

OUTSPOKEN

WELL-KNO WN WRITERS SHARE THEIR INNERMOST THOUGHTS...



“The loss of my mum to breast cancer means I feel the need to make the most of my life”

Dawn Porter reveals the impact of losing someone you love

“ When I was six years old I witnessed my mother suffer and consequently die of breast cancer.

Much like any child who experiences something distressing, I have since lived with the fear that something similar will happen to me.

It isn't that I spend my time worrying about dying, I really don't. I worry about being out of control of the things that I want to achieve. My mum was around the age I am now (31) when she first got diagnosed, so when I make plans for the future, even events as close as a couple of years away, something ingrained in me wonders if I will be OK to see it through. I can't help it, it is a part of my psychology that was never a choice and isn't something I could change or would even want to.

This probably all sounds very pessimistic but actually it isn't at all.

When I call it fear (I only call it that because I don't know another word for it), I don't mean I am a gibbering wreck unable to live my life for fear of having one too many low-calorie fizzy drinks - or whatever the current cancer danger is - and getting ill, far from it. Sure, I watch what I consume - I stay away from all things processed, avoid foods with harmful chemicals in them and I've vowed never to touch another cigarette (I gave up six years ago) - but rather than suppressing me the 'fear' actually encourages me to go forward and make things happen. I feel like my fear is the driving force for all that I do. It keeps me exciting, it keeps me trying and it keeps me putting fun first.



DOES LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE AT A YOUNG AGE MAKE YOU MORE AWARE OF YOUR OWN FUTURE?



DAWN'S MUM, CAROL, WAS 36 WHEN SHE DIED

And I am also obsessed with memories. I get fanatical about photographs. I see a good photograph of me with the people I love as being potentially iconic one day. The same way the ones I have of my mother are to me.

For the most part though I feel like my fear is a positive force. Of course it does have some negative effects too - namely when it comes to the thought of having children. The fear (and guilt) of possibly not being around for my own children sometimes inhibits any broodiness.

It's also the fear of getting ill and putting my family through that with me. And yes, I'm aware thinking like this is a negative thing - I am working on it.

So you see, my fear is not about suffering and pain. It's the practicalities that surround fear that I'm really thinking about.

Even though my great-grandmother and my mother died from cancer in their 30s, my gran powered on through to being 86 and never had so much as a scare. So how will I feel if I am happily rocking in my chair well into my 80s and cancer (or anything else for that matter) hasn't struck? Will I be sad that I lived a life with my fear? No. I would feel lucky.

I wish I hadn't lost my mum so young but that is a tragic injustice that I just have to accept. However I don't resent the way my life turned

out and I have my fear to thank for that. It is my motivation, and if I am honest, I really quite enjoy it.”

Next week: Lucy Mangan

LOVE HOMEWARES

WE MOVE INTO A NEW HOUSE THIS MONTH AND MY LIFE NOW REVOLVES AROUND EVERYTHING FROM NEW BEDS TO BATH TOWELS AND FANCY CROCKERY SETS. IT'S REALLY BRINGING OUT THE LAURENCE LLEWELYN-BOWEN IN ME.

My real fear isn't necessarily the disease itself, it is more the fear of feeling regret, for things like not having travelled as much as I would like to, not having reached the level of success that I dream of, or not having spent all the time I want to with the people who I love.

It is a fear of being stopped in my tracks and having something other than my own determination and ambition take control of how I live my life. It is a fear of not getting everything done, and a fear of

hurting the people around me.

I live with a constant pressure to achieve. It isn't always to do with my career, sometimes it is about making sure that I get to spend quality time with my boyfriend, friends and family. Even just to read a book or take a course. I feel the need to be very present in people's lives (this could explain my choice of career) so that I will never feel like I didn't have an impact on the world and the people in it.

HATE INNER EARPHONES

THOSE TINY INNER EARPHONES FEEL LIKE SOMEONE HAS BEEN PRESSING THEIR FINGER IN MY EAR WITH FORCE. I AM GOING OLD SCHOOL WITH RETRO HEADPHONES FROM NOW ON; THEY DOUBLE UP AS EARMUFFS TOO - BONUS!



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