

SECRET ADDICTION:

‘I lost my kids because of my nightly ‘Mummy treat’

Victoria Vigors struggled to cope with lockdown and developed a drug addiction that cost her £40,000 and led to her children being removed from her care – now she’s warning others...

When Victoria Vigors found herself homeschooling her two children, Matthew* and Mia*, during lockdown, it quickly took a toll on her. Like so many other parents across the country, she was stressed and exhausted. At first, she used alcohol as a crutch, and by May 2020, Victoria, then 35, was drinking 10 bottles of wine a week. Struggling with constant headaches, weight gain and low energy that affected her patience

with the children, Victoria took a friend’s advice and tried ketamine – a Class B anaesthetic used on humans and animals – with devastating results. Victoria spiralled into an addiction. Before long she had spent £40,000 on the drug and it was only when she thought she was having a heart attack in October 2021 that she confessed all to the paramedics, which led to social services intervening and her children being taken away.

DIFFICULT Now clean, she’s since been reunited with her kids – and wants to warn others off the drug. Victoria, 40, says, ‘Another mum had told me ketamine was a perfect pick-me-up. But it’s not a “treat”, it’s a highly dangerous substance. ‘So much stigma surrounds mothers who fall into drug abuse, and it keeps them silent and trapped in their addiction. I want to show others that there is hope.’ It was at the start of the pandemic when the single mum-of-two started to struggle. Victoria, who lives in Kent, says, ‘My son was 10 and my daughter was three. I was juggling

home-schooling with keeping a toddler entertained. It was really difficult.’ Quickly, alcohol became a way to escape, and she soon found that she was drinking at lunchtime as well as in the evenings. She says, ‘Pre-pandemic, I wasn’t a regular drinker. But during lockdown it took the edge off the stress of yet another day trapped in a small home with two energetic children and no respite. I hated that I looked permanently puffy though. And I woke up every morning with a thumping headache and gained loads of weight.’ One evening, on a Zoom call, a mum friend suggested something shocking. Victoria says, ‘I told her I didn’t know what else to do to relax and she said, “Why don’t you try a bit of ketamine? That’s what I do now and then for a little treat. All the mums are doing it. You should give it a go.” At first, I was stunned, but when she told me it left her feeling floaty and chilled out, without the calories or sore head from wine, I was intrigued.’ A few days later, Victoria illegally bought a £15 bag of

ketamine from a dealer whose number had been passed on by her friend. That evening, with the children in bed, she nervously tried the drug for the first time. She recalls, ‘As the powder went up my nose, I immediately felt my body and mind unwind. It was exactly as my friend had described. When I woke up the next morning, I was pleased to find I didn’t have a hangover. I felt almost smug that I’d discovered this new antidote to escaping the daily grind.’

ESCALATED Victoria began using the drug nightly when her children were asleep, viewing it as her ‘Mummy treat’ after a day of homeschooling and housework. At first, two bags would last a week, costing her £30, but her usage quickly escalated.



During her lockdown addiction



Social services stepped in to temporarily take her children



Victoria with her kids

of 2021, nine months after first trying the drug, Victoria began to suffer from chest pains which became more frequent and intense. She went to A&E but was too ashamed to admit to being a ketamine user. By October 2021, she was getting through five bags of ketamine a day at a cost of £525 a week, using her savings to fund her habit. When her chest pains became severe, Victoria had to call emergency services – and finally came clean with the truth. She says, ‘At the hospital I was diagnosed with ketamine-induced cholangiopathy, a

‘WHY DON’T YOU TRY A BIT OF KETAMINE? ALL THE MUMS ARE DOING IT’

condition that causes damage to the bile ducts. It can lead to inflammation and potential cirrhosis and liver failure. In some cases, it can be fatal.’ As well as dealing with the guilt of what she had put her body through, Victoria was heartbroken when social services got involved and removed her children from her care. She says, ‘I was told they had been sent to live with their fathers

and that I’d have no contact with them for the foreseeable future. I was devastated and felt so guilty that I was the cause of this shocking disruption to my children’s lives.’ Ready to kick the habit, Victoria moved in with her mother and went cold turkey to wean off the drug. She says, ‘I attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings, which were instrumental in my recovery. Meeting other women there, including mothers like me, I felt less alone.’

EMOTIONAL After four months, Victoria was allowed to have video calls with her kids. Two months after that, she was allowed to see her son during supervised visits, but it was another 18 months before she was reunited with her daughter as well. Victoria says, ‘Because they have different fathers, there were two separate legal processes before I could see them in person, with me having repeated drug tests and endless meetings to prove I wasn’t a risk to them. It was exhausting and emotional. My whole life had been turned upside down.’ Finally, in September 2023, the three of them were reunited. Victoria says, ‘Falling asleep under the same roof as them for the first time in months, I felt overwhelmed with relief.’ She now shares custody with their dads and is in a new relationship herself.

She says her son is old enough to understand what happened, but her daughter is still too young. She explains, ‘I’ve told her I was poorly all the time we were apart. One day I will have that difficult conversation about why we missed so much precious time together.’ Now, Victoria wants to encourage women to ask for help. She says, ‘We must treat women like me with compassion and support, or they will never be able to step out of the darkness I found myself in.’ ● Follow Victoria on TikTok @uk_victoria

BY DANIELLE LETT AND EIMEAR O'HAGAN *MATTHEW AND MIA'S NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED



Victoria now warns others about the dangers of ketamine