London Marathon Journey – June

A wise friend of mine once told me that, after a transplant, emotion is never far from the surface.

A couple of situations in late May and early June brought emotional tremors to my normally dormant volcano. Shielding was a difficult time and emerging from it has not been without its ongoing frustrations. Also, needing to seek out medical care for a potential infection heightened my sense of vulnerability. When you have experienced being acutely unwell, the fears of returning to those dark places can ambush you. Feelings resurfaced like hot lava. Memories of a child sitting on the side lines of PE lessons, or waiting at a railway station knowing her journey would culminate on an operating table.

In the midst of this, it dawned on me, for the first time, crucial and comforting: that in all situations now, I have the best company imaginable: the company of a gift from my remarkable donor.

The reason for writing this, as you know, is to raise awareness of organ donation and to encourage other transplant recipients. I’ve been hugely inspired myself this month by Ryan Brett, aiming to be the first transplant recipient to run from Lands End to John O’ Groats. His updates have been both frank and humorous. My account of this journey, I hope, is honest, positive, but never “sugar coated”.

Actually, talking of sugar, I’m now starting to stock pile Jelly Beans. I love them anyway, and now I have a genuine reason to buy them. Nutrition was one of the topics of conversation when I spoke, earlier today, to Simon, my running coach. He was less enthusiastic about my obsession. Apparently what I need are energy gels. As with running coaches and running vests, the idea of me using these feels far too pretentious. Yet somehow I find myself Google searching some rather expensive products and trying to work out whether lime or raspberry would be more refreshing.

The start of June needed to bring me something of a re - boot, the true starting blocks of the marathon journey. Many marathon training plans are 16 – 18 weeks in length, so now is the time to sharpen my focus. The end goal is suddenly on the horizon. We’ve agreed to blend a beginners and intermediate marathon plan for me to follow. When I say “blend”, I mean literally print, cut and Sellotape the two together. This gives me a rather gentle weekly plan (beginner) with some serious weekend long runs (intermediate). It has been placed in a prominent position and I’ve got some multicoloured marker pens to record each session achieved. Never, in my 44 year history have I been so organised!

Sessions will be a mixture of “easy”(who are they trying to kid?), “interval” and “long” runs. My first long run (according to my plan) was scheduled for 6 miles. I breathed a sigh of relief, this felt achievable at least, until Simon got wind of the fact that I’d shuffled my way through 14 miles last month. He has now decided that the first long run should be between 8 and 12 miles. Apparently I can choose. So how many of you will tell him if I find myself sitting under a tree eating Jelly Beans after 8 miles?

Of course, the other element of this journey is my desire to raise funds for the Freeman Heart and Lung Transplant Association. The organisation supports transplant recipients and their families. It actively promotes sport through the British, European and World Transplant Games. It funds equipment and research at the Freeman Hospital and recognises the sacrifices made by donors and their families.

I will be unashamedly starting to pursue my fundraising target from now until October.

If you feel you can help, please visit: <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/SusieWood1>