Speaker 1: A diagnosis of breast cancer can cause a life-changing ripple effect of impact affecting those we love the most, and those upon whom we lean for comfort and strength in the most challenging of times. My name is Ashley Hurley. I'm the CEO of Breast Cancer Ireland, and you're listening to More Than a Lump, a podcast that talks openly and honestly to a selection of guests about their very personal connections to breast cancer, be it through their career choice, their own firsthand experience of the disease, or through sharing the experience of close family members. My conversations will center on how breast cancer has informed their perspective on life, love, family health, their goals and indeed aspirations. Although each story is utterly unique, the one common thread that runs through each one is that breast cancer is more than a lump.

Speaker 1: This episode of More Than a Lump is proudly supported by Care Plus Pharmacy. CarePlus is Ireland's leading community pharmacy brand offering expert advice and services for healthier and happier you. You can find your nearest care plus on care plus.ie. Or follow them on social media for daily health and wellness tips. When Paul Gallagher's wife Marie died from breast cancer in 2007, age just 46, he had to raise their three daughters, Amy, Kate, and Sophie on his own. At the time of Marie's initial diagnosis, back in 2002, five years earlier, the girls were just 13, 10, and six respectively. In this episode, Paul joins me along with Kate, his middle daughter, to talk about their beloved Marie and to reflect on the past 20 years, the low points, the high points, and in particular the recent birth of BA first baby grandchild, eh, Ruby Marie, and also indeed Kate's wedding. If you think you might find the topic of loss and bereavement to upsetting, you may wish to skip this episode of More Than a Lump. Paul and Kate, you're very welcome to our little studio. Thank you. I got

Speaker 1: Paul. You and I have known each other for a long time, and I, when I spoke to the team in breast Cancer Ireland about covering the topic of bereavement and loss in our podcast, I knew that your story and your experience of that, of your beautiful daughters will be something the listeners of this podcast might wish to hear about. It's a sad story, but also a story of resilience, hope, and getting on with things for sake of the people you love. And in memory of the woman you loved. Paul, maybe take us back to that trip to Spain, new Year's Eve in 2002, when yourself Marie were getting ready to go out for a party with friends. There were five families, I believe, altogether, and Marie felt a lump in her breast on the shower.

Speaker 2: Yeah, that's correct, Ashton. Um, yeah, it was, I can't remember what particular day it was other than it was, uh, new Year's Eve and we'd all booked into sort of a local Chinese restaurant and all the families were looking forward to the evening. So the girls remember small running around, getting themselves ready, and um, yeah, Marie went int have a shower when she came out and she was crying her eyes out, still see her standing there, and I said, what's wrong? And she said, I have a lump on my breast. In fact, I think of two. So she said, I can feel something here. And I said, if you don't mind, I'll have a little feel myself. Yeah. So I said, okay, no point in panicking. I said, um, there's nothing we can do about it now. I said, except we can make a phone call back home to Dublin.

Speaker 2: And we phoned our family doctor, Dr. Hastens, and uh, we, we spoke to him and he said, look, when are you back? We said, in two days time. He says, come into me straight away and he, I'll do a test on you and I'll see what it is. It may be no more than some sort of assist or whatever he had said. And, um, and yeah, so we went out that evening. It was a bit stressful. Yeah. And a little bit sad. Um, but we did have a, a sort of a good evening as best as we could. And, uh, and then the rest is history. When we came back, Marie went to see Dr. Hastings. He, Julie booked her into hospital to get a, a test done. And, uh, from there, uh, we were in St. Vincent's at the time and, uh, then we were called in and we met with Professor Hill.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And he, uh, went through, uh, the position with us. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I can remember the little rooms that we were in the back end of the hospital, not the side of the hospital, and the Vincent's private. And uh, we went in, it was a, I think it was a Wednesday afternoon. And, uh, the lights were dim and I knew this was going to be bad news. And as I saw the lights being dimmed, and, um, he was very nice, very, uh, explanatory about the whole thing. But Marie being Marie, uh, when she was told that she had to have a mastectomy, she just said, when can this be done? So positive and all the rest of it went with it. She was a very fit and healthy person. Um, never really ate anything bad like her few drinks. Okay. But never put any bad food inside her, especially when she was pregnant and all that with the, with the girls.

Speaker 2: Like everything was by the book. But this knocked her for six cuz she was quite an attractive looking lady. She was stunning. She wasn't just quite an attractive looking lady. She was stunning. Well, she was that all right. She was fairly stunning. All right. But she looked pretty gorgeous that day. But you know, the color was knocked over her face when she was told that she had breast cancer. So, um, professor Hill or aie as I'd like to call him, um, he just said, well, I I just can't do the operations straight away, Marie. We have to prepare and make sure everything is right for you. And she said, why not <laugh>? She said, I want this outta my body. Yeah. And um, so that's where it all started. Mm-hmm.

Speaker 1: <affirmative>. And how did you, how did you both decide, or did you both decide to tell the girls at that stage that they were quite young? 13, 10, and six?

Speaker 2: Well, we didn't tell them straight away. Marie wanted to tell her friends, like she was sort of a ringleader of the sisterhood, the glue in the pot of all the women in around the Fox Rock area that were all our very close friends. So she decided to ring them and they said where you were, by the time we left Vincent's Hospital, it was quite late in the evening. Like, well, could have been six o'clock before, and we knew it. Our local hostility being the Leos name was Pat. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> with ladies and their husbands mm-hmm. <affirmative> all rallying around her. And that rally stayed with her right to the end. Yeah. Um, and they formed a ring around her like I'd never seen. And I was sort of on the outside of that ring from that day on mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it was like Fort Knox and you, you couldn't get inside that ring.

Speaker 2: And the girls were dead solid beside her, you know what I mean? Yeah. Dead solid. All her friends. Then we did tell the girls, but they were still very young to understand that Amy was probably the, uh, the older of the two of the tree, should I say? Sophie was only a baby. Yeah. Six years of age. Kate was just a little bit further down the road in her, but she didn't understand it. And um, Amy did, and the thing they did want to know was her mommy going to die. Yeah. And the answer was no, but she's gonna go through a big operation, so you're going to be with me for a little while. Yeah. And, um, and so that was it, like mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, and the operation took place a couple of weeks later and it was a long operation because we were going to football match and we dropped Marie into the hospital early in the morning and she was still in the Tater at six o'clock that evening because she had a mastectomy and she had had a lot of blood transfusions and then she had an implant as well.

Speaker 2: Reconstruction the same day. Reconstruction, doing the same day, which was a lot to be doing, but that's the type of person she was. She didn't want to be, dare I say disfigured. I know in her sense she wanted to look like Norma mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and it was probably a little bit too much in the one day. Yeah. But she was a strong woman, so what she said went mm-hmm. <affirmative>, so I had no say in that end of it. Yeah. So, and being a man, you don't really understand that end of it either, you know? Um, the aesthetics in a woman are very precious Of course. So, um, I just went along with the flow, sort of

Speaker 1: That psychological trauma. Yeah. Mm-hmm. You know, you want to sort of, you know, have you, yes. You want the tumor gone, you want cancer gone, but you still want in a lot of cases to come back as what you, you know, what you started. Yeah. And that's for a lot of people, they do want to have a reconstruction straightaway. Sometimes it suits and sometimes it doesn't. It doesn't. Yeah. You know, and I remember you saying years ago that you tell bringing the kids into the hospital and saying, by the time the daffodils are back up, mommy, it'd be better.

Speaker 2: Yeah. You know, and daffodils have a thing with me because, um, to this day, every time I see the daff littles popping up and then the buds come up and then the flowers come out, I say, wow, yeah, this can never leave me. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> <affirmative> that feeling and that memory. And I always feel that when the devilles come out, things are gonna get better. Yeah. As in sickness goes, the weather's going to change. Yeah. People are gonna be in good for em. We're starting to get the bright nights back, all of that sort of stuff. And there were dark times, and one of the things that I did was I changed the color of the house inside the house. I got rid of everything that was dark. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, everything, anything that we had, we had blue wallpaper, red colors on everything. I changed everything to, to lemons and to to to cream colors.

Speaker 2: I just wasn't having this sadness in the house mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And it was sad. Yeah, of course. Because when we were told Marie was still alive, it was like having a funeral. Yeah. It was that upsetting. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and that was someone had to be strong enough, have a tear. I know. And that had to be me. That's tough. So, so you have to, you bo you bottle all that up inside you mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, and I'm really only talking about it for the first time like this. I know. So it's not the easiest thing in the world. Mm. But yeah, someone had to do something. We had to keep the place bright or change colors, change everything. Literally changed all the colors Yeah. In the house. And that took a few bob to do as well, but I mean, it was done and it just got rid of that.

Speaker 1: Yeah. That darkness.

Speaker 2: Darkness.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and then I suppose roll on another few years and Marie got sick again. Her cancer had returned and this time had gone to the bones

Speaker 2: Before you go there. There was always, she was always in good form until she got to that. And I go back to the hospital when she was in hospital and um, before I got to the bones and all, and even I got to the bones. Right. But then there was a few things that happened. There were still likes of, there was, um, the guards were doing her exams and um, Marie's leg had broken That's right. From the hip. Mm. To the knee. And at the, that Monday morning when she was going down for her operation with Gary o too, and I remember saying it to <affirmative> John, the oncologist, John, John, professor John Crown. Crown. Oh yes. John Brown. Yeah. John Crown. There was something wrong with her leg. Her leg was as black as I, and she was only outta hospital, but the bone had cracked. Okay. And she couldn't really walk that weekend. Her dad was admitted to uh, St. Francis in in uh, Reini. In Reini. And it was Sunday night into Monday morning. Marie was having this operation on the leg at half six in the morning. And I get the phone call at two o'clock in the morning and said their dad had passed. Oh gosh.

Speaker 2: Amy was doing double mats exams in the leaving cert. Yeah, yeah. And Kate was doing double mats in the junior cert. I said, geez, what am I'm going to do? So I decided I wouldn't tell them that her granddad died, but I had to tell Marie mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I rang her early in the morning. Early, early. I said, look, I can't go down to you cuz the girls are doing this. Yeah. But I'm telling you now your dad has passed, so not the nicest thing to tell you going underneath the operation board. I'm not telling the girls I know. So I had to go to the school, drop them off, and then tell, ask the principal in Loretto. Mm. Any phone calls in here, nothing for the guards if it's their aunties or anything like that. Yeah. I don't want them knowing anything their granddads, she was passing her mama sister.

Speaker 2: So that was all up. But she got through that and then, you know, she, when I got into her bones and all the rest, and it was, it was just, I knew when they opened the leg that that was it. And I had to find out how long had she mm-hmm. <affirmative> got left mm-hmm. <affirmative> without telling the girls. Yeah. But sort of prepare myself in a way. True. That, how do I handle this? Mm. And the nurses in St. Vincent's were magnificent. They told me, no panic, stay calm. They tell me what'll happen. Okay. And how it'll happen. And they were absolutely fantastic. You know, so that's the thing. But, but still up to the end, Amy had her Deb's party house.

Speaker 3: Yeah.

Speaker 2: And she wanted to see all the dresses. Oh yeah. And all the girls that were going over class all had to go in

Speaker 3: With their dresses. No, that was um, was that June my junior cert results? All right. Or something. Yeah. And we went in to the hospital to see her and she had a bottle of bucks phase <laugh>.

Speaker 1: Oh, that's fantastic. Yeah. So nice. Like Kate, you were what, 16,

Speaker 3: 15? I was 15. 15 when she died. Um, but I think I was about 10 or 11 maybe when she, uh, was diagnosed. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and it's so weird because I was so young, but there's like vivid times that I like remember, um, of her being diagnosed even though I didn't really understand what was going on. Like when we were in Spain, she was really upset the night that she had found the lump and we were all out for dinner and it was a massive big table of us, probably like 30 odd. And all the adults were up the top and all the kids were down the end. And I just remember she was upset before we went out and like she was trying to hide it from us mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, but again, throughout the night I remember I kind of looked up at the table and she was chatting with one of the other women and I could see she was upset again.

Speaker 3: And I had gone up to her and I was asking her like, was she okay, what was wrong? And she just told me that, um, she really missed her sister. One of her sisters lives in, um, New Zealand. Okay. Um, she's really close with her sister. So she was just telling me, oh I really miss Valerie. Um, so I kind of just forgot about it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and then when we got home as well, like I can add up all the times where I started making sense that something was wrong. Um, when we got home, we had the um, school play was always on in January. Um, but before that, one of the days I think I couldn't go to rehearsal or like something someone had to collect me, someone different had to collect me from school. And you used to have to tell your teacher, my mom's not collecting me, dad's collecting me, or whatever it was.

Speaker 3: And um, the teacher asked me, um, why? And I said, oh, my mom's um, just in hospital. She's just getting a biopsy. But I didn't know what a biopsy was. Mm. I had no clue. I just said it so flippantly, like, um, and I remember my teacher going, oh, is everything okay? But she knew I didn't know. Yeah. And I went, yeah, yeah. And I just didn't think. Um, but I think then after that she might have had a word with dad or whatever it was, cuz she obviously knew, but I remember her face and it was her face that kind of gave me, okay, something's wrong. And then, um, a couple weeks, weeks later, then the play was on. And um, I think the moms, the other moms knew that she was getting tested and her friends and whatnot all knew. So it was, um, there was always a few nights of the place. So like mom would go one night, dad would go the other and then they'd go together or mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And the night that dad came, I remember we were leaving and it was all, it was really busy and one of the other moms kind of just looked at dad and dad just kind of like shook his head to say like, it's not good news. And even though I was so young, I picked up on all these little things and then,

Speaker 4: Sorry, I've never actually spoken about this.

Speaker 1: Take your time.

Speaker 4: Um, there was like get well flowers being sent to the house, which is obviously so nice, but just adding up all those little things. Um, sorry.

Speaker 2: You're okay.

Speaker 1: Take your time. It is very tough because as you say, you were going around about, about your daily life, you know, the play I school, you didn't Yeah. But then all of a sudden you were starting to put Yeah. Pieces of a jigsaw together, but it wasn't really giving you the full

Speaker 3: Picture. Yeah. Like you underestimate how co on kids actually are <laugh>. Mm-hmm. Um, but then eventually when the word was out and like, you know, all the flowers, the amount of flowers that were coming to the house, um, they told us on a Sunday, I remember we were going to pings that night, pings was a restaurant, Chinese restaurant in Oregon. You can tell Chinese was like our favorite thing, <laugh>. Um, and we used to go every Sunday and um, we were going that night and they called us into the front room and I think they told Amy first and then they told me. And even though I had like picked up on all those kind of different little things, I still didn't expect to be told what I was told. Like for example, me telling my teacher, oh, she's gone for a biopsy, I didn't even know what a biopsy was. Yeah. Um, so yeah, I didn't expect it. But then again, we kind of just got on with it and like we do as a family, we, like, we all went to dinner that night and not that we celebrated, but like we always make something out of everything, even if it's a sad time. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so we just did our normal and went out for dinner and got on with things.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And I remember Paul, you saying to me, you know, your house became sort of the local go-to for everybody that Marie met in Vincent's, if they were traveling, especially if they were traveling a distance and coming for treatment, it was back to Gallaghers and she'd put them up into various different rooms and sorted everybody out. And she really became the go-to person because you were so close, I suppose, to the hospital too.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Well a lot of people were traveling, as you say, up from the country. There was no place for them to go. Yeah. Um, ordered at a coffee shop now that of 'em would retard from the travel up and so on. So Maries were on the soup and the sandwiches and so on and so forth. And there was times I'd arrive in and I wouldn't even know who would be in the house and say, who's that? Who's that? When she's traveling back to Sligo or she's going to Donal or she's down to Cork or she's down to Wexford and so on. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and they're just having little rest before they go back and yeah, she was really good like that. There's one amazing story which probably haven't mentioned to you there in her ward. Um, and the ward that she was in, um, Kate probably remember the name of it cuz you picked out the ward for her coffin. Is

Speaker 5: It St.

Speaker 2: Helens? No, in, in, in, in, um, in St. Vincent's.

Speaker 5: It's the same name as her.

Speaker 2: Um, Oakly Wood or something like. Anyway, there was a young girl in there and uh, and this is the type of person Marie was, there was a young girl in and um, I saw always wear the blue pin swipe suits at the time, part of the part of the job going in and outta different customers and I'd have their pin swipe suit on. So a lot of people taught, um, and I bring me work me, a lot of people used to say hello professor, hello doctor to me, <laugh> when I'd be going in and out the hospital ward and the nurses always be saying, hello, how are you? And they thought I was a consultant or whatever. And so I used to go in, but there was this young couple and they were canoeing for the want for the better Ward <laugh>, eh, it was six, six beds in the, in the ward.

Speaker 2: And, um, they were kissing and hugging. I said, what's going on there? And Marie says, do you know what they're only, they only got married. And uh, anyways, uh, and I said, Jason, and, uh, she's not well. Like, you know, I said, fair enough. So Marie had been talking to them about, um, at the girl, I can't remember her name was, but she was an AIB from head office and aib, uh, staff member. And Marie says, do you know what you should do now? She says, uh, between now and your next treatment, she says, you need to get away to the sun. You need to get away to the sun. I said, we haven't, we haven't had a honeymoon yet, you know, blah, blah, blah. So, um, about two or three weeks later I'm looking at Marie and I said, for into the hospital. And I says, eh, what's this on my visa card?

Speaker 2: <laugh>, uh, this uh, booking of Floyd's? Are we gone somewhere? And uh, and uh, some apartment in, uh, in a very over in Spain. Oh, I don't mind that. I said, I have to mind it <laugh>. She said, what's going on? And she said, do you know the couple that's over there? She said, I booked her and her husband to go to Spain before they had their next treatment. And here's the awful thing about it. She never got that next treatment. Oh. Oh, she passed away. She was that sick. Wow. And it was one of the bank managers actually told me about it and I said, I know the person. Oh, right. And she was only 27 or 28 years of age. Oh, and that's the type of person Marie was. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, she would do that for other people mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so she did it, the simple thing as well as the more expensive it. Yeah. But she did that. She'd have all the ladies in. And then one particular night I walked into the house, the whole room was full and we have a double room as a living room. And I was just all ladies having a glass of wine and cheese and whatever, crackers. And, and they're all just chatting, but every one of them unfortunately had breast cancer.

Speaker 1: My

Speaker 2: Goodness. And she had met them either in the ward or in oncology Yeah. Having their treatment. Yeah. So they were all having a GWA in about how their life was going on and so on and so forth. Yeah. So there wasn't very much room for me <laugh>. So I sustained the kitchen

Speaker 3: <laugh>. We actually, I think adopted her way, uh, going forward because we just, we don't, we never don't have people over. Mm-hmm. Like, it's like an open door policy. Um, and we actually named second named our House Hotel Gallagher <laugh>. Absolutely. People are just in and out all the time.

Speaker 1: Yeah. But then, and, and I remember Kate, we were speaking about this earlier, so, and it's, and it's relevant for breast cancer Ireland because our focus this year in 2023 is all about how metastatic matters often, you know, they don't, these patients who suffer a metastatic disease don't get heard and don't have a voice because they have a stage four diagnosis. But we are seeing lots and lots more people living and living well with cancer. Yeah. Um, unfortunately Marie's cancer spread to her brain. Yeah. Which is, I suppose from a scientist's point of view, the most challenging part. And it's something that we are very passionate in breast cancer, Ireland about funding. And we do significant investment into, you know, international collaborations both in Ireland, in Chicago, et cetera, in that whole area of brain metastasis because it's the one area we can't cure. And I think we've gotta keep investing in it. We are making headway. We have lots of other clinical trial drugs to help for bones, spine, liver, lungs, but the brain is the one that is the most challenging. Yeah. Um, and I know sadly you lost your mom, you lost Marie. How did you cope Paul, in those months and times after that with the girls being so young

Speaker 2: <laugh>? Well, the first thing I had to do, if I confined a funny side of it was doing my first shop and I was born right in supermarkets and got down in Duns. I hadn't a clue where anything was in Coral's court, but I couldn't have picked a better night to go down just to be on the funny side of this because this is a sad subject. But I went down to nuns, uh, got home in the Monday evening and sort of fed the guards and, but I was never home before eight o'clock. So they more or less fed themselves. Um, went down, started looking around the oils and next one of the women says, you look lost son <laugh>. And I said, I am. Where, oh, look at, you're doing all the wrong things. Come over here and we'll sort you out. So give us a look at your list.

Speaker 2: And I said, oh, Timmy head. And I said, so tell us this. So anyways, they were brilliant. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they filled the basket for me, did all the shopping, and told me where this to go and that to go and blah, blah blah. So that was my first thing. But the problem that I had was coping was, uh, when I came to the girly stuff, going into the girly oil and looking at the pharmaceutical side of it and looking around to see was there anyone looking at me, <laugh>, uh, going to, to pick up certain girly products. Oh, I was terrible. And I remember, um, my pals uh, got me away for a weekend, a golf and talk about getting things mixed up. All the stuff I had in the bag for me was for the girls. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So trying to cope, it took me a while to get things sorted out because, uh, I used to get the girls and still do their names mixed up.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And, um, so, uh, the coping part was very difficult cause there was a lot of washing to be doing and ironing and so on. And me being the type of person I am, I wanted to do it all myself. Yeah. I said, right, the girls need looking after her and I have to be the sh the mommy now. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But the first thing I did was I said, I better lose a bit of weight because otherwise I'm gonna go down to choose. Because when Marie was sick, it was hospital to, to home to look after the girls and back to the hospital. And you might get home at 10 or 11 o'clock at night. Then you had to do ironing, make lunches, so on. So you were eating sandwiches rather than eating at dinner, you were eating, drinking coffees, this that, that eating on the ground.

Speaker 2: So two and three hour sleep max a night. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I went from being a fit 13, 14 stone up to 18 stone, 12 a ballooned. So I said, first thing I can do is get rid of this. So I sat back to the gym, back training back, blah, blah, blah. And eventually I got myself down there for about a year and a half mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I got myself down to about 13, so and so I was happy enough for that mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but then because the girls took a lot of looking after mm-hmm. <affirmative> because I had to start doing school rooms, which I never did before. And, and then there was always an argument who could sit in the front and who could this that and the other <laugh> and Spin FM was on and whatever else were their, uh, radio station on.

Speaker 2: And the only thing I insisted on was that when a sport came on, they'd all be quiet. Yeah. <laugh>. So I could listen to the sports in the morning time, but it was, it was good fun. It was very challenging bringing them up. And uh, one of the things I always remember was, because you know, when little girls become of age, Sophie was 10 when her mom passed away. And I said to girls, now she's gonna be become a young woman now in the next year or maybe two. Yeah. You need to look out for her. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And, and I said, and because I won't notice what's going on mm-hmm. <affirmative> and uh, so when the time comes look after, they'll have me doing things that I can't handle. Yeah. So they were great. Amy was like the mommy. That's right. And um, she, whatever she said went with the girls and uh, still is, you know, um, and I'm sure they probably go to her more than they go to me, uh, to talk about things. And

Speaker 1: Kate, how did you feel at that point when, when your mom had passed? Like, Amy was slightly older, Sophie was much younger, you know, like how did you kind of come to terms with it I suppose?

Speaker 3: Yeah, it's a weird one. Um, I kind of, even just like the couple of weeks up to her dying, it was kind of as if it, it nearly took until the very last like few days to actually realize what was happening. Um, because she had gone, she was in hospital for, I think was about three months. It was like three months before she died. She'd gone on a trip with her, um, mom and her sister down to

Speaker 2: At alone.

Speaker 3: At Alone. Um, and she was too, she was too sick. So they took her back up and when she got back up, she went into hospital. I think that was in August, the end of August. And when she went in, she never came back out. So we spent like three months or so going in and outta hospital and kind of just never clicked that like she was actually going to die. Um, and I even remember at one point we went in to see her and um, when we left, dad brought us in after school or after work. And when we left we were getting in the car and I remember asking him, what are we gonna do for Christmas? Like, are we gonna come into hospital? Or like, where are we gonna have our dinner? And like looking back, I obviously gave Dad like the pride of his life when I asked that question cuz he didn't wanna tell me mm-hmm.

Speaker 3: <affirmative>. But it's obviously a realization for him that we didn't know what was going on. And um, and yeah, so it kind of took, it was really only in the last few days before I remember they moved her out of the ward and they moved her into, um, a room on her own mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And when it had gone to her brain, then it started taking over. Like she wasn't as functional when we were going in to see her. And the nurses were telling us to bring in things like, um, photo albums and stuff. Okay. But she was still there because I remember when we brought in the photo albums, she didn't wanna see them because I think she knew that was kind of, you know, the end of the line for her mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so it was kind of, I suppose I was so young, I was hanging around with my friends all the time.

Speaker 3: Like, the one thing I will say is thank God for friends and family and family friends. Um, because I actually don't think like any of us would've made it through without them. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, like so many people just swooped in and looked after us. Um, I was at an age where I was kind of like going to discos and going to Wells and all those kind of things. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and I went into transition year, um, and I remember like I, I ditched school a lot in transition year. I just didn't wanna go in and deal with getting upset and being in school. Um, and dad was at work so I got away with it for a lot of the time. <laugh>, um,

Speaker 1: Just by the way Paul <laugh>.

Speaker 3: But, um, I don't know, I think it's kind of the later years that you start, it's the life event that you really, you really do feel, um, like for example, we got married there in October, um, and it's not exactly like, it might not be on that particular day of that event, but even just the small things, um, you do start kind of getting upset over things around the time of a life event. Um, I remember there was one time, I think it was in, maybe it must have been only a couple of months after mom died, but um, I was, I wasn't collected from school but there was a miscommunication and who was collecting me or whatever happened. And um, it was quite dark cuz it was going into winter and I started walking home and I like bawled my eyes out the whole way home. And I think that's when I

Speaker 1: Realized she was gone. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Speaker 3: And it's funny because that could happen when she was

Speaker 1: Alive. I know, but I

Speaker 3: Know but um, that

Speaker 1: She just rang more True. Yeah. But she was never going to pick you up again. Yeah.

Speaker 3: Yeah. Um, so yeah. But it's kind of, as I said, it's the later moments in life that are kind of harder to, to deal with. I think the more mature I am, the more I, I do start, you know, she's never coming back mm-hmm. <affirmative>, but we do celebrate her in all of our life events as well. Lovely. Like she's a part of everything even though she's not physically there. I know.

Speaker 1: You know. I know. And I mean it was lovely. I know Amy, your older sister has just had her baby girl.

Speaker 3: Yeah. Amy just had a baby. Yeah.

Speaker 1: Ruby Marie.

Speaker 3: Yeah. She named her Ruby Marie. Um, so yeah, she's, she's gorgeous. She's a adult. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And we even like that we think, you know, it's mad like imagine if she was here and she was a granny, like she'd hate to be called a granny <laugh>. Totally

Speaker 1: <laugh>. What's your glamorous for that <laugh>?

Speaker 3: Um, and then Sophie, my younger sister, um, her and her boyfriend bought a house there recently, so they moved into their house down in Greystones. Yeah. Um, so there's just all these kind of life events that you always kind of feel you'd love to show her or talk to her about what's going on, but we have each other as well. So that's it.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Which is really, really important. Yeah. And I remember Paul, you saying, you know, oh my God, like I have three daughters, you know, the amount of tan, the tan on the towels, the tan on the sheets, the tan on the loom <laugh>, like how do people cope with all this <laugh>? And that was at a time when we totally tangled ourselves in Tan. You know, there was none of this there by Vog. We

Speaker 3: Actually had, um, myself and Amy set up, um, a tan, a spray tanning company called Southside Tanning <laugh>. And we used to spray tan like dad, there was no say Dad was not getting any word in it. We, it was happening and that was it. We used to set up popup the um, tent in the playroom and just spray tan like 20 bodies on a Thursday evening <laugh>. And they'd do be in drying themselves at the fire <laugh> with like no clothes on in their little spray thong

Speaker 1: <laugh>. Oh. Poor Paul <laugh>. I was

Speaker 2: Totally barred outta the house.

Speaker 3: <laugh>. He used to just get to the point of not saying anything <laugh>.

Speaker 1: And I suppose Paul, for you, like you were running your business, you know, you had these three teenage and younger children, like you had to find a really, really difficult and I suppose lonely.

Speaker 2: Well it was very difficult, but I had other people involved in the business as well. There was other directors there, but it was really tough. Yeah. Um, I never looked at it as being tough, challenging. Yes. Um, and I suppose that's probably cuz of the age. I always had like, you know, I was sort of involved in football, men don't cry, all of this sort of stuff. Um, got involved in all sorts of challenges as you know. Um, and um, so was it difficult? Yes. Did I ever look at it? It's been difficult, no. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, did I sleep much? Definitely not. It was the biggest, uh, difficulty I had actually through Marie's illness because you know, you were in bed together at night and she was sore and stiff and if I lay down in the bed, um, it was a disturbing horse.

Speaker 2: So I used to have to sit up straight mm-hmm. <affirmative> and stay in the stay in the try not to move, try not to move. And I'd have a TV on without sound. So for about three or four years after it, I just couldn't sleep. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I didn't, I was, and, and as such, now I don't sleep that much three, four hours at a night, maybe five and lucky mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And um, and that was a, a big thing. I can always remember it was this, you didn't sleep an lot, but the demands of the job were still always there. And then we had the horrible recession Yes. That hit as well. And that was just devastating to our business mm-hmm. <affirmative> and um, so yeah, it was difficult times. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>

Speaker 1: And I know you have a massive, massive circle of very good friends over all the years, both your parents and your own girls as well. But did you ever, did you use those as your support system to talk about how you felt? Or did you ever seek counseling of any kind? Did you find a need? To

Speaker 2: Me personally? Yeah. No, I never, never saw, I probably mistake I made, I should have had the girls, uh, looked after properly. Um, and I didn't because I, I wanted to try and do it himself. We did have somebody in and they did speak to us in the house. I can always remember, I can't remember the lady's name, she was in a few times. Um, but we seen the coat together, we were close knit and the girls sort of watched over me and I watched over them. But it was, um, that's me. No, never looked at the counseling regarding talking to people.

Speaker 2: If you were talking with talk, maybe just, there's so much going on in life that I've very seldom spoke about that my closest friends, there was probably four of us, six of us, eight of us used to always go out on a Saturday night. We that to a restaurant or just to up home for a few points or whatever. And I was ending up sitting on the table on my own. Mm. And they were really good taking me out. But after a year or so of that, I sort of said, I think I'm only wheel on my own and have a few pints and so on. So I used to vary it, you know, but they were so good to me, like, so good to me, so protective I suppose more so nothing else. Yeah. And, and you

Speaker 1: Were probably on a, for all the world, a hamster wheel, you know, you didn't have time to reflect, you know? No,

Speaker 2: Because everything was geared around keeping the house, right. Yeah. Keeping the business going, working as long as you could still involved in the football and there was all sorts of wood things that we did. We, we set up the cycling as you, as you know, in the, in chemical CROs and we did all sorts of challenges, um, with fundraising and um, so there was, there was always something on the go. Mm.

Speaker 1: You're not a man to sit around that's for sure. <laugh>, well,

Speaker 3: Definitely

Speaker 2: Not. So I said I fall asleep. Yeah. <laugh>. So I tend not to,

Speaker 1: You know. Yeah. And Kate, how about you? Do you feel you would've benefited from that traditional therapy? Or how did, what coping mechanisms did you use?

Speaker 3: I um, I did a little bit of, um, in school they have like guidance counselors. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so initially when mom passed I went into the guidance counselor once or twice, but I just didn't get anything out of it as well. I was so young I couldn't really say anything, but I was kind of just sitting there and crying. Um, but genuinely my friends, um, and family friends, um, and family aunties and uncles, they are um, the people who actually got me through, uh, I kind of wear my heart on my sleeve. I can't hide my emotions. Um, I do build them up, but then when I'm ready to burst <laugh>, yeah, I burst. Um, but you always feel so much better after just having that kind of conversation with someone. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> or just chatting to people and just letting people in as well.

Speaker 3: Like there's so many people who, um, I would have conversations about, you know, being upset or what's going on in my head or what's going on in just general life. Um, and like people want to be there for you mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So it's not always a case of having to go to a counselor even though, um, I don't doubt for a second that they probably do help. Um, and I have thought about it many times, but just having that outlet between like people who you can talk to is really helpful. And just sometimes just letting yourself being upset. Yeah. Um, like it's a weird one. I used to um, go for a quick run around the block before the wedding when I was trying to get myself in gear and I used to put on my wedding playlist on Spotify and I dunno what it was, but I always used to just cry. Like the minute I started running and the minute I started playing the playlist, I'd always cry for the first like one or two songs. Um, but I always felt great after it. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, like, it was like a happy, sad, if you know what I mean? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, yeah. So genuinely just chatting to your friends and being open about things. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> I find is the best kind of outlet for me.

Speaker 1: And Paul, I suppose I knew Marina, I didn't know her very well. I'd met her once or twice at, because you were always great supporters of all that we did for breast cancer, Ireland. But did she ever have that conversation towards the end and say, you know, make sure or go and find somebody or don't you dare go find somebody mine, those girls or <laugh>. I mean, did she ever have that conversation?

Speaker 2: Uh, Maria wasn't that person. <laugh>. Um, she did say to me 10, no 10 months before she passed away and she was having trouble with this, this leg of hurt. She said, you know, you're gonna be hurting these kids. And I said, get that outta your brain. Yeah. Get that outta your mind. Did she ever say to me, go and find someone new? No, <laugh>

Speaker 3: Certainly

Speaker 2: Did not and would always be suspicious anyway, um, about men in general and that's why she was such a hit with the girls. Besides being quite attractive to herself, um, no, no. But um, it's a hard one to say when you have your daughter sitting beside you here in an interview. Yeah. I've had a few girlfriends and uh, had one or two nice, nice relationships. But it's, it's, it's, it's, um, it's been tough but always the girls came first and that was a security officer here sitting left of me here. They used to watch on me cuz she sat, uh, her room was the first one on the way in. And so

Speaker 3: Actually mom my room, I wonder if she did this on purpose <laugh>, but me and Sophie used to share a room. Um, and before she died, a couple of months before she died, she turned the front downstairs sitting room into a room for me. So I think maybe she was future proofing. So

Speaker 2: Be careful,

Speaker 1: <laugh>. Well, listen, I thank you so much Paul and Kate. I mean, this is not an easy topic. No. It's not easy for anybody who's, who's gone through this, but I think you've been very open and honest and I do think that our listeners will get a lot of solace in what you've said and how you've, you know, how you had to deal with the loss, how you had to go through all of Marie's journey, um, and now deal with the loss and as you say, you know, remembering all the life moments and having her still part of your life.

Speaker 2: Yeah. What I would say, Ash, just to anyone that may be listening is that like the loss of a loved one, whether it's your wife, your sister, your, your, your, your aunt, your granny, whatever, is not easy to deal with. But what is nice about it is to celebrate their life after they've gone mm-hmm. <affirmative> and put yourself in to a position where you can celebrate, like memorizing their birthdays, the Christmas and so on, and still get on with your own life. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, and we've tried to do that as a family. We've never forgotten her, but we've all moved on mm-hmm. <affirmative> and at the same time, um, it's, that's the way she would've wanted mm-hmm. <affirmative> and

Speaker 1: She's always with you. Yeah.

Speaker 2: And she's always absolutely, she's always with and like when Amy had the baby there recently, and we were all a bit nervous about it because she was in labor for a few days and we were touch and go in, I went to the church, four candles or lit and door were lit for Marie to watch over Thinging for her granny Yeah. For her granddad to watch over. And the top candle was for Amy. Yeah. <laugh> and for was coming over mm-hmm. <affirmative>, which was the new little baby, which is brought a, it's just a circle.

Speaker 1: Another new Lisa life. Absolutely. Yeah. So, but it is amazing how you say that life moments are always remembered. I had a recent conversation with, um, Philip Hannigan, Emma Hannigan's dad. Oh right. And he said to me that a couple of months ago he brought all of the families in for dinner because Emma would've turned 50. Ah,

Speaker 2: Ah, very nice. So

Speaker 1: It is true, those are those lifetime moments. Yeah. You know, are still remembered and it is important to still

Speaker 3: Remember Yeah. To like, like that it's like, you know, gone but not forgotten. Absolutely. You know, like mom's birthday is the 6th of December, so on the 6th of December every year dad gets the tree and we go over to the house and celebrate the house. So you have to just make the best out of the moments even though they're not here. Absolutely.

Speaker 1: Absolutely. Well listen, thank you Paul and Kate. You're very welcome. Thanks very much for joining us today. Thank you. On more than a lump. This episode of More Than a Lump is proudly supported by Care Plus Pharmacy Care plus Ireland's leading community pharmacy brand offering expert advice and services for healthier and happier you. You can find your nearest Care Plus on careplus.ie. Or follow them on social media for daily health and wellness tips.