

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Joanna Cox, 39, from Castleford, woke up on the wrong side of the bed with a life-changing new condition...

Packing our suitcases, the whole house was buzzing with excitement.

My daughters Isabelle, now 19, and Caitlin, now 21, giggled as they compared bikinis and squabbled over what outfits to wear abroad.

It was the summer of 2017 and we were getting ready for our long-awaited family holiday to Majorca, Spain.

We hadn't been on holiday in years, what with the girls in secondary school and me balancing two jobs.

But considering that my grandma Anne, then 81, was getting on, we wanted to have one last family hurrah abroad together.

We just couldn't wait to kick back and relax in the Spanish sun for two weeks.

And so we spent the night before in a state of chaos, clothes flying across the room as we packed our suitcases.

I was running on adrenaline as I tried to keep track of what was being packed, buzzing with excitement for the next day.

The girls were so excited that they struggled to sleep!

But for me, it was a different story – as soon as my head hit the pillow, I was fast asleep.

Groggily, I woke up, my eyes blurry as I blinked awake.

Looking up, I noticed several unfamiliar faces looking at me.

I didn't even have the energy to react as they introduced themselves as paramedics.

'Your blood sugar levels are extremely low,' they told me, passing me a sandwich and a hot drink. 'We need to get you to A&E.'

Hearing the commotion,

Isabelle and Caitlin rushed into my bedroom.

'Mum, you're awake!' they said. 'We were so worried.'

As the paramedics helped me to my feet, I grabbed hold of my phone on the bedside table.

I almost dropped it when I saw the time.

Or should I say – the day.

Not only had I missed my alarm... I'd completely overslept by two days!

Reality sank in as I flicked through my emails drowsily.

An email from the airline provider sat in my inbox – we'd missed our flight.

Why didn't the girls wake me up? I thought, confused.

Shock rushed through me as they explained how they'd tried to wake me as we travelled to A&E.

Neither shaking me, calling me or making loud noises did the trick.

I'd slept through all of it!

Only, this wasn't the first time this had happened...

It all started six years ago when I accidentally woke up a few hours past my alarm.

I sprang out of bed, fighting off my tiredness and rushing around the bedroom, hastily throwing on my clothes.

The girls were late for school, all because I hadn't woken up to give them a lift – they couldn't take public transport, as we lived in a remote area over 30 minutes away.

I was always on time, ensuring we have breakfast as a family before leaving, too.

But the girls weren't

annoyed – they got to enjoy their morning off school watching TV!

Balancing my part-time jobs with running my own cleaning company, I was always a busy bee.

So, I just put my oversleeping down to being overworked and tired.

'You OK, Mum?' the girls asked when I finally got up. 'You're our Sleeping Beauty!'

I laughed it off, not knowing how fitting my new nickname would become.

Ringling up their school, I pulled an excuse out of thin air and apologised profusely.

Only, I didn't expect to run out of excuses so soon.

My oversleeping became so frequent that I'd find myself falling asleep in public, too.

On a night out in Leeds with my best mates, we couldn't wait to paint the town red.

But, as we perched at the bar and I sipped on a mocktail, I struggled to fight off my extreme drowsiness.

It's been a busy day, I



I'm only awake for a few hours



I'M NO DISNEY PRINCESS

thought to myself.

My eyelids drooped and I couldn't stop yawning.

And before I knew it, I was being tugged from my seat, a sharp grip tightening on me.

I blinked blearily, confused as I looked around the bar.

Two security guards in padded black uniforms dragged me across the dancefloor – I was too sleepy to fight them off.

I spotted my mates watching, their mouths agape in shock.

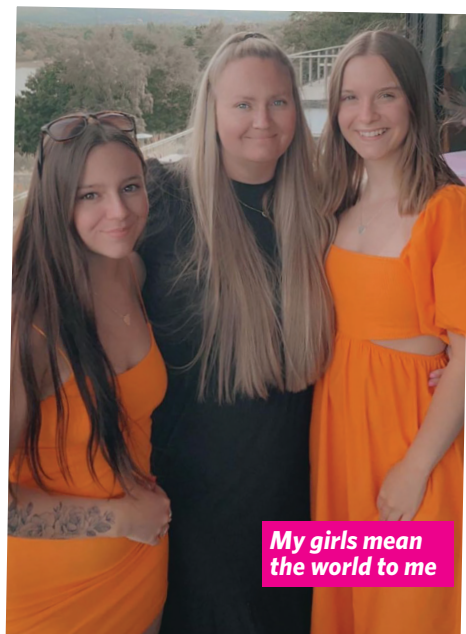
'You're too drunk to be in here,' the security guards said. 'You need to leave.'

'I promise I'm not drunk,' I mumbled. 'I don't even drink!'

But they weren't listening and I was soon pushed out of the door and onto the streets, my mates traipsing after me, disappointed.

My girls were right, I truly was turning into Sleeping Beauty!

Matters only



My girls mean the world to me

frustrated and confused.

At least if I'd had a diagnosis, I would've been able to come to terms with my new reality.

Instead, I was snoozing for more than 12 hours a night and I was suffering from severe nose bleeds.

The kids were having to give me shots from my EpiPen to treat my anaphylactic shocks and had noticed my new habit of sleep-talking, too.

I never remembered a word I said though.

One night, I was trapped in a horrendous nightmare, my dream-self watching on blankly as I pulled the trigger on a group of children.

The next thing I knew, I was waking up blearily.

Only, police officers were gathered around my bedside, looking down on me.

I was still buzzing with anger and adrenaline from the nightmare, so it took me a while to calm down and gather my emotions.

My heart sank as they explained my scary reality.

While asleep, my daughters had found me screaming that I wanted to kill my own family – the people I loved the most in the entire world.

They had no other choice but to call the police.

I sobbed unconsoled as the police sat beside me, talking me through it all.

This was the start of something much worse, I felt.

Since then, I've been passed around to many different sleep specialists and trialled countless new medications.

Often, I'm plagued by hallucinations of spiders

crawling all over my body and up my bedroom walls, or a man walking around my bed but I'm unable to scream for help.

Finally, in 2022, I received my official diagnosis of idiopathic hypersomnia – a rare disorder causing excessive sleeping, which doesn't yet have a cure.

I wanted my diagnosis to be a sigh of relief, but instead I just felt numb.

Connecting with others on Facebook with the condition, I feel less alone in with my fatigue struggles.

Now sleeping on average between 18 and 22 hours per day, I'm only awake for a couple of hours at a time – and sometimes I don't wake up at

all, spending days in a row unconscious.

Surviving on baby

food pots from

ALDI and protein

shakes, I get my

quick fix of food

whenever I can to

avoid my blood

sugar levels

dropping while I'm

asleep for hours at a time.

I just wish I could have my old life back and go out for a meal with my family again.

While the girls have never made comments about us not being able to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions together, I know my condition causes them a lot of disappointment at times.

We can't make plans anymore either, as there's no guarantee I'll wake up.

Instead, we must make the most of the precious moments we're all awake together.

And while they both joked I was Sleeping Beauty, my life is far from that of a glamorous Disney Princess.

I can only hope that one day, I'll eventually see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I survive on baby food pots and protein shakes

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