



Royal London presents Lost for Words

The reality is that all grief is grief and all loss is loss. But I believe that, when you lose a child, it is the deepest sense of loss that you can ever face. Because I personally had lost parents, I had lost a former husband and, yes, it's all relative to the situation, and relative to the person and relative to where you are in your life. But I think to lose a child, it sends you into the darkest black hole imaginable and one which I thought I'd never get out of, because it's in the wrong order of life.

You know, I used to think to myself, oh, my goodness, if, you know, when I die, I mean, how I would I ever say goodbye to my children? I never dreamt for one second that I would be saying goodbye to one of my children, but in the wrong way around.

It was the wisdom of those people who had already lost children that gave me a code with which I could manage it. I remember one letter, which was pivotal, really, because this lady wrote - never met her, by the way - she wrote, and she said, "I don't know why I'm writing to at 1:25 in the morning," she said. "You know, Caron had a great spirit, and she had a very big soul. And you've got to remember that the soul is bigger than death. And death is never the end."

Wham, it was just like, you know, a steamroller hitting you, really, but very profound. She then said, "You have now to learn how to live with that. It will never go away and you'll never forget it. And you'll never forget the black hole. But you have to learn how to live in and around that loss. And you will learn to live in and around it. But, as both of you are in the public eye," she said, you have to find a way of moving forward and doing something positive against something so deeply negative."

I remember going to bed and sort of thinking, churning over all these words. And, I thought, of course, I have to set up a foundation in Caron's name, to help other people who are struggling with cancer. And that was the positive against the negativity. And that really has been, not all of my healing, but part of my healing, because Caron would be



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astounded by how successful it's been. So that was the beginning of any kind of positive healing that I had.

I think that most people don't know how to treat death. You know, we hate making wills, we hate addressing the fact that we will die one day. You have to plan for the fact that you won't be around at some point, you have to plan for the fact that you will lose maybe your mum, or your dad and you sort of have to be realistic about that.

I think, funnily enough, as I come from Ireland, I think Ireland celebrates death a bit more than maybe in England. People don't believe me when I say that still in some parts of Ireland, the coffin will be set up in the kitchen, maybe. The person who has passed is all part of the hooley and the shenanigans going around.

My grandmother was the first person I lost, and I was only about 12. She had a very big farm kitchen and when we went back for the proverbial sandwiches and a cup of tea, they were all laughing and jigging around and telling stories about my grandmother that had amused them. And, as a child, I was horrified. But I now realise, of course, in my...at my stage in life that you want to celebrate, you want to celebrate that person's life.

There's an expression that says that people never die if they live on the lips of the living.