EB: Maggie's Podcast. Giving you so much more than medicine. Thanks for listening to this, the first ever Maggie's Podcast. Now each episode in this series will focus on a different aspect of living well with cancer, whether it's the food you eat, the buildings you spend time in or the people around you. The podcast is here to make you laugh, talk and think.

Our first podcast deals with isolation because people living with cancer can often feel cut off. You might find yourself stuck at home during the day when everyone else is at work. Or maybe you find the loneliest time is when you're surrounded by people, none of whom seem to understand. In All Together Now, Victoria Derbyshire explores the isolation that can come with cancer.

{Phones ringing}

Emma: Hi!
VD: Hi, good to talk to you.
Gwen: Hi!
VD: How isolated do you think that made you feel back then?
Emma: It would have been manageable if I'd been able to speak to other people about it.

{Phones ringing; music}

VD: Hi, I'm Victoria Derbyshire and welcome to this Maggie's Podcast where we're looking at living with cancer and, in particular, at the isolation it can bring.

This is All Together Now.

Diane: When you have the diagnosis of cancer, you don't know what the future's like. You don't know who to talk to.

Mark: The isolation is the feeling of terror. Those moments at night, those quiet times during the day, often overwhelms the, personally, incredible support that I've had.

Diane: What I've got, you know that you're going to get bad news at some point. I know it's incurable. I don't know in terms of time. I haven't asked.

Georgia: When you're diagnosed, you don't know what your prognosis is going to be and it takes time and I don't think I could cope with people all the time asking me, "What's happening? What's happening?" I just wanted to get on with it. It's like I wanted to get through it and then I could then tell people what had happened. {Music} It was an incredibly lonely way of doing it.

VD: Let's hear from Mark! He's from Nottingham. He was diagnosed with cancer 18 months ago.

Mark: If you have, as I had, a busy, full-time job in a school working 60-70 hours a week that comes to a screeching halt, that's where the loneliness can set in.

Melanoma's an incurable cancer. It's not something that will ever go away, so I have it for the rest of my life and for as long as they can keep me going. I'm fortunate in that
my physical isolation is minimal. I've a fantastic wife who's looked after me and three relatively young children. So the house is always full of noise. {Music}

My youngest daughter had a major, major wobble over the summer. I had a particularly bad patch with a number of admissions with infection problems and, you know, she said to me – it's that classic moment that, you know, "Well, who's going to give me away at my wedding?" {Sound of choking with emotion} Sorry! That was... Yeah, that was hard. My daughter's since had counselling sessions. It makes a difference. We noticed that she's calmer, much, much more pragmatic about me and... And it's funny that one of my biggest fears is not so much me dying, which is incredibly terrifying, but it's actually me dying and then my wife dying. And it's that thought that the kids are alone which, of course, they wouldn't be. We have a fantastic family and wheels in place and guardians and that's all sorted, but it's still that fear that you get.

There's one enormous positive. I have spent more time with my wife and my children in the last year than I probably have in the last 10. What it has done is brought us an awful lot closer together. {Music}

VD: There's no predicting exactly when and where cancer will strike but, when it does, a diagnosis can affect everyone – friends, family, our children.

Emma is from Edinburgh. Emma was only 12 when her mum, Rosie, was diagnosed with breast cancer. She's 16 now. Hi Emma!

Emma: Hi!

VD: Hi! Good to talk to you.

Emma: Yeah, you too.

VD: Tell us about your mum being diagnosed with cancer!

Emma: When my mum was diagnosed in early 2012, I felt numb for quite a long time because I didn't really know what I was supposed to be feeling. I had no-one to talk to about it and I wouldn't dare talk to my mum because I thought it was...

VD: Why not? Why do you say that?

Emma: I thought it was just a sensitive subject. I knew she was talking about it at the hospital every single week and...

VD: And the questions that you didn't dare ask your mum because you didn't want to add to her anxiety, what kind of things would you have wanted to ask?

Emma: Obviously the first thing that springs to mind is, "Are you going to die?" And, like, "What is going on inside your body?" Like, "What's changed, when did this start?" And "How do you get rid of it?" And, "How's it going to affect the family?" And stuff like that.
VD: Mm. And not feeling you could ask those questions, for perfectly understandable reasons. How isolated do you think that made you feel back then?

Emma: It would have been manageable if I'd been able to speak to other people about it. So, not being able to talk to my friends and, also, not being able to talk to my mum about it. I can't imagine ever feeling more isolated in my life.

VD: Wow. That's... that's something for a 12-year old to be feeling like that.

Emma: It's horrible the way it can affect families like that. I think communication is like the most amazing thing in this kind of situation.

VD: Mm. And do you think your – when you look back – your mum was trying to protect you? She, perhaps, wasn't giving you all the details that she had about her diagnosis?

Emma: Yeah, definitely. I feel, from her point of view, she was doing the right thing. I would never blame her for acting the way she did. I totally understand but I think that took its toll on me in the long run because I ended up keeping it all in and I just, eventually, just exploded.

VD: How did that manifest itself?

Emma: I started to unravel and we went to Maggie's and we actually started to talk about it a little bit. And then, I guess that's kind of how the book came about because, knowing what is going on inside her body, that... that helped me a lot.

VD: Mm. Before you got to talk to people at Maggie's, did you... did you genuinely think, "My mum is going to die?"

Emma: Yeah! I mean, I thought she was lying to me when she told me she was going to be fine because there's such... there's so many misconceptions about cancer and you just... you just assume it comes with time limits on your life.

VD: Emma, let me bring in Jamie who is, also, in Edinburgh. Hi Jamie! How are you?

Jamie: Ah, yeah, I'm good, thanks.

VD: Jamie, you're 16, like Emma, and, like Emma, you have written a book for teenagers. Your book is about your mum. Tell us why you wrote it!

Jamie: Well, on 1st November in 2013, my mum lost her 17-year battle with breast cancer. So she had it for the whole of the time that I was... I was alive. So I grew up with her with cancer and... And, obviously, experienced it as a teenager, the diagnosis and... And, you know, my book was based on similar circumstances but has a different ending. Emma's has a much happier ending and, you know, my mum was so inspirational to so many people that have cancer for so long.

VD: Emma's talked about feeling isolated. What was it like for you?
Jamie: You know, yes! She's right, you know! You do feel isolated because you feel you don't want to bring it up in your own home because you feel like, you know, your mum spends so much time in the hospital, you know, getting chemo or whatever and you feel like home is the place where actually she needs to relax and forget about the cancer and that. So you don't want to bring it up. So, yeah! You do feel isolated for that and you do feel that, you know, at times, there is nobody to talk to. And it's horrible! It really is. For a teenager, it's really horrible.

VD: Mm. What was your mum like?

Jamie: Everything that a mum should be, to be honest. Was always there for you. You know, I kind of take every day as it goes and appreciate, you know, that I still have a dad because, in life, it's full of surprises and you don't know what's around the corner.

VD: How much did writing things down help you?

Jamie: It helped massively to write it all down and, you know, the feeling and, I'm sure Emma will agree, the feeling when you get that first hard copy in your hand is really indescribable to know that you've now succeeded in what you set out to do in writing this book, to share the story of, you know, our mums. So, you know, the book was... It really helped me. And my dad read it for the first time recently and he said it was, you know, really amazing to read back on it all and it helped him.

VD: Mm. Emma, how did writing help you?

Emma: I think because when I was writing the book it was after my mum had the all clear, it wasn't so much an ongoing outlet but it was more of a release. Although I'd had a chance to kind of unload about everything at Maggie's and then, by that point, me and my mum were talking about it openly, it was a way to express things that I hadn't told anyone before, stuff that they didn't know. So my mum learned quite a lot about me because I didn't know I was feeling a certain way until I had the chance to process it and write it down.

VD: I wonder what advice you would give to others who might be listening right now, who may be experiencing some of the emotions that you have all felt. What would you say to them?

Emma: Well, we've definitely started living life a lot more in the moment and it does make for a happier family life and just life in general because we're making the most of it.

VD: Jamie?

Jamie: Say what you feel. Don't, you know, keep it all pent away! Let all your emotions out! If it's in front of your friends or your family, you know, you know you've just got to let it out. Because that's the best... Honesty is the best policy, as they say.

VD: You know, sometimes it's hard though, isn't it? It is hard for people to just say what they feel.
Jamie: Absolutely! And that person might be going through something similar, you just don't
know and that's why you need to be open and share what you're going through with
other people.

VD: Thank you so much for talking to us. Jamie and Emma.

And "My Mum, Monica" and, "Eek, My Mummy Has Breast Cancer" are both available
through Maggie's Centres. "My Mum, Monica" written by Jamie, "Eek, My Mummy Has
Breast Cancer" written by Emma.

And to find out how Maggie's Centres can help people to live well with cancer, just visit
maggiescentres.org. {Music}

Diane: No, it's very welcoming and the inside is... it's always warm down in the kitchen, the
big kitchen with a big table and lots of people round and lots of tea and coffee and all
sorts of things. So that's... that's sort of the hub of the place.

Mark: There's been times where I've been an in-patient and I've been released from the
ward for a couple of hours, just because I've needed to get out of that magnolia
institutionalised environment and come here for a cup of tea and a chat. And
sometimes I've needed some emotional support, other times I've just wanted a cup of
tea and a friendly face and it's been as simple as that.

Diane: When you're with your family and your friends, you're always thinking about the effect
on them. Whereas when you come to people at Maggie's, you know there's always
someone you can come and talk to – a listening ear if you need to.

Mark: My wife comes along to Maggie and she's supporting me but she takes part in the art
classes and there's other classes like writing classes. Hello Kate!

Diane: It's supposed to be a home from home. No clinical signs anywhere, no badges, no
uniforms. It's very much a non-institutionalised space so...

Georgia: The very first time, I came in tears, really upset. I'd talked to friends and family but I'd
just felt they kind of didn't understand and I knew my breast care nurse had said that
people here, in Maggie's, will be able to understand you more because they've been
through a similar experience. So, I felt drawn to the place because I thought I might
get more answers here and I did.

VC: Georgia was only 42 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Georgia: When I was delivered those words, it just blew my world apart and I wasn't prepared at
all. {Sound of children singing} I'm a teacher assistant. You know, you don't want
things to stop just because you've been diagnosed or things to change.

I chose to tell very few people, you know, and, like I said, at work, I only told the
management. It was just my way of dealing with it. I think it was, probably, about
control because I could control who I was telling, when I was telling them and how I
was telling them.
I had a partner at the time. It was very difficult for the both of us, very difficult because it came totally out the blue. My partner did feel incredibly isolated because I told him not to tell anybody and not to share it with anybody which, at the time, I thought that was ok but, actually on hindsight, it's not ok. And I think his way of dealing with it was not to acknowledge the seriousness of it being cancer. So he almost dealt with it if it was something quite low level but, afterwards, when we talked things through, I understand where he was coming from because he couldn't allow himself to believe that I'd got cancer and I might die. {Music}

VD: Breast cancer is the most common cancer in the UK. It affected Georgia. It affected me and it affected Rani, too.

Hello Rani! How are you?

Rani: Yes, thanks. I'm good today, thank you. Very well.

VD: You were given a breast cancer diagnosis around seven years ago and I know you've been supported by Maggie's in West London but how did you respond when you initially received that diagnosis?

Rani: With a kind of a sense of disbelief because I'd been very well and I looked very well but I just had this growing lump. So, a lot of shock and it was a process.

VD: I know your treatment began really quickly, within a week, I think, of diagnosis.

Rani: Yes.

VD: Did you sleep at night?

Rani: I slept like a log. I managed that very easily. [It's] a big escape, isn't it, dreams?

VD: Can I ask, "Like what?"

Rani: So I had surgery six days after my diagnosis and then I developed an infection and I was really quite delirious for a few days. And, during those sort of dreams – my dad was very vivid in my dreams – he sort of arrived at my doorstep, looking as he did, like years ago when I was a child, was a much younger man, and he sort of... he collapsed. And there's these two young girls – I mean like really young girls, like teenage girls who were the ambulance people – and they said to me, "We're going to go a hospital." And I said, "Which one?" And they said, "We don't know." And I said, "When will I come back?" And they said, "We don't know!" And they said, "But you're with your dad." And, you know, that gave me such a lot of comfort.

VD: Did it? Wow!

Rani: It's a really peculiar thing to say but, you know – waking up from that dream and then it was a dream that I had for a few months afterwards and then it went away – it made me feel that, whatever happened, whatever my journey was, if this was my time, my
dad was waiting. It was very comforting that he was there. My dad died now. It's been about 14 years.

VD: And in the real world? What support did you get?

Rani: So, I have a husband. I have three children. I have a mum. I... at the time, I had five sisters but one of my sisters has died since. Lots of great friends, really close friends. Amazing! My oncologist was a bit unusual, from what I've learned since, in the sense that he was very available to me, because I could email him and he would respond wherever he was in the world because he's one of these, kind of, high-flying oncologists and so he'd always be off at conferences and whatever. But he was always available.

VD: And the terminology, the medical terminology, was it inclusive? Did you feel detached? Separate?

Rani: I was one of these people that felt that I had to be very much a part of the decision-making process. I think that's my coping mechanism.

VD: And what about from Maggie's?

Rani: You know there's no way that I can express my gratitude to the Maggie's Centre in the sense that, every step of the way, they've been more than a listening ear, they've been literally like another family, another... a sanctuary.

But, at the time when I was diagnosed, the Young Women's Group didn't exist. That came later. It was about three years post my diagnosis. The timing was perfect for me because, I think, that's when I really hit a wall. I've had a lot of complications along the way. All my positivity, all my own kind of support, everything I had in place, literally, was, you know, I just needed something more and it was the support of other women who'd had all sorts of different cancers and all sorts of different experiences, but one thing we really shared was that we were all relatively young because I was almost 41 when I was diagnosed.

VD: How are you now?

Rani: I'm just really glad to be here and I think, if I didn't have the treatment, I wouldn't be.

VD: Thank you very much, Rani. Thank you so much for talking to us.

Rani: It's a pleasure.

VD: We wish you well.

Rani: Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

VD: As a charity, Maggie's relies on the generosity of supporters. If you'd like to donate, do visit maggiescentres.org. {Music}
Diane recently cycled 100 miles to raise money for Maggie’s despite having years of treatment.

Diane:
I’m 66 years old now. I’m married, two boys and I have two grandchildren as well, yeah. And I have breast cancer. I was diagnosed, initially, about three and a half years ago and I had a lumpectomy and chemotherapy and radiotherapy and they thought that everything was fine and then, just over two years ago, they discovered that it had gone into my liver and into my bones. My cancer is not curable but it is controllable, to some extent, by chemotherapy.

I did feel very isolated, particularly when I ended up in hospital not feeling well. I’d never been in hospital before, except when I had the boys, and I’m needle-phobic, so that doesn’t help! But I didn’t know what to expect and I just found it a little bit overwhelming.

I was alone. It was the middle of the night. I’d been sick a lot. I had to come in by ambulance and my husband, you know, didn’t come in till the following day. But, yes, I was by myself. There’s business going on round you all the time in hospital but, although the staff are superb, they don’t have the time to spend just to chat about things.

The whole situation for me was transformed because someone I had known a long time, but hadn’t really been close friends with, was also diagnosed at the same time and her initial diagnosis was a lot worse than mine. But we happened to end up in the same ward, at the same time and that just transformed the whole situation for me and we’ve been able to share experiences ever since. I mean one of the things that Elaine and I had… had a Christian faith in common. So, that... And that has certainly helped me. And that's... We’ve sort of travelled the road together, if you like. {Music}

I try and cycle as much as I can. I probably go out three/four times a week on it. When I’m out on the bike, particularly if you’ve got an open road and I’m by myself, all sorts of things go through my head. It’s a time when you, sort of, sort out your thoughts. Yes. Solitude can be welcome. Isolation is when you feel cut off from other people and you don’t really have a choice about it.

VD: The difference between solitude and isolation is something Ina understands only too well. She discovered she had a tumour in her abdomen after going into hospital for an unrelated operation.

Ina: My isolation's coming because my husband's left me. I'd just come out of hospital. Within a few weeks, we'd broke up and I had to leave my home. I had to move out because I needed looking after. I went to live with my sister and I lost my home and my husband. {Music}

I’ve been more concerned about losing my husband than having cancer. I got a bungalow from the council and I was just going to move in with a chair my sister were giving me and I bought myself a bed, second-hand. But then a friend of mine, who I used to work with – I was a psychiatric nursing assistant – she’d got everybody
together and they furnished that house for me. Second-hand stuff, things they were no longer using, but the whole bungalow were furnished for me.

I’d never heard of Maggie’s, never heard of it until my oncologist told me. I'd get to the bus stop and I'd think, "Oh! I'm not going. I can't be doing with this. It's too far." It's about 20 miles away but...The first thing I remember was being allowed to cry. I felt guilty and as if I shouldn't be doing it because family members, you know... like people say, "Oh, don’t cry!" You know. Because, you know, you've got to sort yourself out. That sort of thing. But, at Maggie's, they give me permission to cry. It gets rid of emotions, you know and people will give you a hug.

When I first came, I'd got no interest in anything but, all that I've took part in, I've gained something from and I've done lots of things in the last... I've been coming just over a year now. {Sound of birds and digging in soil}

This part of the garden is used mainly for vegetables. It's just on the edge of the hospital campus really. {Sound of digging} It's turning really well at the minute because of all the rain we've had. Yeah, I love it. You really get lost in the garden so you don't think of anything but what you're doing. It's a bit mucky.

To me, it might sound silly, the fact that it's like a house up in the trees, it's raised from the ground and you've got trees all around it, to me, it's like a birds' nest and I feel like a little bird coming to roost. {Music}

VD: Many people with cancer are cared for by partners, family or friends. Let's talk now to Gwen in Abergavenny. Hello Gwen! How are you?

Gwen: Hi!

VD: Gwen, thank you for talking to us. Two years ago, your husband was diagnosed with bowel cancer. Can you describe what kind of impact that had on you both?

Gwen: It was huge really. More than probably we ever thought. I mean sort of pre-diagnosis, Mike was very private and very quiet about his symptoms and didn't even tell me for some time. Our relationship, probably, was slightly suffering because he wasn't his usual social, funny, sort of, optimistic self. And then, on diagnosis, knowing that, as the carer, that my role really was to be with him and support him, where on the exterior and to the outside world, he was coping with it extremely well but, kind of knowing him for 40-odd years and living with him, you could sort of see that things weren't as well as they could be in his head, as well as in his body.

VD: I wonder if, despite that partnership between you of four decades, there were moments when you both felt alone.

Gwen: Absolutely! And I think, sort of, as the process went on and as he was unable to do the things that he usually did, it was the realisation of, “Oh gosh”, you know, "I never put the rubbish out normally. I'd never mowed the lawn, I never do this do this, never do that..." And having to cope with all of that. And you do feel alone and, in the middle of the night, you know, sort of, when you're used to having somebody beside you...
VD: So, can I ask you, Gwen? In those moments, in the middle of the night, what were you thinking about?

Gwen: I think... I think I was lucky in that I never sort of felt that I was going to lose him but things go through your head about sort of, you know, “How are you going to cope with the next day?” For instance, when he was coming out of hospital with a temporary ileostomy bag and things like that. And you think, well, you know, “I'm squeamish. I really don't know if I can handle this. I don't know if I can even look at him,” you know. So there was those sort of feelings going through my head.

When it came to it, he really did deal with it all himself and was very private about handling that situation, so… But, you know, sort of, it's "What happens if he's taken ill in the middle of the night? And I'm on my own. I'm no nurse," you know, "I'm...What do I do?" And I think that must be a fairly common feeling.

VD: I think there were times – you say you were no nurse but you did have to help, for example, when the temporary bag leaked and that led to you feeling alone.

Gwen: Oh, absolutely! You know, sort of, when you’re woken up at 3 o'clock in the morning with a grown man sort of very upset because he’s having to wake his wife up to clear up a mess. It's not very nice and you don't tell people about that. You...

VD: Can I ask why not?

Gwen: Because... well, I... I just think you sort of... It's not something that you bring up in conversation. You know, people will say to you, you know, "Are you okay?" My response was always, "Yep, Mick's fine, so I'm fine." But probably wasn't, you know. So you do sort of hide behind that sort of sense of... It is quite a private thing with his body and you didn’t want to let people know that that sort of thing happened.

Since then, we’ve talked quite openly about it but, at the time, it wasn't something that we wanted to discuss. So you do feel kind of alone in those circumstances.

VD: I wonder if it made much difference that you both live in a fairly rural community?

Gwen: I think it did and it didn’t. There is a very strong community feel, so we were comfortable with most people. However, as I was saying, it, you know, the sort of nitty-gritties of the situation, we didn't talk about. I think there was a fear that, if something went wrong, for instance, with... when he was on his chemo, there's something that happened that meant that we needed urgent treatment – it was a distance to get there.

VD: How is Mike?

Gwen: He's fine now. However, his personality has changed slightly.

VD: Go on!
Gwen: He's much more easily stressed. He's much more emotional about everything and he recognises it. So I just need to raise an eyebrow sometimes (laughs) and he'll know he needs to settle down and calm himself. And will hopefully get better over time. So, fingers crossed!

VD: Gwen, thank you so much for talking to us... appreciate your openness. Thank you.

Gwen: No problem. Thank you. (Music)

VD: Maggie's is also there for any family and friends left behind, like Peter, who now volunteers for the centre after his wife died.

Peter: My wife, Kathy, was diagnosed with a brain tumour and was getting treatment at the City Hospital and it so happened that her treatment started just a couple of weeks before the Maggie's Centre first opened. So, we were using it on a regular basis for the, what, year/15 months of her illness.

The best picture, actually, is the one up there. Hang on! Sometimes it can be quite small things that trigger memories and emotion. We were on a family holiday down in Bath, probably a year or two before she was diagnosed, and one of the family members who's a very, very good, semi-professional photographer, took a load of family pictures and captured this moment of Kath and I – I can't even remember what we were laughing at but we were absolutely cracked up over something – and it's just a wonderful image and... It's probably my favourite photograph, yeah. Oh, she was gorgeous, yeah. (Music)

In a crowd you can still feel isolated because the fundamental key person of your life is not there and just that validation of who you are has been, I mean particularly being married for 41 years, so much of it was what we did together, you know, an entire life was built. You get that situation where all those treasured, shared memories become solo memories and there's nowhere you can go for validation of those memories. I think I remember which of my kids did that at that age but the person I would have turned to to say, you know, "Which one was it?" That person isn't here anymore.

Mark: I haven't lost anybody who I've met through the Maggie Centre to cancer yet. So I haven't had that closeness but I've lost friends and relatives to cancer over the last few years. But until I've... got cancer, I've been able to compartmentalise that part of my life.

What's quite interesting for me is there's an awful lot of other support out there for cancer patients and I recently joined a Facebook group called Melanoma Mates. It's fantastic and I'm very glad I'm part of it! The problem with it is that people die. (Music)

When you have a large community like that and, even in a social media setting, it's quite hard. At the moment I'm going through a good patch. You know, seven weeks ago, my prof deemed me tumour-free, which was just amazing, given where I was back in January, where he said, "Look! There's a worst case scenario here, you know, you... in six to 12 months, you could be gone or in palliative care." And here I am 11
months later and I'm functioning pretty much normally. And you get that incredible feeling of elation and of, you know, I've dodged the bullet, at least for a few weeks.

Diane: I don't want to be restricted by the cancer as to what I can achieve in the time that I've got. (Background singing "It's the most wonderful time of the year..."") So I still try and keep very busy. I still sing in choirs. I don't want to do everything with other people that have got cancer. I also need to be with ordinary people getting on with ordinary lives.

Georgia: Some of my friends actually chose not to share things that were happening in their life because they felt, because I'd been diagnosed with cancer and it was such a life changing thing, they felt that they couldn't burden me. Because they were like, "In the scheme of things, this is not important compared to what you're going through."

But I felt completely the opposite because, to me, what was going on in their lives is important and, also, I wanted the normality. Just to hear everything that was going on (sound of children), you know, and, like I said, at work I didn't tell... I only told the management.

So, when I came back, everyone treated me as if I'd been off with a cough and cold because they didn't know what I'd been off with. So, in a way, that worked to my advantage because I didn't feel like I was being bombarded with questions. People weren't giving me that look. But what I found was, as time went on, I wanted to talk about it and then I thought, "I can't talk about this because I haven't shared this with them."

So, what I did, I wrote a letter to all the staff and my head teacher read it out in a staff meeting for me. And it felt great after I wrote the letter. And some people embrace it, embrace you. Some people don't know what to say. Some people don't acknowledge it at all. All different ways (sound of children singing and playing).

The word "cancer" just stayed with me for months. It was the last thing I thought about at night and it was the first thing I thought about in the morning. And that went on for months. And I can actually remember waking up one morning and I hadn't woken up and thought of cancer and I thought, "This is the start of me being able to move forward now" because, at one stage, I thought, for the rest of my life, I was going to be thinking of cancer 24/7 (sound of children singing).

Cancer has definitely changed me and sometimes I believe things happen for a reason. Although cancer is a terrible thing to be diagnosed with, the positive that it's brought me, it was meant to be. And it's changed my life in many positive ways. I am very well. My treatment finished in January 2014 at the end and I'm currently free of cancer.

Ina: When I'm out walking my dog, my head's full of all kinds of thoughts. I keep going over how things are and trying to work out why this happened. I very often end up crying. But, at the moment, I'm much better than I was. I've got stronger. It's like a different world to me now (sound of birdsong). I'm noticing everything from sky, fields, trees, birds. Whatever's around me, I'm seeing it and recognising it. Even litter on the floor, you know, I'll have an opinion about it, you know, where I'd just walk by it and not even
notice it before. I wasn't interested in life. Where now I'm starting to feel there's a possibility. *Music*

It's just good to get out into the world.

**VD:** Wow! It's good to get out into the world.

Thank you for joining us on this Maggie's Podcast. Wherever you are in your cancer experience, I wish you love and strength and do join the conversation if you'd like. Just use the hashtag #morethanmedicine.

*Sound of phones ringing*

**EB:** Thank you for listening to this Maggie's Podcast which was produced by Loftus Media for Maggie's. We hope it gives you a taste of just some of the support we offer in our centres.

Maggie's Centres support anyone living with cancer, including families and friends, and it's all totally free of charge. For more information or to listen to other episodes in this series, go to maggiescentres.org.

Maggie's Podcast. Giving you so much more than medicine.