

CASE STUDY

Embargoed till Sunday 9 August 2020

“I started drinking daily during the COVID-19 lockdown”

The coronavirus lockdown turned daily life upside down for most Australians.

Such was the case for mum of three Casey, 37, from Langwarrin, Victoria ([my little man tribe](#)). A fitness teacher with her own studio, The Pilates Basement, Casey had to shut the doors immediately when lockdown was announced in Victoria on 16 March.

“We all knew lockdown was coming, but it was still a shock when it was made official. There was no way I could keep my Pilates studio open, so I packed up and headed home to look after my three boys full time.”

Casey’s partner Craig, 40, a carpenter, was able to keep working.

“Craig was out during the day in the week, so it was just me and the three boys. Keeping them entertained all day, plus home-schooling my eldest, was hard work. We had good days, but also some really hard days.

“Some days it felt like a marathon just to make it to bedtime. On more than one occasion, I felt so disheartened and exhausted, I almost wished to be sick just so I could get a rest.”

Before the lockdown, Casey says she only really drank alcohol at the weekend, or on special occasions.

“I definitely enjoy having a drink, and one of the things I’m most looking forward to once this second lockdown is over, is visiting our favourite wineries.”

“I’m not sure if it was the stress of home-schooling, general anxiety about coronavirus or being home so much more than usual, but Craig and I started having wine during the week once the kids were tucked up in bed. This wasn’t normal for us.

“We justified the wine as a “reward” for getting through home-schooling, or making it through another day of lockdown with three children under eight-years old. Before we knew it, we were “rewarding” ourselves with alcohol every evening.”

“The longer lockdown went on, the less of a charade we made about the drinking. We stopped making up excuses, or even asking each other if we wanted a drink. Once the house was quiet, I’d instinctively pour us both a glass. It just became a part of our everyday wind-down routine.”

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation has launched a new campaign, *Break the Habit*, to highlight that it only takes on average around 66 days to form a habit. This is roughly about the same amount of time many Australians spent in lockdown.

“One Wednesday evening, I went to pour our evening drink and realised we had drunk the house out dry. This had never happened before. Craig and I had a conversation about how drinking had crept into our week. It was only then that we discovered our alcohol consumption had doubled. I was shocked.

“Drinking every day was a habit that crept up on us. If we hadn’t of run out of wine that day, I don’t know how or when I would have come to this realisation.”

Casey is a Pilates instructor, and Craig is an avid cyclist. “As a couple, we enjoy keeping fit and try to live a healthy lifestyle. But we definitely emerged out of the first lockdown less healthy than when it started.”

After an indulgent lockdown, Casey and Craig decided to participate in Dry July, and went without alcohol for the whole month. Because they are based in metro Victoria, their Dry July experience also coincided with the second round of lockdown.

“It was so disappointing to enter lockdown for a second time. The novelty has certainly worn off, and I haven’t magically learnt how to teach a 7 year-old since the last time.”

“Dry July was tough. Other friends who started the month taking part, fell off the wagon once we went back into the second lockdown. Craig and I were tempted, but we’re also very competitive. We set ourselves the challenge and were determined to see it through.”

“Whenever we’ve wanted a drink, we’ve tried to be creative in finding other ways to satisfy the urge. I really wanted a drink the other night, so I poured some kombucha into a wine glass. The craving soon passed. I’ve done the same for Craig with sparkling water and cordial in a beer glass on the weekend, when he’s wanted to unwind after a busy week at work.

“We both feel a lot better for having cut down on the alcohol. I definitely don’t want to go back to my old lockdown drinking ways. Craig is sleeping better, and I have more energy to tackle home-schooling that was stressing me out in the first place!”

Now that Dry July is over, what is Casey hoping will happen to her drinking? “My plan is to go back to what was working for me before – enjoying a glass of wine or two at the weekend. Lockdown is an intense, stressful and unusual period of time, but I don’t want to use alcohol as a crutch to get through it. It’s bad for me, my family, my health and my wallet.”

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Casey is available for interview on request and pending availability.