# “Being drunk became boring for me, and I just like myself better when I’m sober”

When you think of an old-fashioned stand-up comedian, you can’t help but think of smoky bars, endless drinks and lots of big nights.

But the industry is changing, with more comics now opting to drink little or no alcohol.

Among them is Kirsty Webeck, who has been a professional stand-up comedian for eight years and gave up alcohol gradually because she did not like how it made her feel.

“I’d feel dead for days after a big night of drinking and it affected my diet, my exercise, my sleep and my mood,” she said.

“In my early thirties, I started to get wild anxiety when I was really hungover.”

Without consciously marking the day she stopped drinking, Webeck, who is 40, reduced her drinking over the past few years – and now can’t see herself having a drink anytime soon after realising she feels better for it.

“When I’m drunk, I think things are funny that I ordinarily wouldn’t,” she said.

“Then the next day I would be cringing at some of the things I did or said.”

Throughout Melbourne’s COVID-19 lockdowns, Webeck grew a social media following by sharing her positive and uplifting take on life.

Since the lockdowns ended, she has thrown herself back into the comedy circuit and in November her stand up special Silver Linings debuted on streaming platform Paramount+.

Webeck said the comedy industry had shifted its drinking culture since she started out.

“There is still a contingent of comedians who like to party,” she said.

“But I reckon in the past five years, and maybe it’s just who I have been hanging out with, it’s become more apparent that many of them don’t drink or don’t drink much ... Especially the younger generation. Either they are completely sober or maybe only have a glass of wine a week.”

On a recent national tour with four other comedians, Webeck noticed a change in the after-work culture. There were no more hangovers on tour.

“We were all talking about all the wild stories that used to come out of a tour like that 20 years ago,” she said.

“On the final night of the tour, there is always someone who is like ‘let’s go to the pub’, but 75 per cent of the group will go home to bed and the other two or three people who go to the pub will be home by midnight.”

In her twenties, Webeck lived in Taiwan where she taught English and learnt Mandarin.

Along with her expat friends, she spent most nights drinking and partying.

“We would go out drinking until 4am in the morning and then we'd go to bed for a couple of hours then teach all day,” she said.

“I honestly don't know how we got through it. If I went out tonight and had four glasses of wine and was home in bed by midnight, there would be a good chance I would be cancelling the show tomorrow night.”

When she returned to Australia to follow her dream of becoming a stand-up comedian, Webeck wasn't a huge drinker, but she had the odd big night - and found the hangovers became much worse. After drinking, Webeck experienced a level of anxiety that wasn’t normal for her.

“I feel very fortunate that me stopping drinking was almost a natural progression; I hadn't consciously made a decision to give it up,” she said.

“Being drunk became boring for me, and I just like myself better when I’m sober…

“All of the major injuries I have had in my lifetime have come from being drunk and all the worst decisions I’ve made have occurred while I’ve been drunk.

“Sure, I’ve had some fun times, but I have had a lot of fun times sober as well.”

Webeck believes it's important not to judge others and everyone has their own story when it comes to drinking, whether that be giving it up or moderating their drinking.

“I still haven't said that I have quit drinking, but I am incredibly enthusiastic about my lifestyle right now and there is nothing on the horizon that makes me think I would like to have a celebratory drink,” she said.

“I’ve already had some major occasions occur recently that ordinarily I would have been like ‘I should have a glass of champagne after that’, but I haven’t, and it hasn't even occurred to me to want a drink.

“I’ve been going home to have my lemon and ginger tea and loving it.”

**You can find out more about Kirsty Webeck, and what she's up to right now,** [**here.**](http://kirstywebeck.com/shows)