London Marathon Journey – November

My final “run club” session with the Lycra Clad Lovelies was held on the night prior to Lockdown 2. The cold and rather damp session was cheered by fireworks as we snaked through slippery streets. Within the group I have represented all types of runner. I started right at the back, spent many comfortable months somewhere in the middle and now I’m having push myself join the frontrunners.

A changing identity is part of every transplant journey . I am proud of my pre transplant self. I recognise how hard that existence was. Post-transplant I have certainly experienced some difficulties but, largely, I have gently allowed myself to explore my new capabilities and edged quietly towards new goals.

Other people’s expectations of transplant recipients are more complicated. I remember a nurse at the GP surgery who commented “You don’t look like a heart transplant patient” and my (previous) dentist who asked me how long I was expected to live. I kick myself now that I didn’t challenge each comment more harshly.

Family, friends and colleagues also shape expectations. Opinions range from some who believe I’m permanently on the brink of death, to my husband’s special brand of Yorkshire encouragement. His thoughts on me training for the London marathon were firstly that I’d have to “hurry up” and secondly that I’d have to brave winter training.

Luckily, in the face of a global pandemic, I will at least be able to train over the summer. (The marathon date is now October). In terms of speeding up : don’t tell him but he definitely has a point!

Yesterday, I met with Simon, a running coach, for the first time. Today, my legs are aching but I do at least feel that my marathon journey has started. I had no idea what to expect. We talked about my fitness and he showed me some “drills” to prepare for my runs. His story is hugely inspirational, spanning professional athletics, working for many major sports brands and needing emergency heart surgery after collapsing on holiday in Paris many years ago. We did have something in common after all!

We met at the Guisborough Walkway centre and interrupted kids, prams, dogs and grandparents by him videoing me “sprinting” back and forth. It seems my right foot prefers Strictly come Dancing ( pointing my toes at a jaunty angle) to running, but my posture at least was ok. He will email the results of his findings to me and then I can plan to improve my “technique” accordingly.

It crossed my mind, as I walked home after 2 hours of analysis, that if you had told my 8 year old self she would one day meet with a running coach to help with a marathon journey, she would have looked at you with much suspicion and stuck her nose straight back into a good book.