

## Dying to Talk – Luke Ryan

**LUKE:** So I had cancer twice, once when I 11 and then again when I was 22.

I was so conscious of I guess how having something like cancer puts you into this world that's quite removed from the people that you like, you know, your friends and your family.

They kind of no longer have the same sort of interior life that you have, or the same kind of perspective on you know, your existence.

I guess the first that I really had to engage and grapple with this sort of like, idea that you know, people die really, like you know, and in this case it might be me.

How do you tell people? In what way do you tell people? Like, what's the way of introducing it into conversation, that won't kill that conversation?

Like you know, you have to become this sort of this strange conversational ninja, able to like, you know, work out what people's objections or like what people's reactions are going to be so you can neutralise so you can neutralise them before it actually happens.

So I sort of turned to humour and stand-up comedy as a like, kind of way of getting on the front foot and shaping that narrative and going: no, it is okay, this is happening to me, I am very much fronting up to that, but like, you know here are the jokes, it's fine, let's all joke about it together.

I just seen humour has so much power to like, neutralise the most difficult things in life and sort of create a way of these things, especially, I guess, talking about them with people that aren't necessarily going through it themselves.

By talking about it, or doing an entire show about it or writing a book about it I wanted to be like normal.

It's a strange thing about having cancer, like you know, it's presented to you as this monumental event, and it is but like so much of the day-to-day experience of having cancer is just boring, is just routine, you just do the same things over and over, not every moment is like a significant moment.

Most of it just feels like regular life with perhaps a bit more vomiting.

We've become a lot worse at dying because death used to be a, I guess a fact, such a fact of life, like you know, mortality was high, maternal mortality was high, people just died.

Infections were more untreatable, cancer killed everyone that'd touched, so it's been that sort of almost paradoxical thing that as we, as a society have gotten better at warding off death, we have become a lot worse at actually dying.

There's such a big difference between like, length of life and quality of life and I think what's sort of lost sight of that, like it's just, you know, life at all costs, to die is a failure of medicine and in fact, a lot of the time to let someone die is medicine at its absolute best.

I think we do need to start talking about what it means to have a good death, and you need to have that conversation with your family, your friends potentially even like you know, it should be

something that we are not so scared of having, even though you know, it is a terrible thing, but it is something that we just need to engage with.