

Transcript – Zurich Video Podcast 2008

## Abby Bloom's story

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### **Abby Bloom:**

I was raising two children. When the heart attack occurred they were fourteen and seventeen respectively. I think what I was doing was probably what most working mothers do when they're raising children. Which was cramming my days full of trying to keep the children safe, well nourished, monitoring their school, their out of school activities. I was also working long hours and sometimes compensating staying up late. My work did involve a considerable amount of travel.

Although I do consider myself an active person, I think it's fair to say that for a lot of that period, those fifteen years, my activity was more rushing around and sitting, catching aeroplanes, travelling, working with clients, than it was much more that sort of activity, than really healthy aerobic activity. Having said that, I wasn't a couch potato and most people thought of me as an active person.

At the time that I had my heart attack my mother was eighty-eight. She's still going strong at ninety-four today.

I considered myself to be a healthy person and someone who from family history was not at risk for something like this.

My life is fairly typical of most working mothers. My daughter had an early morning, that is before school, sports session. So as usual we had the morning rush. We headed towards the harbour tunnel. I started feeling very, very peculiar and I started feeling a kind of tightening in the throat that I hadn't experienced before. By that time we were well and truly in the harbour tunnel and I was aware that I really felt odd and I didn't think that I should continue driving. She said, that's ok mum, there is a break down lane. And she said if you can make it, we'll just change seats. So that's what we did.

I directed my daughter to drive straight to the emergency room of the nearest hospital. They attached me to increasingly sophisticated diagnostic equipment. It, at a point, became obvious that I was having a full on heart attack.

There was only one artery in my heart that was blocked and it was totally blocked. My heart was cleared by inserting a stent. I could immediately feel the difference.

My aim when I was discharged from hospital was to do as much as possible in post cardiac care and also in gradually recovering my fitness as I could. I was not even able to walk to the corner of my street. It did take three to four months however for me really to get back to the point where I could hold down a more or less full time job.

I had ongoing expenses of maintaining the overheads of a business. And those had to be paid regardless of whether or not I was contributing to the businesses income. And indeed to make a contribution towards the family income. Without that I would have had to find the money elsewhere to pay for those costs, and they never stopped.

We had trauma, we had term-life insurance and we had income protection insurance. So we had the complete range that would cover us in a situation like this. It was extremely useful for us as people who never expected that we would have to use it. Certainly not in my case at the age of fifty-one. I knew that I was continuing to receive funds that I could use for those relentless expenses that came in. In addition, I had expenses related to my physical recovery and that included supervised exercise in a recovery program and after that a physical training program for about eight weeks. I went in for counselling on stress reduction, I had to have some physiotherapy sessions as well, and of course in recovering from something like this, I was very limited in the physical work that I could do. I needed someone to come in and look after the needs of the children while my husband was at work and I was still recovering. We followed advice and we made sure that we were always fully covered, and in the event it was a good thing.

Things that we take for granted, like the fact that we'll be around for something simple, seeing our children finish school, aren't necessarily a given.

There is an important message I think for women and particularly in those critical years. Most of us, here in Australia have to work to support our families, many women who are full time mothers are working more than full time at home, and as a result we know that we should be taking some time for ourselves. We probably don't fit in enough exercise regularly enough and we are not as conscious as we probably should be about our diets and our lifestyle, and managing stress.

I do feel that I have my life to live over again. And it's that recognition that I have had a chance to start again that encourages me to live in a different way. And in particular, just get out there and get physical.

### **Supers:**

*Abby suffered one of life's major traumas. Heart Attack.*

*Cardio Vascular disease affects one in six Australians. – (Heart Foundation. Access Economics. 2005.)*

*Luckily, Abby had her insurances in place with life, trauma and income protection cover.*

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