

Well where do I start, my name is Samantha Allan and I live in Bowen, North Queensland. I lived a pretty hectic life at times, some days were more stressful than others especially with raising a teenage daughter on my own, I worked all week and enjoyed having drinks and catching up with mates on the weekend, this all happened when I was 33 so quite a scary thing to go through.

It was Saturday 18th September 2016 (a day which will be etched in my mind for a very long time), a normal night out for me, I was at our local yearly fishing classic at the beach then walked up to the pub a few hours later and sat there for a few hours talking to mates, only drinking water by this stage then all of a sudden I started getting really sweaty, felt like I was going to spew, so walked to the toilet which didn't help so then walked outside to the pub to another mate and he said Sammy are you ok and by this stage I said no I don't think I am & said I need to go home, so then was dropped home by another mate, I got home managed to walk up 2 flights of stairs, then washed my face & went to bed about 2am, around 3.30 I woke to what was the most horrible pain/discomfort I have ever experienced, like someone sitting on my chest & what felt like a really bad case of heartburn. I couldn't get comfortable sitting, standing or laying down, so thought I would go out to the kitchen & get a few heart burn tablets, as I went out I was staggering and hitting the walls like I was really really drunk & funny thing was I didn't even drink much, I went back to bed & by this time I was spewing up bile, I was sweating like I have never sweated before, I tried jumping, punching & hitting this thing out of my chest but nothing was working, I also read somewhere if you think your having a heart attack to cough, which I didn't think I was having but thought anything was worth a try so lets do it, nope that didn't work either, this "thing", whatever it was, just wasn't budging. I decided to have a cool shower cause that usually makes you feel a bit better, I fell over in there, I eventually got myself up, got out then checked in my daughters room but thought nope, it's too complicated to wake her up so continued walking to my room to get dressed and thought to myself what the heck is going on, sweat was pouring out of me like I had a tap turned on above my head. I was in so much pain, something I never ever want to experience again, I didn't know what to do so 4 hours of trying to do what I could, I thought bugger it, I better get some help. I text my mum, HELP!, hospital, quick. She then called me & said what's going on & I said get here now, she said I really should call an ambulance & I said nah it will be ok, you just take me up to get checked over, in a really slurry pained voice, I still don't know how I managed to walk down the 2 flights of stairs, the hospital trip is very vague, I remember getting to the back door at emergency & the nurse getting me in a wheelchair then saying to my mum, OMG she doesn't look very well at all, I remember bloods, troponin test and an ECG which was all over the place being done but don't even remember the nurses taking my clothes off to put a catheter in or much of anything else, I found out I was having a massive heart attack. I got airlifted to Townsville hospital which is 2 hours away from my home town, I don't remember the chopper ride, I was passed out on & off till about 10 minutes out, they did tell me I got chest pain while on there though. Got taken to CCU where I stayed for a bit, later that day I had an angiogram done, the surgeon said it looks like your drink was spiked & they found I had a coronary artery dissection & am very very lucky to be alive & apparently very rare for my age, so a fun night out for me turned into an absolute nightmare. The nurses & doctors from Bowen called Townsville Hospital to ask if I made it cause they said I was pretty much at death's door and they were very concerned about me, which was lovely of them.

I had to stay in hospital for 1 month as I was too high risk to go anywhere. Spent lots of weeks in the cardiac ward, I became part of the furniture hahaha, I celebrated my 34th birthday in there the best I could with family & friends & lots of presents. I had lots of tests and scans over the following month but it's not somewhere I want to be in a hurry again. I

was initially set to have a bypass but 2nd angiogram a month later confirmed the dissection had healed & there were no narrowings or blockages. I now have heart failure so heart is functioning at 35% and I will admit life has been a big struggle the last 8 months, from being so independent & doing everything for myself, some days I now find it hard to go about my day with the usual housework, hanging out washing, even to do grocery shopping. I am at doctors weekly for check ups as he is still very concerned about the symptoms I am getting which is lightheadedness which I think is due mostly from very low blood pressure, chest pain on and off, shortness of breath, numbness down my left arm, pain between my shoulder blades and just feeling generally unwell. I am still off work as I nearly passed out down there in February and haven't been allowed back until I'm sorted out, luckily for me my job is still there for when I am better, which is a big relief.

If I wake up feeling good then I get up and try and do housework, go visit friends or get on the exercise bike which then makes me have to lay down for the rest of the day cause I'm buggered.

Medication I am on is Sozol, Ivabradine, Atorvastatin, Bisoprolol, Clopidogrel, Aspirin, Telimisartan, Magnesium and Nitrolingual Spray(when needed).

I have had about 10 visits to the Emergency Department earlier in the year where troponin tests and ECG are done each time which have come back negative or borderline.

Although I have a wonderful support network, I still feel more alone then ever some days and I have had lots of moments where I want to scream, cry and say Why me? Why didn't I die when this happened? Why am I still here? Why wasn't it my time yet? I am seeing a psychologist, exercise physiologist & a dietitian since last week who are trying to help me with everything and it is only early days but hoping that makes a big difference, unfortunately we don't have any type of cardiac rehab here. Luckily for me while searching facebook one day I found a couple of support groups about heart attacks and heart failure and this one which gave me some relief as there are finally people out there who know what you're going through.

I will say yes, my life has changed dramatically & it will never ever be the same again but I guess you just have to do what you can and get on with life the best you can and learn to lean on you're friends and family a bit more and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

I am glad I am still here to tell my story and it does make me appreciate life even more now, I want to watch my daughter grow up, be there for my friends & family cause honestly without them all I would of lost the plot, so thank you to all of those people who have stuck by me, I really do appreciate it.