

# Losing parents to cancer made me help charity

LOSING both parents to cancer was a massive blow for TV star Terri Dwyer.

But it has spurred the former Hollyoaks actress to help raise money for the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation.

Terri, 35, is convinced smoking played a huge part in their deaths of her dad Tony Dwyer and mum Doreen.

"It was such a devastating blow to lose both my parents so young," she says.

"My mum died at 44, which was incredibly young, and my dad died at 50.

"I cannot accept that smoking did not contribute to their cancers, they both smoked 20 or 30 a day.

"My mum had ovarian cancer but then it spread to her lungs."

Her dad died suddenly from stomach cancer in January 2003.

Terri says: "We were so close, I was always a daddy's girl and we forged a stronger relationship after we lost mum.

"I feel massively impacted by cancer and because I lost both parents to cancer, even though there is a low genetic risk, I do worry about myself getting cancer.

goal keeper Steve Simonsen, to lead the countdown to start the walk.

The 9km walk, which started and finished at the Port of Liverpool Building, Pier Head saw women of all ages don yellow T-shirts and brave strong winds to cross the finish line and collect their medal.

Terri says: "There was such an amazing atmosphere on the night, even the strong winds couldn't spoil it.

"All walkers should feel really proud of what they've achieved.

**About to find out more about the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation visit**  
[www.roycastle.org](http://www.roycastle.org)



**LOSS: Terri Dwyer**

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# I wasn't going to let local bullies stop me

**FORCED** by bullies to stand trembling on top of a brick wall with a soft drop on one side schoolgirl Katie Small knows first hand what it's like to be vulnerable and frightened.

But she never let the experience destroy her and instead grew up to become a teacher and has now set up her own motivational workshops for schools and youth groups.

The 32-year-old mum-of-two, who is a teacher at a Kirkby school, says: "I was told I could achieve anything I wanted but not all children have this.

"So many times I hear 'I can't do that because' or 'I could have done that, however...'"

Katie, from Halewood Village, has set up a company, Small Steps To Success, offering the motivational workshops which cover a range of issues from helping children make the transition to high school to anti-bullying.

Katie's mother, author Catherine MacPhail, wrote a book about a girl being bullied

**Janet Tansley** talks to teacher Katie Small about how a terrifying childhood event shaped her life

after Katie's own experiences as a teenager in her home town of Greenock, Scotland. "It was the day after my 13th birth and my friend and I were on our way to a disco but took a short cut by a derelict railway line," explains Katie. She and her friend found a brick enclosure which they went into before being set upon in there by a family of local bullies.



**HAPPY:** Katie Small with her children Daniel and Jessica

"They kept us in there for two-and-a-half hours attacking us and humiliating us. At one point I was forced to stand on top of a brick wall with a soft drop on the other side and I did think 'I'm not going to make it out of this.'"

It was a horrific experience which left Katie scared and nervous, but she refused to become a victim and used her positive outlook to come out on top.

"Again, I think it's great how such a negative experience can be turned into a positive one. It's a life lesson for children. "Bad things do happen. There are disappointments, it's how you deal with them."

Katie, a part-time PE teacher at All Saints Catholic high school in Kirkby, set up Small Steps with help and guidance from Train 2000, and funding from the Start Up Fund in Knowsley, before setting up a website and starting to spread word about her work in January this year.

She has designed six workshops targeted at specific age groups from year 6 pupils to year 13.

Year 7's First Class Workshop looks at helping children cope in the first year at high school.

"With that I want to encourage children to aim to be the best they can be, to develop their self-esteem and confidence and to give them simple strategies to do that.

"Things like having a compliments box. I get children to make a compliments box and whenever someone says something nice or positive to them they write it down and put it in the box. Then when they are having a bad day, they can get it out and read it.

"The Year 9 workshop is called Your Life, Your Choice. Your future and looks at children choosing their options. "I try to encourage them to think about what they want and not just to follow their friends. It's the first time many of them have

ever thought about their life and their future, and this is about saying, if you're interested in art, choose art. It's about having the confidence to not follow the crowd and to think for themselves.

"It's about setting goals and looking at how they can reach them. As they get older Katie, who has two children Daniel, three, and Jessica, one, gets youngsters to create vision boards or dream boards which they can put in their bedrooms and look at them every day, before preparing them for the wider world.

She candidly admits: "In school I find a lot of children make excuses for things, they can't do something because... and that comes from adults.

"There is a lack of motivation nowadays. There is a name for everything and everybody has got some sort of syndrome. They say they can't do something when I know for a fact they can.

"Of course, there are some things out there that people have got. But if you have got dyslexia for instance, it doesn't mean you can't go to university or write a book, it just means you might have to go down a different route.

There are a lot of people with huge disability but they compete in the Paralympics. I tell children these people could easily have turned round and said 'I can't do that'.

"It's encouraging them to have a positive mindset". Schools have personal, health and social education lessons in school and teachers, says Katie, are brilliant in helping to motivate kids. But they are restricted by the curriculum.

"I have not got anything to achieve in terms of so many As and Cs so I can just go in and talk to children and teach things they don't learn in school."

◆ **Contact Katie** on 0151-488 0927 or log onto [www.smallstepsuccess.co.uk](http://www.smallstepsuccess.co.uk)

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