“Everything I’ve been through helps me to support others”

**Marie Curie Nurse Alison Divers** lost a nine-month-old child and had cervical cancer in her twenties, leading to a life-changing operation in her thirties. Now in her forties, she draws on her own experiences of loss and suffering to support others.

"I was diagnosed with [cervical cancer](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-cancer/) when I was just 21. When they told me, it felt like someone had hit me on the head with a brick. My son Kyle, was only 14 months old at the time."

"Everything was like a big whirlwind – it didn’t feel real. But it became real, very fast.

"I went through laser treatment, radiotherapy and chemotherapy – it was a long process. It took 18 months. The doctors warned that if I wanted to be completely clear of the cancer I’d need a hysterectomy, but I said no – I still wanted more children."

## Another profound shock

"Everything it took its toll, but just months later, I fell pregnant and my daughter Morgan was born.

"At three months old, Morgan was diagnosed with a severe heart defect. It was so awful. When we got the news, I was still trying to get my head around what I’d been through.

"But there was no treatment or surgery that could save my girl – Morgan was just nine months old when she died in 1999.

"Losing a child is not something you ever get over. The six months that followed her death are just a blur.

"People who have babies avoid you, it was so incredibly difficult but I had a network of friends and family and my husband who got me through that time – and I had to stay strong for my son.

"I also went to group counselling. You never expect in a million years that you might have to bury your child but speaking to people who had experienced similar grief really helped."

## Another chance

"A couple of years later, I fell pregnant again and my daughter Nicole was born.

"Thankfully, Nicole was perfectly healthy but until she was two I was overcome with the question of ‘what if something happens to her?’ I managed to get past it – she’s 18 now.

"Then, when I was 28, the cervical cancer came back and this time it had spread to my ovaries too. There was no other option but to have a full hysterectomy and to have my ovaries removed.

"I had the operation done and it was very emotional – at 29, I went through menopause instantly.

"I wasn’t just dealing with the fact that I wouldn’t be able to have children again, but it felt like a part of my womanhood had been taken away from me.

"But I had amazing support from the people around me, which helped me enormously."

My Son Kyle was just 14 months old when I first got my diagnosis. My daughter Nicole took away a lot of the grief of losing her sister.

## A dream is born

"When I was 31, my dad fell ill. It was while I was at the hospital visiting him that I saw four Marie Curie Nurses outside in the garden consoling a family. And I thought, that family needs those nurses so much during this difficult time.

"Later, I went to speak one of the family members and she said to me: ‘I couldn’t have got through this without the nurses.’

"There was something about that experience that me think that was what I wanted to do one day – I’d been through loss and knew how important it was to have people there to support you.

"I wanted to be that person for another family.

"After my dad died, I started working for a care company and gradually built up my experience of palliative care. I told anyone who’d listen I was going to be a Marie Curie Nurse one day. Eventually, a job came up at Marie Curie and I thought: this is my time, I’m going to go for it."

## It’s not just a job for me

"The day I got my uniform I cried like a baby.

"People had been so kind to me, and my family, through everything I’d been through in my life and so I wanted to give something back.

"Being able to help someone, to give them the dignity and respect at the end of their lives, is why I do it.

"Having experienced loss myself, of course sometimes it can be upsetting but it also helps me to understand better what the families are feeling.

"Most people will ask if I have lost somebody and when I say ‘yes’ it really does open a new chapter of looking after that person."

*Source:* [*https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/blog/alison-divers-story/225251*](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/blog/alison-divers-story/225251)