heavier of a smoker or if I didn’t smoke that much, if I had that kind of information to compare to I think it would be a lot easier for me to grasp um like how well I’m doing because it’s really more of like a personal battle so it’s like, I mean I guess my answer would be like yes to both. Like it would motivate me if it was a friend or if it was a stranger but I think it would motivate me a lot more initially if it was like a friend. But I do see how having information on a stranger might help.

Alvin: Alright, are there any last insights on the role technology could play on smoking cessation? Any last thoughts?

Riku: I think especially now with modern technology in the way that we’re going, there’s just like, we get like a lot of information quickly so it would be nice to see something that could potentially help people quit smoking like a lot easier because as far as I know, the only thing people think about is just like cold turkey or even just getting advice like seeking advice like that it’s just very off-putting and there’s nothing that ever really seems approachable or desirable for a smoker to find some kind of method to help them quit.