



Royal London presents Lost for Words

I think losing someone during COVID and during lockdown, the restrictions around the funeral and not be able to be with your loved ones in the last dying moments, they're the main two things that have stuck out, and I think they also delay the grieving process. I felt like I was in a dreamland for many months. It's only been the last couple of months that I've really started to acknowledge that Dad isn't here anymore.

Dad was in hospital for 11 days altogether. The first few days, we could communicate with him, he wasn't sedated. We were having video chats with him, phone calls, and he was still in good spirits. He was still my dad, just still cracking jokes and being concerned about everyone else. But the last seven days, he was sedated. So, he was unconscious and, on a ventilator, so... A ventilator, you can't really use it unless you are sedated, because of how invasive it is on the body. He couldn't talk back to us, we couldn't talk to him, he was in an isolated room.

We were given the option to be with Dad as he was passing away. My mum wasn't able to, cos she was isolating cos she was symptomatic. Previously that day, we'd had our normal phone call to say that actually he was doing OK. Then, within about two hours, he just took a turn for the worse. It was just too late. It was happening too quickly. So, it was a massive shock.

Back in 2003, Dad had lung cancer. I remember dashing home, after finding out that he'd got diagnosed with it to find him not there. So, I said to my mum, "Where is he?" She said, "He's just gone up to the shop to get some beers." And Dad just came in the door, whistling, and with a big smile on his face. And I said, "Well, why aren't you upset?" He said, "Cos I'm not going to let it beat me." And he didn't.

But I think having that happen in my life brought me closer to him, made me respect the time with him and how valuable time is with people. Dad's lung cancer diagnosis made



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me take death more seriously. But, not only death, I think it actually made me take life more seriously. That was... That's the main focus - how precious time is. I looked at the lung cancer as a burden and something that shouldn't have happened to Dad, because of how it changes quality of life. But, now Dad's not here, I actually look at it as a blessing, cos it brought us closer.

I feel losing someone during COVID and during lockdown, because that's when it happened for me, hasn't given you an opportunity to celebrate their life. I have seen many different reactions to grief. People can't bring themselves to sell their parent's house. Some people just want to get it out quick. That's fine. You need to deal with it how you need to deal with it, that helps you. Myself, I apply myself into helping other people. I think some of my close friends and family didn't understand it at first, but they realised that actually I did what I needed to do to help me in that time. So, there is no right or wrong way in this. You just have to ride the wave of it, unfortunately. But I would suggest surrounding yourself with people that understand and that are just there for you.

Sometimes you don't need someone to say anything. You just need to have someone to put their arm around you and say it's OK to feel this way and, you know, I'm here for you.