

'I was burnt out by the stress'

Csilla Gindorf tells new about coping with Graves' disease and how her mushroom snack business has changed her life for the better

Csilla Gindorf, 30, from Salisbury, created a "better health" mushroom business in 2022 after experiencing intrusive thoughts when travelling to her toxic fashion job. Suffering from severe burnout, anxiety and stress, her health deteriorated so much it triggered auto-immune disorder Graves' disease. Now she tells us why it's vital to recognise when it's time to "refocus, reset and refresh" your life – for the good of your mental and physical self.

I first came to London to study fashion and I was really excited to get into the industry. I thought it would be all glitz and glamour and fashion shows, but I realised quickly that wasn't the case at all. I was so anxious and remember one day cycling to work and wishing I could have some sort of accident. I wasn't looking to die, but I was looking for a way to not go into the office and to have a break.

I knew these thoughts weren't normal behaviours or ways to feel. Every time I came home my boyfriend would say, "Here comes the bell from hell" when I rang the doorbell because he knew that nine times out of 10 I'd be complaining about how bad my day was.

When I started off in product development things were fine, but then I moved to merchandising and it was all about the numbers and the pressure was intense. I was still a junior in my role and there was far too much expected of me – far more than I could handle – and also far more than I should have been given. Sometimes I'd be working until 3am and then having to turn up for a presentation at 10am the next day.

There were a lot of late nights and early mornings and as a junior it's hard to find the courage to speak out and stand up against seniors. I was so anxious the whole

time and terrified to say anything so I would just take on all this extra work and let people walk all over me. Then Covid happened and I was really happy because I didn't have to go into the office any more. It was a blessing in disguise for me.

MY HEART WAS RACING

Everyone looked out for themselves – it was a very "eat or be eaten" mentality and this made it hard to forge friendships. I'm originally from Switzerland and have moved around a lot for studying over the years so long-term friendships have always been tough. I was told though, once I got into the working world that's where I'd make my adult friendships and lasting connections – but the turnover of staff was insanely high.

My heart rate was constantly high and racing, my metabolism rocketed, I started to lose weight and I was exhausted all of the time. Then in 2020, I was diagnosed with Graves' disease, which left me devastated. I had hereditary issues with my thyroid anyway – when it's overactive, everything is sped up. I'd get to 7pm and be so incredibly shattered. I was just burning out, tired and overwhelmed.

Graves' disease is an autoimmune version of a thyroid disease, so if it's overactive and autoimmune it's Graves' disease and if it's underactive and autoimmune it's Hashimoto's. Mine is the least common one – only 1% of people have it – and it's triggered by stress.

I'm very good at hiding stress so no one around me even noticed, but I was bottling everything up inside which is stressful in itself.

My first step was to start thyroid hormone blocking medication, then beta blockers to slow my heart. But then the doctor put me on all sorts of



Csilla at one of her Lucid product stalls

other prescription medicine for anxiety and fatigue. That's when I discovered mushrooms.

Most people don't realise mushrooms are immunoregulatory, so they can calm down an overactive immune system or they can boost an underactive one. When I first started trying them there wasn't any sort of immediate effect and I don't ever feel high or have any hallucinogenic effects. But over time I started to feel less anxious and had more energy.

IT FELT LIKE A MIRACLE

I didn't truly realise the impact until I came off my doctor's medication though. I went back for more blood work and was surprised when my GP said the Graves' disease had come back because I'd stopped taking his medication. However, at this point I'd been taking the mushrooms for so long, I didn't even notice because all the symptoms I'd normally feel weren't there any more. My body was able to prevent me from feeling the fatigue and the anxiety – I could cope much better. It felt like a miracle.

It's really hard to make a positive mental health choice when you are so close to burnout – you can't think rationally which is why I launched Lucid – creating functional mushroom and adaptogen snack bars – so that I, and others, don't have to rely on conventional medicines to combat fatigue, anxiety and brain fog. The mushrooms changed my life and I want others to discover the amazing potential these natural ingredients have. They can taste bitter and earthy so I mix the powders into tea but coffee, soups and smoothies all work.

People often say to me, "You're so brave to quit your job and start a new business." But for me it was the trigger to better mental health and I can organise my day in a way that makes it much less stressful.

This is a whole fresh start – a time to reset and revive and I couldn't recommend it any more to people who feel they need it too. I'll be at Fearn Cotton's Happy Place Festival later this year and I can't wait to connect to others looking for another option for better mental wellbeing.

ALI GRAVES

Faffolux.com, an online charitable raffle company that raised money for the Hatch Enterprise, supported Csilla when creating Lucid, as well as other under-represented entrepreneurs

Have a story to tell? Email us at truelife@reachplc.com



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