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SURROUNDED by family and friends, enjoying a career within the South Australian court system and spending the bulk of her spare time on her passion, Kim Procter had a fulfilling life.

Until she didn’t!

With no comprehension of what was brewing inside, Procter simply began to “feel off” but continued with her daily routine, which included training a few standardbreds – or trotters to be precise – with her father, Jeff.

As time went on, however, Procter’s symptoms intensified.

“I was at work serving someone at the counter when all of a sudden I felt like I was going to vomit,” Procter recalled. “I thought that was weird but didn’t feel well so I went home.

“The next day thought I was fine and tried to eat but when I did try I couldn’t swallow and felt like I was going to choke.

“That continued for a while, particularly at work, then it got to the point it was happening all the time.

“One time I was at Mum and Dad’s house and it got so bad I couldn’t eat, kept feeling dizzy, was getting pains and felt as though couldn’t breathe.

“They called the home doctor but he wouldn’t come to Globe Derby so Mum took me home and gave me stuff for reflux and thought maybe I was just overly stressed.”

With the frequency of the episodes increasing, Procter’s inability to eat led to dramatic weight loss and further complications.

Becoming ever more alarmed about her health, Procter began suffering anxiety issues.

“Because I kept losing so much weight I felt bad all the time,” Procter said. “I returned to doctor who then started talking anxiety and put me on anti-depressants and gave me a referral to a psychologist.

“I was seeing the psychologist once a week but she went on maternity leave so I stopped going as I thought was getting better, then I had trouble with dosage of my medications.

“One time I got the wrong dose from the chemist and was sick for a week. I couldn’t move and thought I was going to die.

“By summer 2014 I was barely eating and lost so much weight it was playing on my mind and making my anxiety worse...it’s a vicious cycle.

“I eventually levelled out a little, started eating better and was spending time with a personal trainer...then a panic attack came.”

Just as her life seemed to be progressing well Procter began a rapid decline as her world ultimately came to a grinding halt.



KIM PROCTER with Abitofadreamer



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With panic attacks now part of her unwelcome routine, Procter became incapable of leaving the house, which meant no work.

And even worse, no horses!

"I was at Globe Derby talking to people when all of a sudden I felt like my lip had swollen and was numb, like when you get an injection at the dentist, it was last race so went back to Mum and Dad's to help feed the horses," Procter said.

"Then when I was driving home I had what I know now was a panic attack, but at the time I thought I was having a reaction to something because my lipped was swelling up

"I felt like I couldn't breathe, pulled into servo and called 000. When the ambulance got there the paramedics asked me if I had asthma, checked my pulse, said it was nothing to worry about but would take me in to check me out.

"This was in summer and I was cold and shaking so badly they could not put enough blankets on me.

"The panic attacks continued and began affecting work to the point I reduced my hours then eventually had time off...I was missing weeks at a time.

"I was ordering groceries online as I was adamant I was never going to leave the house.

"I got to the point I was feeling so low I began to question my sanity, whether I should be alive, should I be locked away.

"At one stage I begged to be locked up because I couldn't put up with it!

"Because of my state of mind stepping away from the horses was necessary but is something I wish never happened."

Slowly regaining confidence, Procter returned to her father's stable but it took a substantial period before she could perform any training duties, eventually applying for her licence at the beginning of the 2019/20 season.

Fast forward to June 2020 and Procter's life underwent another dramatic change.

Moving to Victoria, Procter began working at the Toolern Vale stables of John Justice.

Hoping to acquire a trotter of her own to train Procter eventually came into contact with Anton Golino who promised "to keep an eye out for a cheapie."

After deciding a son of Used To Me wasn't suitable for his stable, Golino spoke to the three-year-old's owner – Yabby Dam Farms Principal Pat Driscoll – about gifting the squaregaiter to Procter.

"I was shocked when Anton offered him to me," Procter said. "I am still overwhelmed by the generosity he and Pat showed.

"As soon as he arrived where I am stabling him I fell in love with him, but I did change his stable name from Beaver to Dreamer.

"Some family and friends have joined ownership with me and it's so wonderful to be sharing Dreamer with them."



Racing as Abitofadreamer, the gelding will compete in Cranbourne today in what marks an important juncture in Procter’s hard-fought journey.

To be driven by Justice, Abitofadreamer will begin from the inside of the second row due to his ODS status.

“I’m as nervous and excited as humanly possible,” Procter said. “Come Sunday I will be a bit of a wreck but cannot wait to see Dreamer race.

“No matter how he performs I am going to be so proud of him.”

While she had to muster the strength to return to harness racing, Procter credits being around standardbreds as a major contributor to her improved mental health.

“My confidence can still depend on the day, but I m getting there,” Procter said. “With horses I’m getting close to full confidence...an eight out of 10.

“I hated being away from the stables and know now how therapeutic being around horses is.”

Reflecting on her struggle, Procter has offered sage advice to anyone battling a similar affliction.

“Hitting rock bottom made me stronger,” Procter said. “I still have my moments but can handle it better, although I am still trying to work out how to stop irrational thoughts.

“I didn’t realise anxiety and panic attacks were two sides of the same coin that can really devastate you.

“I know too well how hard it is to open up about it, to understand exactly what is going on and to accept help, but having good support around you is utmost important as is seeking that help.

“Never be ashamed of what you’re going through or think those who love you won’t understand, because they will.”

Those feeling the effects if mental health can call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or can click **here**.



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Paul Courts

