

What a year!

On the 16th March 2020 I woke up to an email from Matt Hancock telling me to shield. My heart sank and I felt physically sick as a sense of panic washed over me, not for myself but because I have three foster children, my husband, our daughter and my mother and father-in-law that I care for. I was so worried how I could still look after them and shield and I could see the change - people were starting to panic-buy and I was so worried as I couldn't get anything as I shopped for 8-11 people. I was shielding so my husband was going to the supermarkets and they were only allowing us two cartons of milk. I tried online but struggled to get anything, not even powdered milk. I was on line 24/7 continually searching for people that would deliver food - I found a few local businesses delivering and lots of little pop-up companies making pies, meals etc. I just purchased anything so I could feed my in-laws and the kids. It got that bad I had to buy spam and do not even get me started on the loo roll situation...

As if my stress levels were not high enough, I got a phone call from my parents - they were on a long holiday in Cyprus and their flight home had been cancelled. All hotels were having to close and, told they have to leave the country, they were frantically trying to get home but all flights were cancelled. I spent the next 48 hours contacting travel agents, airlines and the British embassy to get them home. I finally got the embassy to agree to send a military flight to pick them up.

At this point people were in a state of panic but it seemed so selfish that some were emptying the shelves and others just couldn't get anything. I felt under huge pressure to look after the family and feed them.

I feel I am a very positive person so tried to make it as positive as possible. I had to shield as I was classed as high-risk because of all my previous surgeries and treatments, so got the kids involved and did the London Marathon in the back garden over 3 days at Easter weekend to raise money for the club's chosen charity. I don't have a huge garden so I did feel a little bit dizzy afterwards. We had a garden party for VE Day with the kids and bbqs etc and I decided to enter lots of virtual races to stop myself from getting bored, as the 'B' word is banned in our house. I actually did over 30 virtual races last year including the New York Marathon in October.



2021 was due to be a big year for me - my 50th birthday and I was going to be a grandparent for the first time. For my birthday, as we were only allowed to run with up to six people, I decided to have a little celebration in Chadderton Park where I used to do parkrun. I organised a relay and finished off with four loops of the park, so I got to run with some of my lovely friends from RRR. The most amazing part of my birthday was that I got to hold my granddaughter for the first time.

So, after three months of running loops of my garden I started getting up at 5.30am and going for a little run each morning, as this helped me cope with whatever the day had to throw at me. Each morning after my run I would do Jo Wicks with the kids and a few weights to try and keep me sane(ish), as I was homeschooling 3 teenagers with two in their final year doing their GCSEs. I never want to read another Shakespeare book ever again!

As a few of you are aware I was between 20-21 stone most of my adult life until about 4½ years ago. I had been feeling unwell and went to the doctors and was told I needed major surgery and then undergo treatment. They were very concerned about my weight and putting me to sleep - I remember the anaesthetist saying, 'we need to address the elephant in the room', I tried a bit of humour and said it was rude to call me an elephant. He did not crack a smile and said he was concerned about putting me to sleep and my recovery time as I was classed as morbidly obese. So, one Saturday morning I got up, felt physically sick with nerves, but went to my first parkrun. I discovered a love for running and exercise - I joined a women's only bootcamp and after six months joined RRR. I started studying nutrition and decided to go down the clean eating route, as I didn't want to do any fad diets - I have dieted all my adult life and just got bigger and bigger.



I think the past 18 months have tested my strength and willpower beyond what I could ever have imagined. We lost mum to Covid in December - in the past I would reach for food and use it as a coping mechanism. Some days it was the hardest thing not to reach out for the comfort food but instead I would put on my trainers and go for a run.

So, three major surgeries later I am still running - slowly but running. I know lots of runners are always chasing that new PB but the way I see it I am just happy that I am still able to run - and a mile is a mile no matter how fast I run it. I joined RRR to keep fit and keep my weight down, what I did not expect was to meet some amazing friends - so thank you. Now I always have lots of friends I can pester to run with me! xx

Nikki Forster