With son George

'Our children's lives can't be in vain'

Louise Fox, 49, from Barton-le-Clay in Bedfordshire, lost her son George at the age of 13 after he was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour. She grew close to other mums in the same position and a group of them decided to skydive in memory of their children. They raised thousands for brain cancer charity Tessa Jowell Foundation and have plans for another challenge this year.

'George was my middle child. He was bright, intelligent and cheeky and the healthiest of my three children then, out of the blue, in April 2021 he started complaining of headaches. The doctor and optician said they were just migraines but a week later he vomited and alarm bells started ringing.

We rushed straight to A&E where they did neurological checks but the headache pattern continued for weeks. I put my trust in the doctor who told me point-blank, "This isn't a brain tumour." A few weeks later George and I headed into his scan and we never made it back home.

George after his surgery

They found a 6cm brain tumour and blue-lighted George to Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge. Our naivety probably saved us at that point. George was as sweet and loving as always. Pushing our beds together on the ward, he tried to make it a special time.

In May, George went in for his 10-hour surgery – we still didn't know what we were dealing with – but afterwards they said they had removed 99% of it. We felt so positive.

MY WORLD IMPLODED

Three days later and George was home but when we went back for the results, our world changed forever. They explained that he had a glioblastoma for which there was no cure. They advised us not to go looking for a cure and to enjoy our next 12 to 15 months that we had left with him.

I collapsed in the room – my world imploded. We refused to tell George he had an incurable brain tumour. We couldn't tell him he was dying. So we sat at Burger King afterwards watching our little boy eat his lunch with his paper crown on, our hearts shattered into pieces. Within a month, his tumour had grown back to full size.

George went through radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and then immunotherapy in Germany. We watched our boy have seizures and there wasn't even a 1% chance of survival. Nearly 12 months later the same doctor who told us it definitely "wasn't a brain tumour" was the same one who signed his death certificate.

Louise started a support group

When you're on this journey you turn to parents in support groups – you hope to find someone with a way to help prolong your child's life for long enough until a cure is found. You just want to save your child.

I set up a Facebook group called Forever Mums Of Brain Tumour Angels, for mums who had lost children to a brain tumour. There's about 60 who want to raise awareness. We needed something that felt like a challenge – we were all terrified of heights so this felt right. The skydive was so emotional. We all had T-shirts with our children on and when the second plane came down, there was a double rainbow.

We're planning Earth, Wind And Fire next. For Earth we're climbing Snowdonia in May, for Wind we're going to be wing walking and for Fire we're going to walk on hot coals. I'd encourage any mum who has been through what I have to join us – there's strength in numbers. We have been through the ultimate pain but we have a responsibility. It powers us through – our children's lives can't be in vain.'

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