



Caption if needed

## Reborn in rehab

A downward spiral of booze and drugs pushed Travis Young to breaking point. Here's how he turned his life around.

**T** Travis Young, 29, grew up in Sydney's Sutherland Shire surrounded by a loving family. The son of an ex-Canterbury Bulldogs player and talented player himself, Travis also started up a fitness business in his early twenties which became successful. But all was not as it seemed. "I started drinking when I was young, but it didn't start becoming an issue until I was about 24 or 25," he says. "I also started taking cocaine at 21 and it

really ramped up at the same time. I had a successful business and things were going okay but everything just spiralled out of control because of the amount of drugs and alcohol I was using. "It was the culture - football culture, Shire culture - it was seen as normal to go out Friday to Saturday among the group I was hanging out with. Even though I always took the party a little bit too far every time, it wasn't seen as unusual - it was quite normal with that group."

The effect of this endless party lifestyle started to take its toll on Travis's health. "I struggled with day-to-day tasks on Mondays and Tuesdays although I forced myself to train, but my mental health was where the real problems were starting to arise," he says. "I had never suffered from depression or anxiety before, but after I started ramping up my drug use I started feeling anxious going to cafés or in crowds. My job was to stand in front of 30 people and tell them

what to do and it was starting to get uncomfortable for me."

Travis also became very depressed, but although he was struggling he tried to pretend all was okay; that he was happy.

"It took its toll on me," he says. "It was so draining to pretend to be happy when I had so many problems."

At age 25 the addiction began to spike. Travis doubled his drug use, going on three-day, cocaine-fuelled benders. After the loss of a close friend and his grandmother, and missing his son's first hours after birth, Travis would use drugs to escape. He added prescription medicines to the cocktail to help him sleep. As this cycle

continued, Travis started to let friends, family and business partners down. He missed business meetings, footy games and his grandmother's final days.

### The tipping point

"At the end of 2015 I lost my business and I lost the lease as well," Travis says. "I tried to restart the business again, but the two trainers I had working for me started their own business and I lost all my clients. I had no gym and I was just struggling."

Travis finally found a new gym in March 2016, but by then he had a bad reputation and was unable to get back up on his feet.

**"That's what drives me now - I never want to go back to being that person who wasn't there for my son or my family."**

"I had this 'fuck it' moment, and I went on the bender of all benders - a four-day bender of gambling, drinking, drink driving, taking copious amounts of cocaine and that was what tipped me over the edge," he says. "My mum found out there was a problem - because I wasn't even hiding it on that bender. Normally I was really concealed about it. But this time I was out of my mind - I didn't care if anyone saw me, I didn't care what state people saw me in."

Travis's mother drove from her home on the south coast of NSW and came to find him, passed out asleep after his big weekend.

"When she did wake me she asked what was wrong and I told her I had a gambling problem - I didn't admit to it all," he says. "I ran away from her. I jumped in my car and drove away."

After fleeing, Travis pulled his car over and wrote his son a suicide letter, saying goodbye. "I was contemplating suicide and how I was going to do it," he says. "I don't know how but I managed to snap out of it. Then the next morning, my mum asked if I could come over to speak to her, and so I went over, and the first thing she said to me was, 'Do you want to go to rehab?' Straight away I said yes."

### The turning point

Days later, Travis was on a plane to Thailand, headed for The Edge - a specially designed rehabilitation centre

for young men that combines sport and psychotherapy. The intense one-on-one counselling and group classes and the friendships he began to form with others in the program, along with access to a gym and daily Muay Thai classes, helped Travis find a way to conquer his demons.

"It was a really good experience for me and I enjoyed it," he says. "It might sound weird that I enjoyed rehab, but I did. I didn't have to run a business; I didn't have to worry about anything or anyone except for myself for the 28 days I was there."

Of course, part of the process was having to face up to the damage that he had done, particularly over the previous year.

"I realised that I wasn't just hurting myself," Travis says. "As an addict I was being very narrow-minded. I truly thought that the only person who was getting hurt by my actions was me. I got letters from home while I was there and it taught me how much I had hurt others - it was the biggest lesson I learned. How much my actions had been affecting those who were close to me, those who I loved, and it absolutely broke my heart. My mum was so hurt, my dad was so disappointed. My mum even said that I wasn't a good father, and that's what really broke me, because I love my son so much and I had considered myself to be a good parent before then, but that's what drives me now - I never

want to go back to being that person who wasn't there for my son or my family."

### Lessons learned

Fast forward to now and Travis is a changed man. He has a flourishing new business - aptly named Reborn Fitness (rebornfitnessclub.com) - which is celebrating its first anniversary, and he's about to welcome his second child to the world with his partner. He has also been 100 percent clean and sober for 18 months.

"Reborn Fitness is a group training facility, and we do a lot of personal training and challenges as well," Travis says. "With the challenges, I base a lot of them around sobriety and the things I've learned from rehab about mental health and lifestyle balance and how important it is to your life - it's not just about training and nutrition." Travis has also

Travis (below centre) now operates a flourishing business.



found that many of the personal lessons he learned in rehab have helped him to become a better trainer.

"I don't think I'd be half the person I am or be where I am now if I hadn't gone through those tough times," he says. "I have become a better man, dad, business owner, trainer - everything has been amplified because of those tough times."

While Travis is one of the lucky ones, there are many who continue to struggle with addiction and mental health issues. And Travis has a message for them: speak to someone. "Always speak to

someone," he urges. "Men are often too proud, don't want to be seen as soft or weak, but there is a saying, 'it ain't weak to speak'. The most ambitious thing I've ever done was to speak to those close to me about my problems, seeing a counsellor and opening up and being able to share my experience with other people. It's then that you realise you're not alone, you're not different." ■

If you or anyone you know needs help or information regarding mental health, contact Lifeline on 131114, Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636.



If you've a story you'd like to share, send an email to [alison@mensfitnessmagazine.com.au](mailto:alison@mensfitnessmagazine.com.au) with clear before and after photos (photos must be at least 1MB each).