MEDIA MONITORS

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Alcohol: stories from the frontline

art.influence.change
beyond empathy

'IN MY shoes' is a serial story written as part of Armidale's Just One Less project. Just One Less is a robust and sometimes confronting community conversation that seeks to raise awareness about: alcohol and its place in our community; risk-taking behaviour in young people; why some young people fare better than others; and what inspires parents to become positive role models.

Just One Less is a project run by Beyond Empathy, an Armidale based arts organisation (www.beyondempathy.org.au). Through this project Beyond Empathy has focussed on highlighting the things that connect us and not those that divide us.

During the process of discovering stories in our community it seems to Beyond Empathy that home is a recurrent theme, or possibly an antidote, for all of these complex issues around alcohol.

Beyond Empathy will share some excerpts from a family dealing with issues arising from alcohol each week in the *Express Extra*.

You may connect with this story or you may not, but before you judge, try to walk in their shoes.

Hi Mum and Dad,

I'm loving uni! College food and accommodation are pretty basic, but the people make up for it. Leaving home and the old town is the best thing I've ever done. I'm having so much fun here it's like one big party!

Love, Jess

Hi Jess,

Well, that's a nice way to thank your Mum and Dad for everything we've done for you – and are continuing to do. You're at uni to study, not party. Remember where partying got you in high school.

Love, Dad

* * * * *

Chillax, Dad. Strangely, I can study and still have a good time.

Jess

* * * * *

Jessica,

Ever heard of gratitude and respect? I suggest you go and study up on those. Your mother and I deserve both from you, especially after everything you've put us through.

Dad

* * * * *

Drop it, Dad. Can't you just leave the past alone and stop throwing it in my face all the time? I've changed – moved on. Wish you would too. I didn't ask to be born and, as you've so often told me, you have to earn respect. You always make out that I had a perfect childhood and I was the one who messed everything up. I mean, really?

* * * * *

Jess, sweetheart, what are you trying to say? Are you drunk? We know there were problems and we were there to support you and help you find your way through them. And we'll be there to help you again, if you need it. Is there something wrong? You know you can talk to us about anything.

Love, Dad

To be continued next week …

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