

# Transcript

## Blood Cancer Heart to Heart

### Episode two: Losing a child to blood cancer

**Voiceover:** Welcome to Blood Cancer Heart to Heart. This episode covers death and bereavement as a result of blood cancer. If you're affected by this, please call our free support line on 0808 2080 888.

Gisa and Lorna have been friends for over 12 years. They met when their sons were being treated for leukaemia.

**Lorna:** Hi Gisa. Do you remember how we first met?

**Gisa:** Hi Lorna. Yes, I certainly do. We were in the accommodation, which was there for us to use while the boys were in hospital. And you were in the kitchen there. And David was in the kitchen – my husband – and he came back into our room and said, I think you should meet that lady in the kitchen. And so yeah, and that's how it started.

**Lorna:** Yeah. I think we started to text each other almost immediately, because I believe you sent me a text just saying, “Oh, are you on the way home yet?” You know, this is Gisa, we met in the kitchen.

**Title:** The symptoms came in dribs and drabs

**Gisa:** So the symptoms Matthew displayed did not really form a picture in my head. He had moved out of home and lived in an activity centre, on a little boat. And he said to me that his gums were bleeding on the phone and blamed it on different toothpaste that he had. And then a while later he had night sweats and which he put down to being in a cabin – a sort of close cabin and not much air. And then he went to an activity – surfing – and he injured his knee and had a wound there. And then he said to me that two red stripes were going up to his groin and I encouraged him to go to the walk-in clinic, which

he did, and he was referred straight to the hospital where the doctor gave him a box of antibiotics and sent him back home.

Then he had a snowball fight with the activity people and was very disappointed that he felt so exhausted and out of breath. And he just was not really well. We thought it was perhaps glandular fever because his neck was swollen, the glands were swollen. And then we managed to get him to the local doctor, our local doctor, and he ordered a blood test straightaway and within days, the blood test result came back and in the afternoon of that same day he was told to go to the hospital. They were waiting there for him as it is leukaemia. So the symptoms came in dribs and drabs to me because he was not living at home. What about yours?

**Lorna:** Robin's symptoms had started in the December of 2010. He'd started feeling really tired. He'd had night sweats as well. He'd also developed a cough, which actually sounded like a dog barking, it was a really strange cough. It wasn't a productive cough. And after Christmas, he again went to the doctor to try and find out what it was. They kept saying to him no, it's just a virus, it's going to take a little while to get over. So he struggled go to work sometimes because he felt really tired.

Then at the end of January, he presented a symptom in his left upper arm, which was swollen and was totally discoloured compared to his right arm. And took him back to the doctor again and they said well, we'll just keep an eye on it. But the very next day, which was the weekend, it had swollen up a lot more and I said, right, we really need to go to hospital. So took him up to our local hospital. They did a blood test, and it showed basically he'd got a blood clot in his arm which a 24-year-old man shouldn't have a blood clot there. He was then sent into the main hospital. And they said, right we need to keep you in because we need to do various tests. Which they did during the last week of January. And at the end of that week of tests, they took us into a side room and said, you've actually got a tumour sitting in your chest the size of a grapefruit, and it's called a mediastinal chest tumour, and it's caused by germ cell cancer, which we didn't know. So Rob had actually been in the London hospital from the end of January, on and off until Good Friday, which was April that year, having chemotherapy to reduce that chest tumour in order for it to be removed surgically. He had to have blood tests though, leading up to that point and his platelet level wouldn't rise. It went down really low. So then they had to do investigations as to why that was happening. And unfortunately, the

test results came back that he was pre-leukaemic. So Rob was then transferred to the haematology department. And that's when he was on same ward, although we didn't know it, with Matthew.

**Title: He had quite serious side effects**

**Gisa:** Matthew had his four lots of chemo, starting in December 2010 and finishing in April 2011. And the first lot of chemo, I don't know if it was the same with Robin, but the first lot of chemo was the worst. We had ulcerations, all the way down through the oesophagus and in his mouth and everywhere, and it was just so painful that he had to have morphine and could only communicate while typing on his laptop. And that was a really tough time. And fortunately, that was only in the first lot of chemo. The other chemo treatments following were relatively less painful, although very uncomfortable with being sick, and hair loss and feeling so weak. So yeah, he went through that quite well. But fortunately, one of us was able to be with him every day. And which he said later kept him sane. And it was very important for him to just have us sitting there. And while he was sleeping, just to sit there and be there and just to be a sounding board. And yeah, I must say the staff was always very, very lovely and caring. And yeah, I don't know – how was it with Robin, with his side effects?

**Lorna:** Yeah, he had quite a serious side effects really from every chemo session that he had. Rob was quite, he was diagnosed almost stage four, by the time they found it. So he had to have very intensive chemotherapy. They said this is going to be a really aggressive regime, but we've got to really pump him to try and get rid of the tumour in the first place. So yeah, he would have high fevers, he would vomit, he would have diarrhoea, he would have the ulcerated mouth and throat, constant nausea. So he lost a lot of weight, obviously hair loss. And you know, that's everything, eyebrows, everything, not just the hair on your head. He would he get very depressed. They said because it was such an aggressive chemo (in fact, both of them were, the chemo for the germ cell cancer and again for the AML) his body didn't have time to recover in between. So that really accounted for his low mood a lot of the time.

## Title: You have to stay strong as a mum

**Lorna:** It's difficult because I was there, and like you say you're a sounding board for them. Sometimes a whipping boy. So that was quite difficult. But it's hard to pass your child over to perfect strangers to be honest. Obviously, they are there to do their best job and they absolutely do do their best job. I have nothing but praise for them. But it's really difficult because you are almost on the sidelines looking in all the time, because there's medical jargon that you've never heard of before. And you don't want to keep asking questions because they're in the middle of doing a procedure. But it's really difficult. You just want to, sometimes you just want to wrap them up and take them home. You think, ah, this is my child, please take care of him, you know, he's my future, I want you to do the best for him. And yes, they did do their best for them. But it's not like being at home.

I mean, I did like it when he came home. But also at home, I was in charge of all his medication. And at the beginning, it was like, I was a bit panic stricken, I think, oh I hope I don't overdose him, or whatever. But you soon get into a routine, I realised that I had to write everything down and timing was crucial. And also I remember when Rob came home, he would never sleep very well for the first night because you're so used to pressing a button if something doesn't feel quite right. And suddenly there is no button, there's just your mum who's not a trained nurse. Lot of feelings. You try hard. I mean, I would never break down in front of Robin, because I thought if he sees me breaking down, he'll think there's something to really, really worry about. And he's got enough to worry about. So if I felt really down, I would either just go for a walk, or I would just hold on to my emotions until I got back to my room at night. And then I would just let it all out. Because it was the comfort of your own room.

But you have to stay strong as a mum, because you want them to believe, yeah, they're going to be OK, they're going to get through this, no matter how hard the treatment is. And it's awful to see them going through it, like you were saying, seeing them lose weight so quickly. That shocked me actually how quickly they can lose weight and how their appearance changes. And I mean, I used to have to help Rob with his shower, and things like that. And he said, "I have no dignity now Mum, I really don't care. I just want somebody there to help me." And he'd rather I helped him than somebody he didn't know, although I know they would have willingly done it. But yeah, it's a hard time and as I say, as a mum, you don't want to see your child going through it.

**Gisa:** I remember very significantly, through the first course, we felt really helpless and lonely. Because we didn't know really what was going on. I mean, one moment, we were starting to decorate the Christmas tree. And the next moment we were in the hospital. And it was very disconcerting. And although I have a little bit of medical background, it was parked outside because at that time I was the mum. And as with Robin, Matthew had a very aggressive chemo as well, because it was so late in diagnosing. And then he was put, or asked if he wanted to join a trial, which he did. And I just wished at the time that we would have had something like the forum on Blood Cancer UK or such things. But I wasn't aware of it at the time. And I don't think it even existed then. And I felt really, yeah, we felt really, really lonely because we didn't know where to turn. And although Matthew was 19 at the time, so legally an adult, whenever he was asked questions about his treatment, and where he had to make quick decisions, he always looked at us. Like, you know, what shall I do? And that was really hard.

**Title: There's not always a happy ending**

**Lorna:** We were in the waiting room. And we were called in. And I noticed that Rob's Macmillan nurse came in with us. And I thought, well, that's unusual. She doesn't usually join us for these meetings. So we went in and sat down. And this was Rob's haematologist and the first thing he said was, Robin, I'm so sorry, but there's nothing more we can do for you. The leukaemia is so aggressive that we cannot halt its progress. And as soon as I heard those words, I lost it totally. I hadn't ever broken down in front of Rob, but I just could not stop sobbing. And that was the reason why the Macmillan nurse was in there. Because she thought, OK, I've got to deal with a mum here who's hearing this awful news. So she took me out of the room and took me into a side room. So I left Mark in the room with Robin.

So, I'll be honest, I don't know exactly what happened with Robin and the doctor that was in there at the time. Because I just couldn't deal with it. I thought this is what happens to other people. It doesn't happen to us. You know, I was hoping they were going to say, yeah, well come in for a next lot of chemo. Or, you'll have the stem cells – we might be in over Christmas. We were quite happy, you know, prepared to do that. We'll just be up here with him, you know, we will stick with it through Christmas. And then to receive that news, it was like there's just no hope anymore. And I believe, Rob came in with his dad.

Mark looked grey. Rob just came in and we just hugged. And we just stood there for a few minutes. And he said, all I wanted to be was a dad. You know, that was...he didn't want the world. He just wanted what everybody else wanted. And it was just so sad to see that being taken away from him. He tried so hard. And the Macmillan nurse said to me, "We were astounded that Rob has got this far. It's only the fact that he was so fit that he got this far."

Now you think that's so ironic, isn't it, to look so fit on the outside, but it's the inside that's doing the damage. Then we had to come home and we had to tell the family. I can remember ringing Toby and he was in one of the aisles in that local Co-Op and he could hear me crying. And he thought, this isn't good. So he came straight home. And Rob was just so matter of fact. He said, there's nothing more they can do for me, they've told me I'm going to die. And that was just awful. Just horrible to hear that. So again I had to tell the family. My sister came straight round with her husband, my wonderful sister Di, and my brother-in-law, Dave, they came straight round. And we then had to tell my parents who were getting older. So that was just an awful, awful day. We did go back the following week. But there were no clinical trials viable for Robin. And if he had more treatment, the chances of survival had dropped to about 5%.

So Rob then had to make the decision to have palliative care, because that was all that was left open for him. So that's what he chose to do. That's a hard decision for a 24-year-old boy – not boy, man – to have to make. But that is the stark choice. Unfortunately. There's not always a happy ending.

So yeah, but from then on, he took charge of his life, if you like. We didn't have to come back to the London hospital. We were then transferred to our Colchester hospital. And he had the rest of his treatment there, which basically involved blood transfusions and things like that. But unfortunately, the white blood cell count kept going up. So when we first got back home, he was told that he'd have months to live. But unfortunately, within about a couple of weeks that had been reduced down to you've got weeks to live. So it's just horrible. It's like a dream world. That's the only way I can describe it. You're going through the motions of living, knowing that you're going to lose your son at some point and you just don't know when. So that was awful.

How was your news with Matthew?

**Gisa:** Well Matthew had relapsed in the September. So he had a brain tumour and was in another London hospital where they specialised in that and took it out. It was in the cerebellum in the back. And it took them nearly a week to discover that it was a relapse of the leukaemia and so he had two more courses of chemo during which we met in the October. And then they said, come back again after Christmas when we hope to give you a bone marrow stem cell – whatever – transplant and so we went home for Christmas. And that was...and then he came home and he said, "I don't feel very well." Which is normally the time when you feel the best after chemo. He did not feel good. So we went into Colchester hospital as well. And then they did another bone marrow biopsy and discovered that the last chemo hadn't worked. So they told us in a side room, and fortunately, Matthew's sister had come up as well, so we were all together. And so we were told by the haematologist and a nurse, and all Matthew said was, "Well, that's it then." And they asked what he was going to do that day, when he gets home. And he said, "We're going to decorate the Christmas tree." And so that's what we did. Although he did not really feel up to it. He was quite weak and then he still learned, tried to learn, the ukulele, which was new to him. And then, seven days later, he suddenly had a nosedive in the night and eight days after the discharge from Colchester, he died.

**Title:** I wish we had been told what to expect

**Gisa:** I'm glad he did not decide to go back into hospital. And, you know, it was just the right thing. It was hard. But what I've found, since, I wished we had been told what to expect, or what to do after he died. Because now, I mean, I have so many regrets not to have stayed in his room, it is important to take time, and not rush off as we did to make phone calls to various family members. And I think if people just knew how to deal with it, at least they would have a choice, if they would know, take your time, there is no rush. It's the most important time after death too, you know, for the loved ones to be there. Or if they don't want to, then at least they'd decide not to. But I mean, like hundreds of years ago, people grew up with people dying in the house. They were so in tune with dying, that it wasn't unusual for them to be around dead people. So I think that's a regret I have that we were not told what we should, or could do. But that was another chapter. So that was three days before Christmas that Matthew died.

**Lorna:** Yeah, I mean, that's really awful to not know because that did give us the time to be able to do things. Rob chose not to have radiotherapy because it meant more hospital appointments. And like Matthew, he didn't want to go back into hospital. He did have a problem with his spleen. So that was an overnight stay. But they said as it's because of the leukaemia, we're not going to take your spleen out, or anything like that. So he was just sent home with some more medication. But it did get to the point at the end of November where it was so painful. And we'd already contacted the hospice and there just happened to be a hospice nurse where he'd had a blood transfusion in the hospital, and she said, why don't you just come in to the hospice, and we'll sort out your pain relief. And I was amazed Rob immediately agreed, because he did originally say that he wanted to die at home. But he said "Yeah, OK." And she said, "Well, do you want to come in tonight?" And he said, "Yes, please. I really would." So he must have been in quite a lot of pain.

Well, we were very lucky that as he was a young lad, they let them have a room on his own. And they said that I could stay as well, which is what I'd done. I mean, in fact, I'd been sleeping in Rob's room on the floor as well because he was afraid of dying in his sleep and didn't want to be on his own. So I'd done that at home but they allowed me to stay in the hospice and they were so good. They said, "We'll sort out your medication, sort out your pain relief. And basically just use the hospice as a base. If you want to stay here you've got your room. If you want to go home for a night then that's fine as well but come back here and we'll do all of your medication." So that was...on my behalf, I thought actually I can now be his mum again. I don't have to deal with all the medication. I don't have to be his carer. I can be his mum. Because we didn't know how long he'd got to be honest, so you want to enjoy that time, because it is really precious.

So Rob went in on the first of December. And that week, they managed his pain wonderfully. He went to see Machine Head, which was one of his favourite bands, at Wembley. He went with his best friend Matt, and he went with his older brother Ad. Mark took them up in the car, and he had a fantastic time. He was really worried about going, but they sorted out his medication said, "No, you go, it's absolutely fine. We'll give you the medication, you can take it while you're there if you get anxious," which is what he did. And the funniest thing, if there is a funniest thing, apparently he kept on about this light show that was happening and neither Ad nor Matt could see a light show. So

whether it was a side effect of his meds, I have no idea, but anyway it added to the enjoyment for Robin.

But for the whole of that week, he did various things, such as he wanted to do a zookeepers experience. So he did that. He met up with friends, he had friends come around to see him. And the family could go in whenever they wanted to. They allowed our dogs to go in and see him as well. Because he'd missed them for the whole year – we had two dogs. So that was really lovely. But he was in there for 10 days. That was all. He got up on the last day, 10th of December. He'd been seeing friends the night before. And he was due to go to see Col United for a football match in the afternoon. But he hadn't had a very good night. So he was quite sleepy. But he got up quite late, we went and had our breakfast and came back to the room. And I think both his brothers Adam and Toby had arrived and Mark had arrived as well. And he went and had a shower. And he came out of the shower and literally said, "I really don't feel very well." And basically brought up his breakfast. And he was in so much pain, I had to grab him, put him on the bed, press the button for the nurses to come and they came really quickly. And they got him into bed. And that was the last sort of conscious moment I had with Rob.

I called everybody into the room. Luckily, our immediate family was there, my sister came as well. So we were all there. But he died fairly quickly. They said that they think he was having an episode that he wasn't going to recover from. So we don't know whether that could have been his spleen that had erupted or whether it was his liver, we're not sure. But they made him really, really comfortable. We were all round the bed with him, talking to him. So, we were there at the end with him. I had to give him permission to go. Because he was holding on, I could see that he was holding on. And I didn't want him to suffer anymore. And I just said to him, "Rob love, if you've got to go, then you go. We're all here. We all love you." And he took one more breath after that. And then he'd gone. So, you know, it was a peaceful death for him, which is all you can ask for really, after the year. But I think the thing that we took most solace from was the fact that he took charge of his life at the end when he'd had such a horrible year. He had no, you know, he couldn't control anything. He did everything like he helped to arrange his funeral and he arranged to see people that he hadn't managed to see. So it gave him that control at the end, which helps with our memories as well.

## **Title: Heartbreak is physically painful**

**Gisa:** So, Lorna, after Robin died. How were you able to cope with the grief or what helped you with the grieving process?

**Lorna:** I had a fantastic sister at the beginning who, who helped me a lot. We decided as a family that because we'd found it difficult to find out details about germ cell cancer, which was what Rob's original cancer was, we decided to set up a family charity that we named after Rob called the Robin Cancer Trust. And to be honest, it took up a lot of our time. Just trying to set up charity is a huge thing anyway, but I did it for probably four or five years and then I realised that actually I hadn't dealt with Rob dying. It was a distraction technique. So it was affecting me in different ways. I was so anxious about other members of the family dying. I was so anxious all the time, it was affecting my relationship with grandchildren actually, because I was so worried that something was going to happen to them. And my youngest son said, Mum, you've got to get yourself sorted because you can't carry on like this.

So I actually contacted the local hospice where Rob had been and had bereavement counselling with a wonderful lady. I had, I think, about eight sessions at the beginning, and she was just absolutely brilliant. Just she said, "I'm going to make you cry, because I think you really need to," because I was sort of holding everything in, like you do, trying to be strong. And yes, that's what she did. She got me to cry, broke down my barriers, and I was able to let out the guilt, a lot of guilt. I don't know whether you were the same, I had a lot of guilt because I kept thinking I should have known how ill Rob was. Because as a mum, you think you should. So there was a lot of guilt with that. I had a session with her, which was absolutely brilliant. I then went on and had a group session. But eventually, and I'm still under therapy at the moment, I'm with an absolutely wonderful psychologist who gives me coping mechanisms, if things get on top of me. I think I saw her at the beginning every two weeks because I needed it. Now I'm down to one a month, it's like a top up. But she has been so good in helping me to deal with a lot of issues that you don't always feel like you can talk to the family about or you don't want to involve them because they've got their own problems and things like that. You don't want to worry them. So yes, therapy, I definitely needed. How about you? Have you tried anything?

**Gisa:** Well, when Matthew died, I was saying myself, as other people said to me, "Oh, he's in a better place. He's healed now. He's gone home," etc. Because my faith at the time was such. But I call it spiritual bypassing. It didn't deal with the hurt, and the pain. And I never realised that heartbreak actually is physically painful. And I grew up with the words, pull yourself together. You know, like, just pull yourself together. Don't let yourself go. And years and years later, well, not that many. But yeah, it seemed like a long time – it was too late really – we came across an online grief course. Which at the time, helped a bit. But again, that was based on that faith I had at the time. And since then, I'm looking more into death now. Like near death experiences, etc. Although it's what, coming up to 12 years after the boys have died. There's still a lot of work to do. And I still haven't grasped the concept of grief properly. People say interesting things, don't they? Like, "Time is a great healer."

**Lorna:** No, no, definitely not!

**Gisa:** Yeah, I don't know if you came across interesting things that people said. But yeah, certainly that, or "Aren't you lucky, you've got another child. It's OK." Or "You'll get over it. Are you getting over it?"

**Lorna:** It's like there's a time limit.

**Gisa:** Yeah. And I always say I don't want to get over it. I mean, he's my son. And you just don't talk like that. And it's a shame. I can understand that people who have not encountered grief like that, they don't know what to say. I mean I don't, before Matthew died, I didn't know what to say. I mean, people changed the roadside when I came along, you know, they went on the other side of the road, because they didn't know what to do. If anybody is in doubt what to do, or what to say, I think just give them a hug.

**Lorna:** Yeah, absolutely. It says more says more than words doesn't it. It says, I care.

**Gisa:** Yes. And I think so often people say, "I don't mean to upset you." Well, I am upset.

**Lorna:** I think the other thing is that they don't want to talk about your child. And I find that really difficult. I don't know, I will talk about Robin. He was part of my family. I'm not

going to ignore him, you know, and if it makes that person uncomfortable, that's their problem, not mine. I've learned that now. It's like, yeah, he's part of my family.

**Gisa:** So I love talking about him. Because as you say, he's part of us. And, especially with people who knew him best. I love talking to them about Matthew. But yeah, it's very hard to get that through. I mean, like, some family members, they found it really hard to talk about him, and they never initiated talking about him. And I found it really difficult. Because he's part of the family.

**Lorna:** Yeah, and it keeps them alive for you as well, doesn't it, in your head? You know, they should be remembered. I think the trouble with, you know, with children dying, it's the wrong order of things, isn't it? I've had that said to me, a lot of times, it's the wrong order. You don't expect to bury your child, you really don't. But it doesn't mean it doesn't happen. Please talk about him. You know, if I get upset, you don't have to deal with it, it's fine. If I get upset, then I will deal with it. You know, don't forget them.

**Gisa:** And I think that's where our friendship helped a lot didn't it.

**Lorna:** Absolutely. Because we do we have memories, don't we, that we can just share with each other. And we know how much it means and even little things, you know, the times we text and say, "Oh, so and so reminded me of this today, or I saw this today," and you get it. I don't have to explain. I think, you know, if either of us are having a bad day, we don't have to explain because we've been there. We know exactly what a bad day can be like.

**Gisa:** As I said before to you, every time I speak with you, it's like having therapy. Just don't start charging.

**Lorna:** So, thank you for that. Yeah, but I feel the same. I come off, you know, come off the texting, and I'm smiling at what I've had because Gisa gets what I'm on about.

**Gisa:** Yeah, it's important, even if we don't see each other very often. It's just good to know that you're on the other end.

**Title: See if you can find someone in the same boat**

**Lorna:** We've both been in this awful position of losing a loved one. But I don't know, what would you say to somebody who has perhaps recently lost a loved one to blood cancer? Would you have any advice to give them?

**Gisa:** That is such a tough question. I would suggest perhaps, I mean, that applies to anyone who loses a loved one, to see if they can find someone in the same boat like we found each other. Or perhaps concerning blood cancer, perhaps go on the [forum](#), on the website, and see if you can find someone there who will click with you and really be on the same wavelength. It's a hard one. It's a really difficult one,

**Lorna:** I think my advice would be just to talk about them a lot. Talk about your loved one that you've lost. But you're absolutely right, there's no right way or wrong way to grieve at all, everybody's individual and what works for one person might not work for another. I mean as I say I had therapy, and it helped. But a lot of people don't want to do that. They find the idea of talking to a stranger about feelings is really, really difficult. But it might be an idea to give that a try.

But yeah, I think it is such an individual thing. I wouldn't...there's not one point I would say, yes, you definitely need to do that. Because you can't say that to somebody. So yeah, not a huge amount of advice to say, yeah, you will benefit from this because somebody might not benefit from say, talking, but keep that person alive in your mind. And I think the other thing is to say is there is no time limit to grief. There really isn't. There's not a specific time that I was like, OK, right, well, I've done this for so long, I should be over it. You're never going to be over it. I mean, especially, unfortunately in our case, our sons were our future. You know, we have got other children but it's still that person has gone that you will never know their potential. You will never know what they would have become. The thing is Rob's become more well known since he's died, which is odd in a way. But I think you need to talk about that person to other people so that they know how much they meant to you. Because I think if you have to learn – not have to learn – try and learn to live with the grief. Walk alongside it, not ever try and get over it, because I think that's totally unrealistic. Because how do you do that? You can't forget that person, can you? You know, you don't want to. And why should we, you know? So try and have it there beside you. Walk alongside it. But don't think that's got to go back now, it's got to

go because you'll never achieve that and you're not living your life either. Because you might feel that you've failed by not getting over it. Because there's pressure isn't there, I think. That's the trouble – pressure from other people. Because perhaps they can't handle it.

**Gisa:** Yes, yes. I mean, like, Matthew kept the blog during his illness, which his sister kicked off, because so many people wanted to know what was going on. So we just did that because it was easiest to reach people because you don't have time or energy to give everyone a call. And we kept that going for a while after Matthew died. And that sort of helped a little bit as well. Yeah, I find dealing with grief is, as you say, is never easy. Yeah. My grief finishes when I die. I saw an interesting picture of it once that grief is that size [gesturing] and it doesn't go smaller. But your life forms or shapes around it. It's integrated in your life. It doesn't identify you. It's not your identity, but it is very much part of you. Because every experience shapes you, doesn't it.

For support and information, go to [bloodcancer.org.uk/family](http://bloodcancer.org.uk/family). Or call us free on 0808 2080 888.