

Kylie, 43

Long-term government employee, dog lover & recovering addict, *PERTH*

Long-term government employee and dog lover, Kylie, 43, Perth was the antithesis of a “party-girl.” She didn’t smoke, drink heavily or use illicit substances.

In 2010, however, Kylie, who was living with kidney failure, and a collapsed lung filled with fluid, was hospitalised, and treated with codeine and opioids, including oxycodone to numb her pain.

While treating her illness with prescription painkillers, Kylie’s father fell ill with pancreatic cancer and after contracting appendicitis, which went undiagnosed, causing his appendix to burst, he subsequently succumbed after a gruelling 10 month-long battle. Two months later, Kylie’s mum was diagnosed with lung cancer.

Kylie spent much of the ensuing six months looking after her ailing mother, who too, tragically passed away.

While her parents were ill, Kylie began increasing her codeine use as a sleeping aid, and to help manage her pain. Following the death of her parents, Kylie’s use escalated, as she worked to numb her personal pain. It was at this time, that Kylie realised she had developed an addiction to opioids, and began searching for a place to detox.

This is her story.

“Towards the end of 2010, after I had been dosing myself with codeine and opioid pain medications for nearly a year, I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression,” recalled Kylie.

“This was really out of character for me, because I’m usually very strong.

“My grandmother was a politician, back when it was uncommon for women to be involved in politics, and my family had always raised strong, independent women. So I was raised with strict boundaries. Drug addiction was the furthest thing from my mind,” Kylie said.

Experiencing kidney failure, and a collapsed lung with fluid in 2010, Kylie was hospitalised, where she commenced treatment with opioid painkillers, including codeine, oxycontin and oxycodone.

“It was in hospital that my addiction started. I had always been quite hyperactive, and for the first time in a long time, I was able to sleep properly. My addiction grew from there,” said Kylie.

Quick to realise she had become reliant on opioids to help her to sleep, Kylie, who was unaccustomed to asking for help, found herself in a tough situation.

After finishing a gruelling 24 years of work, Kylie accepted a redundancy package and began searching for offshore rehabilitation clinics in Bali and Thailand in December 2013. She soon found DARA Thailand, and promptly contacted them to enquire about their available treatment program.

“When I chose to go to rehab, I thought I was only going for a detox. I went [to DARA Thailand] mistakenly believing my life was good, apart from the addiction that I had developed to opioid medications,” Kylie said.

“DARA Thailand was in the top 10 listed rehab clinics on Google, and when I scrolled through their website, and contacted them, they seemed really good.

“They certainly weren’t pushy, but after an initial conversation, chose to call me back to check up on me,” said Kylie.

“I think they realised fairly quickly, that it was going to take patience at their end to enroll me in their program.

“Soon after speaking with DARA personnel, I had an argument with a family member, which reinforced my pressing need for help,” Kylie said.

For Kylie, it was important she headed off-shore for rehabilitation, away from the familiarity of her environment, in order to beat her addiction.



Kylie (2nd from the left), celebrating her 30th birthday in June 2002

"I needed to travel to a location that wasn't close to home. I knew that completing a rehabilitation treatment would be tough, and if I chose to attend an Australian rehabilitation clinic, that I would most likely pack my bags and head home when the going got tough. If I was in rehab overseas, I knew I couldn't do that as easily."

Kylie's memory of arriving at DARA is vague.

"I recall arriving in Thailand and heading to hospital for a check-up. However, my memory of arriving at DARA is very vague, and I'm not sure why.

"I do recall, however, that when I arrived at DARA, they searched my bags, and I was in shock," said Kylie.

Unaware of what rehab entailed, Kylie had no expectation of undergoing group therapy sessions, one-on-one counselling or personal training, and for the first few weeks, chose to ignore her counsellors and their advice.

"At the beginning of my treatment, I was a real pain. I hadn't been an addict for long, but coming off the painkillers was really extreme.

"It was a complete culture shock to me. Everyone but me seemed to smoke, and I was very resistant to all of the treatments at the start of my rehabilitation," Kylie said.

"Although I had a beautiful room, great location, wonderful food and all of my laundry done, it was really tough at the beginning."

Initially resistant to treatment, and considering herself and her demons to be different to those of other DARA clientele, it took significant work for Kylie to both recognise and accept that her own issues were similar to those that others were facing.

"I wouldn't listen to what my counsellors were telling me. For the first four weeks, I wasn't having a bar of it. But eventually their persistence paid off, and I started to listen to what they had to say. Soon after, I became a completely different person," said Kylie.

"It was scary and confronting to embrace and accept the various issues in my life. But without DARA and their CBT treatment program, I don't think I would have stopped using painkillers. I wanted to stop, but I couldn't."

After completing six weeks' rehabilitation at DARA, Kylie had to return home. However, by recognising her need for continuing support, Kylie signed an agreement with her counsellor that saw her return to DARA on four occasions over the ensuing few months.

"If I hadn't returned to DARA, I don't think I would have stayed clean.

"Going back, I saw many people from my first visit to DARA who were still undergoing treatment and had continued to change and improve. I was amazed at their progress, and when I returned, they too, were very complimentary about the changes that they saw in me," Kylie said.

For Kylie, the treatment program at DARA opened her eyes to deep-seated issues and her need for professional counselling and support to overcome her addiction. She left Australian shores, hoping "to get clean" and to stop abusing painkillers, and returned home refreshed and more aware of why she had chosen to "use" in the first place.

"I genuinely benefited from DARA's treatment program, which was tailored to my specific needs. I wish I had known about CBT as a kid, and wish they would teach it to children in schools today," said Kylie.

"Addiction is something I wasn't aware of. It wasn't something with which I was familiar growing up, and I didn't know how to deal with it.

"I didn't know there was help available at places like DARA. Addiction is a family issue, and something you need to share," Kylie said.

"If you are living with addiction, share it with your loved ones. Don't hide it from them, and know that help is available.

"DARA Thailand is an amazing place, and provides much more than just a detox," said Kylie.

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Kylie (right) taken during her treatment at DARA, Thailand in 2004



Kylie (right), a week after leaving DARA in April, 2014 at Bayan Tree Hotel, Bangkok