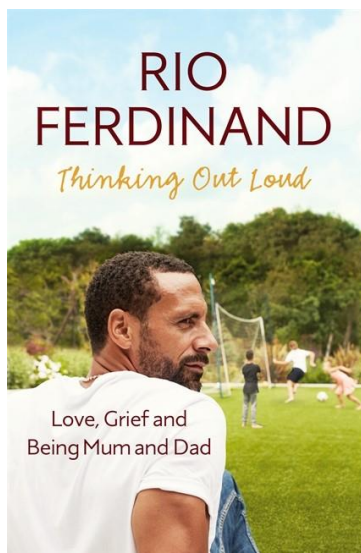


**MACMILLAN  
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# BOOK REVIEWS

**Read what people affected by cancer think about...**



**Thinking out loud. Love, grief and being mum and dad (2017)**

Ferdinand R.

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2017.

288pp.

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**Average star rating 4.5 (out of 5)**

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This comes across as an honest and frank description of Rio's struggle to cope with his wife's cancer and loss, and therefore would be helpful to all of us; after all, we are all going to die. Anyone whose loved one has received a cancer diagnosis will find it a tough read, but also an incredibly useful one. Certainly, anyone facing a terminal diagnosis could find it helpful if they are ready to face the reality of losing their loved one. It does come across as being brutally honest in terms of the impact of his wife's death, and that might be scary for someone facing the same outcome.

The book is nicely laid out and illustrated. It's clear who the author is and that will make it appealing to men in particular. Rio tells his story in a logical and sequential manner, in a way that grabs your interest. It made me wonder why he reacted as he did to his wife's diagnosis, but his searingly honest description of his understanding of where his emotional reactions come from goes a long way to explaining that. I like the tone; Rio doesn't expect the reader to understand medical terminology and comes across in a real and authentic way. The technicalities of his wife's cancer are explained well enough for us to get what was involved in the treatment.

I like the very personal touches and insights that he shares with the reader, such as the moment he decided to go and buy bottles of his wife's favourite perfume for each of their children (p. 26) so that they could have that aroma around them and take comfort from it. What a lovely idea. There is a lot about his football career, which I found quite dull (I'm not a football fan), but it is important background to the context within which he explained how much family time he missed because of his career, and his subsequent guilt about that.

The description of his despair, "wanting the pain to stop" (p. 38) is painful to read but very relatable if you've been through bereavement. The way in which he shares his initial coping techniques – alcohol and workaholism – comes across as very honest and real, and I applaud him for sharing his understanding of the function of these coping mechanisms. As he says (p. 40), "But just like suicide, or running away, or drink, workaholism could never be a healthy solution, just another version of an attempt to escape. More to the point, it was never going to help my children get through the death of their mother. How could they if I didn't show them?". This insight makes the book a fantastic resource to help us all understand the grief process a little better, to recognise in our own behaviours the potential for trying to avoid pain,

to seek escape from it in some form or other. It was good to see the dawning of the realisation that his responsibility to his children to set an example and show them how to grieve was his most important goal, and I applaud him for that.

Rio's revelations about his childhood are a difficult read at times. I admire his honesty in describing it so unflinchingly because it helped him to realise a vital fact, "I have come to understand that none of us can give what we have never received". His descriptions of his football career and how selfish and self-absorbed it made him are revealing. I wondered why he was going into so much detail until he shared (p. 156) his enormous guilt about the sacrifices Rebecca made for the sake of his career, in the belief that when his playing days were over, there would be time to make up for it. How tragic and brutal a reminder that we waste opportunities in the belief that we are all somehow going to have such a future, and a reminder of how precious life is.

I was very sad to read that Rio didn't let his wife talk about her imminent death, that he couldn't face such a discussion. I know from experience that some people don't want to admit the possibility that treatment won't work and believe that somehow all cancer is 100% treatable and survivable. I admire his honesty in admitting that he closed down such conversations and the problems that caused – he didn't know what she wanted to happen to her body and possessions, in any detail, when it came to arranging these things. That made me sad for his wife, that she didn't have the time or energy to communicate what she wanted to him or anyone else. I was particularly touched that she bought numerous notebooks and clearly intended to write down important information, but didn't manage to do it. What a sobering lesson for us all.

I like the list of things learned (p. 167): taking a friend to consultations (requesting to record the consultation is another option); letting a loved one talk about dying; guilt is natural, but not your friend; you will not feel this way forever. His observation about going to a support group made sense too, so that he could see "what progress could look like" (p. 176). He asks an excellent question about why grief isn't taught in school (p. 219). I wonder what impact his book and similar insights will have.

As a woman, I found this an interesting insight into one man's approach and attitude to illness and bereavement. His insights could be useful for men and women to help understand potential similarities and differences between how men and women approach cancer and bereavement. A brave and honest book, well done to the author for writing about his experiences so openly.

### **Living with stage 4 tonsil cancer (56-65) (August 2018)**

This is a moving assessment of loss that could be read pre- or post-bereavement; it will depend on the individual. It is a good hardback book and Rio gets the balance of photos about right. There is an excellent glossary and, more importantly, key learnings. There are a couple of times when dates seem confused. I like how Rio admits he focussed solely on sport and his honesty about how he dealt with his loss – drinking, hiding his feelings – and how he recognised his weakness.

### **I have lost several family members and friends to cancer and have friends currently dealing with cancer (56-65) (July 2018)**

This will be useful for anyone affected by cancer, particularly those with children, as it describes Rio's journey with his children: how to prepare them; how to explain what is happening; and how to get them to talk about things later. It will be more useful before bereavement. Rio regrets not letting Rebecca talk about what life would be like after she died. She was in charge of the home and he felt he should have given more time with her to prepare for life in that respect. Grief is not a 'one-size-fits-all' thing, so it may help people to know that what they are feeling and doing is normal.

The chapters are a good length and it is very easy to read. It is well researched and Rio explains clearly any medical terms as he writes. There are photos throughout of Rio and his family and a list of helpful organisations at the end.

I like Rio's honesty. He admits that he felt completely lost and turned to alcohol at first. He says that in his younger days he barely felt any emotion and found it difficult to open up to family. You can see how he has changed after Rebecca's death and wants to be the best dad he can. Through his experiences, others (especially men who may hide their emotions more) will see that it is important to grieve properly and that there is not one way to do so. I hope it will encourage people to seek help.

Although it is a hard read emotionally, I really enjoyed it. I was not Rio's biggest fan while he was on the pitch, but have nothing but respect for him off it for what he has been through and how he has handled himself. His honesty has endeared him to many. It took courage to break down and admit that he was scared and unsure what to do. Underneath the trophies and money, he is a normal man who would do anything for his children. I hope his book will help others who sadly must go through such a devastating time.

### **My mum was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014. After two operations and treatment she is now cancer free (36-45) (July 2018)**

This book is difficult and emotional to read at times. Rio talks about his wife, his mum, family, and early life in a very honest and down-to-earth way. It may make it easier for people, especially men, to open up and express their feelings when they have lost someone they love. The early sections jump between different times and make it a little hard to follow, but it flows well later. It is very easy to understand and appealing to look at, with some poignant photos of Rio's wife and family.

I like Rio's honesty about how he was so focussed on his career that he missed out on a lot of family time and how much his wife supported him. I also like the focus on Rebecca as a person and a mum rather than as a cancer patient. I especially like the 'Where to find help' section; this will be useful to anyone trying to cope with bereavement, especially where children have lost a parent.

It is very useful, especially for someone caring for young children. I hope it helps people to talk more and admit they are hurting when something sad happens. I recommend it, but it might suggest people watch the TV programme first to see if the book is appropriate for their current circumstances.

### **Throat cancer patient (46-55) (July 2018)**

This real-life account is best read after bereavement. It is a detailed and honest account of how Rio supported his young children through bereavement and the challenges he faced. It is an invaluable insight into bereavement and possible ways of dealing with loss, including specific strategies for supporting young children.

It provides some fantastic examples of how to deal with bereavement, especially regarding young children. In sections of the book, Rio gives step-by-step strategies for dealing with bereavement, which are revealing, yet realistic. He also provides links and contact details for specific support agencies to aid bereavement. The book is well presented and includes images of the author's family. The language is appropriate for the intended audience and the tone is honest and genuine.

I really enjoyed this book, especially Rio's honesty. He gives an open and frank account of his difficulties after losing his wife. He shows how he tried, and sometimes failed, when supporting his young children through the loss of their mother. He evaluates different strategies for coping with loss and how beneficial or not he found them. I like the emphasis on helping children through bereavement, the examples of other families and how they coped, and the links to different support agencies.

This is a valuable resource for someone going through bereavement especially a parent of young children. Supporting young children through bereavement is particularly challenging. Rio is honest about how difficult this was and which strategies were effective in helping his children through this difficult time. The book also has examples of how other families have coped with the loss of a parent or child, which are useful for someone going through bereavement.

### **A relative of someone recently bereaved (36-45) (July 2018)**

I couldn't put this book down. It certainly helped me to put things into perspective and be grateful for all I have. Everything happens for a reason, even the cruel, unfair and senseless death of loved ones; it helps me to know that my loved ones have helped in research and that, because of all they went through, medical advancements will be made. It helped to remind me that life is short, that every moment should be lived to the full, and to appreciate all you have as it can go too quickly.

It offers an honest and emotional insight into losing a loved one. It could be helpful for anyone as there are some great tips on how to approach conversations, how to begin to deal with loss, and especially how to support family, including children. Any professional dealing with bereavement will benefit too as it is a true example of how someone coped. The honest approach can help you prepare for what is going to happen and it offers practical advice on how to go about this. Afterwards, it is inspiring to be able to see that eventually life can and does go on, particularly from someone with such a high profile.

It is well written; it flows well and the language makes it easy to read and understand. The honesty is heartfelt and helped me empathise with the author. The title is thought provoking and the cover is attractive; it stands out in a peaceful and calming way.

This book is truly inspiring, honest, heart breaking, and emotional. It gives hope to those who may think they will not cope and who question how they can move on (if ever) following the death of a loved one. Readers may find it comforting to know other people feel like they do or have experienced similar feelings of loss, loneliness and the pure unfairness of cancer. Rio offers hope and almost allows people to accept that they may need to begin to think about a future. It will appeal to anyone who has been bereaved. Sharing such information when facing all these challenges is inspiring. It did leave me wanting to know more about how things have progressed, but perhaps this leaves an opening for another book.

### **Family member of someone recently bereaved (36-45) (June 2018)**

Initially, I thought this would be best after bereavement but now I think it would be an excellent read for a cancer patient with a terminal prognosis and their family to help them understand what is to come and learn from Rio not to make the same mistakes.

The language throughout the book is perfect and anything that needs explaining is explained very well. The tone is perfect for the book; it felt as if Rio was telling it to me in person. I like the cover design and the layout is excellent. I really like the use of the personal photographs throughout the book.

It is an extremely personal book that holds your attention from start to finish. I didn't want to put it down and read it much more quickly than I would normally read a book. I was hooked. I am a surviving cancer patient and it gave me a lot to think about should my cancer return in the future and how to deal with telling my son and my family. I can see how it would be extremely beneficial to the family/husband and older children of a cancer patient with a terminal diagnosis. Reading Rio's experience will make it easier for a bereaved family to understand that it is normal but also gives excellent advice on how to try to deal with it.

A fabulous book that I have already recommended to friends and family. Some of these friends have had no experience of cancer but I feel they should still read this book as it could happen to them at any time.

### **Brain tumour patient (36-45) (May 2018)**

I read this in one session. I took it to bed to read a couple of chapters and ending up reading it from cover to cover. It is a sad subject but very readable and human – we can all learn something from it. Grief affects us in different ways and people will be open to it at different stages of their bereavement. It was useful for me, but my mum died some years ago; I don't know if I could have read immediately after her death.

It is very easy to understand; the language is clear and appropriate, and the tone is entirely appropriate. It is honestly and clearly written. Rio talks about his life in a logical order; it's not chronological, but makes perfect sense. It is a very appealing book. The photographs on the cover are self-explanatory. The paper is a good quality, the illustrations are good, and the layout is excellent, it's not too 'busy'!

A book about children losing their mum to cancer may not sound uplifting but, in some ways, it is. Money and fame do not protect you from the loss of loved ones and Rio's empathy with others who have suffered similarly is clear. His recognition that he had to change is heart-warming and led to his helping others and being helped himself. I have been left with a great deal of respect for the author even though he made me cry! I feel a great deal of sympathy with and empathy for him. As well as losing his wife to cancer, he also lost his mum.

**My mum died of cancer. I have had cancer but mine was never life threatening (56-65) (May 2018)**

This honest insight into what a recently bereaved partner must deal with could be useful before or after bereavement. It may help to prepare the ground and afterwards may help people understand their feelings. It also has details of organisations that may help and ideas and advice on dealing with children who have recently lost a parent. This is a nice touch and extremely useful.

The language is easy to understand and technical terms are explained. I like the tone – you really do feel the emotions and difficulties. It's a good quality book and nice to look at; there are photos, but not too many.

I couldn't put it down. Rio didn't know how to deal with his grief or that of his children and he takes us on a journey as he learns how to deal with it. I imagine that someone recently bereaved will empathise with Rio and understand the many emotions discussed. It makes you realise that our feelings after losing someone are normal and that there is no time limit on grief, everyone is different.

**Breast cancer patient (36-45) (May 2018)**

I can't recommend this book enough. It is very helpful on so many levels. It is so well written that anyone could find the information helpful, before or after bereavement. There are ideas and helpful chapters to create an insight into the future or to help process grief.

It is very easy to read, as if you are having a conversation or listening to a story; Rio tells it as he remembers events unfolding. The tone is perfect for the audience. The words are down to earth and so open that you can't help but feel every word. Everything about it is welcoming and friendly and the photos add to the story.

An excellent book; an amazing story that will help others for years to come, though be warned it's emotional. It is so touching and truthful about the darkest moments of his family's experience that you can't help but relate to parts of their journey.

**I lost my mother-in-law three years ago and my father-in-law two years ago (26-35) (May 2018)**

I've never read a book like this before – a “man’s man’s” account of grief and loss. It seems unique because it comes from a top footballer who describes the issues faced by men of a certain generation (also by anyone who grew up tough or unemotional) when dealing with their emotions. It is best read after bereavement for those recently bereaved or anyone who must now care for young children on their own. It will be useful for men (or women) struggling to acknowledge and deal with their feelings.

I read it in one day. The tone is personal and it deals with complex issues in an easy to understand format. Some parts really spoke to me, like when he describes losing his memory around the time that Rebecca became ill. This happened to me – it’s so helpful to know that you are not going mad, and that it has happened to other people.

### **Bereaved by cancer eight years ago (36-45) (May 2018)**

Everyone will lose someone at some time and this book helps pave the way. It could be read before bereavement but will also help at the time of loss. It is very easy to read and understand. It looks fine; the images could be better quality but that’s the photographer in me. Rio’s honesty is present throughout and, as he’s living his grief, he’s able to encourage his reader on many levels because of his experiences. I saw the documentary and like most people cried a fair bit. Reading his book has taught me a few things and so I know that others could learn from reading his words.

### **Still fighting my own diagnosis (56-65) (April 2018)**



This is best read after bereavement to show that, although it is tough, things slowly get better. It is written in chronological order, with memories throughout. It is easy to read and everything is explained well. I did not like the tone to start with and found myself disliking Rio but this improved as he spoke of more recent years of his life. It looks good. The hardback has good quality paper and a large, clear typeface. I like the occasional photo throughout. The fact Rio was a famous footballer adds appeal.

Some sections are good, for example “Here are some things I have learned” and “Where to find help”, which has details of where to find support. I like that Rio did these things himself and is speaking from experience. The fact he is a footballer will make people listen to him more, particularly men, who may feel “if Rio Ferdinand can get help, then so can I”.

I would give it five stars if the first part had been less about Rio’s early life and football and more about the subject. I understand this was to help the reader understand his almost cold personality and to highlight how he changed, but at times I wanted to stop reading. However, the latter part and the advice and tips make up for this and I warmed to him when he opened up more about the difficulties of his wife’s illness, then his mother’s. I ended up admiring him for how he dealt with the situation.

### **Friend and family of cancer patients (26-35) (July 2018)**



This excellent book lays bare bereavement and grief, the impact and aftermath of losing somebody with cancer, the futility of cancer and the feeling of being unable to control what's happening. It is easy to understand and resonated with my experience. It is well written and compelling and the photos help to break up the text.

I like the fact that Rio laid bare his emotions and that the book is so well written. It shows the struggles Rio had/has with his grief and that of his children and family. It's an honest no-holds-barred book and gives people devastated by cancer some hope that you can move on. It also opens up options for those bereaved.

### **My husband had squamous cell carcinoma (46-55) (July 2018)**

This would be useful for those facing the prospect of a relative or friend dying, as well as those who have suffered a bereavement. It could be read before or after, it will depend on the person. Grief is a personal journey, and we must find our own way of dealing with it in our own time.

The cover is good – Rio is instantly recognisable to millions. The font is easy to read and the illustrations are good. It is mostly in a logical order and easy to understand, although it flits about at the start. However, there is too much swearing and it will certainly offend those who dislike the 'F' word! This is a pity. Rio has a good command of English so he could easily have avoided expletives. I know it is aimed at men, but not all men are laddish and don't necessarily swear to show emotion.

Rio Ferdinand has been an amazing athlete who loved to win at all cost. Hero to millions, regarded as a man of steel, he has bared his soul and shown us that grief has no regard for reputation. He faltered. Facing life without his beloved wife made him look deep into himself. His reflections are brutally honest, and he leaves the reader with the comforting feeling that it is ok to feel the guilt, anger, sadness, bewilderment, fear and huge sense of loss that come with a bereavement. If Rio can collapse under the huge deluge of emotion that grief brings, then it's ok for any man to struggle openly. The sections on where to get help and support are excellent and the things that Rio has learnt along the way are very helpful ideas to think about. Rio ends in a positive and upbeat way, which suggests that there is hope, that things will improve. I like how he weaves his life story into it; this stops it from being sombre and heavy as there are lots of stories about life rather than just death.

The book was written primarily to help men facing bereavement and it does the job well. But there is also a lot that women can take comfort from. Grief is a profound experience for young and old alike, and it does not differentiate between the sexes. Some of the support services are for men but others are not gender specific and the things that Rio learnt on his journey are useful to everyone. So, while the book is aimed at men I recommend it to women too (if they don't mind the swearing!)

### **Recently bereaved (56-65) (June 2018)**

This may be a beneficial read for those have been told they cannot be cured as Rio reflects on what he wishes he could have changed before his wife died. He talks about his regrets and it may help others to prepare, or give them an insight into what may happen and how to help people. It may also be helpful during bereavement and after; there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Rio shares his experiences and how he coped. There is a lot of personal information and he has taken time and effort to portray it here. There are some beautiful letters of support, which is lovely of him to share. He also includes groups and websites for those who need help.

I followed the story of his and Rebecca's short life together – their meeting, wedding, children, their cancer story, and the beginning of the healing process for those left behind. Everything is explained and I had to look up only one word: metastasised. The use of direct speech and quotes lets the reader know that the words are realistic and personal. I could visualise scenes through his choice of words and connected easily to his tone and language.

The cover is simple enough with Rio and his children in the background, reflecting life after losing his wife. I would like colour photos inside but that's just my preference. The back shows the family in Paris (the same photo is inside) on the day they put padlocks on Lovelock Bridge for Rebecca – a poignant memory.

I have followed Rio's professional career and read his autobiographies, so I had a good idea about his childhood. I'm pleased he gives readers an insight into this here. If you don't know his background you can't understand his aloofness or lack of emotion. For readers to understand the Rio he is today, he had to revisit his past to help him move on and become a different parent. He has dug deep to help him in the here and now, which I don't think he would have done if he didn't have children. You can see when he struggled and how he looked for help to comes to terms with this. He has shown great courage by allowing others to see his journey.

I would like a better understanding of how it affected Rebecca. It is about how the family coped and how Rio had to change for the sake of his children, but Rebecca had been through cancer twice and I thought there would be a bit more about her and how she felt leaving her family. I understand the second time was very quick but she would have gone into detail after the first time, she would have shared this with others, not necessarily with Rio. It's not a negative as the book is about Rio and he may have wished to keep Rebecca's opinions private, which is fair enough.

It is a page turner. I smiled, I cried. I could feel the sadness but also the love. The message is clear: ask for help, speak about it, don't be afraid, help is there when you need it but most importantly when you are ready. Everyone is different, but Rio shared his grief to help others; this, in turn, helped him and his family. Cancer affects everyone and his book highlights this from all angles. Well done for being brave, Rio, but also for bringing it out into the open and allowing others to see and learn from not only your pain but most importantly your courage. Thank you for sharing everything.

**Friend of someone recently bereaved (36-45) (June 2018)**

This book could appeal to those who have been bereaved, but also to fans of football and specifically of the author. The best time to read it would be at least a month after bereavement, once all the initial emotions have started to clear and most practical things have been sorted, e.g. the funeral, insurance, bank.

When I first opened the book and saw the photo of Rebecca in her wedding outfit, I admit I welled up and wondered how I would manage to read it! I like Rio's openness and honesty about his emotions; this is rare from macho men, especially footballers. The first few chapters jump around a bit as he mentions something now that brings back a memory. However, we all do that and this is not a novel so shouldn't 'flow' one way. I didn't like the strong language, but knowing his background and the circumstances in which it was said (in a quote) then it is understandable. As the book moves away from his childhood this issue lessens.

I will probably recommend it to people who have been bereaved; it will depend on if I think they can deal with reading about someone else; do they want to keep thoughts of bereavement going or move on?

### **Bereaved over ten ago (56-65) (June 2018)**

This is a very honest personal story that might help someone who has never been in this situation before. It is best read beforehand – hindsight is a wonderful thing. It is very modern and attractive to look at, with a well-chosen typeface. It is clearly laid out and everything is explained well.

I like the author's honesty but he comes across, as he himself admits, as extremely selfish and I found I couldn't like him.

### **Recently bereaved (66-75) (June 2018)**

This is a fabulous read, very sad at times. It gives a real, raw insight into the pain and emotions of bereavement. It is helpful for health professionals to gain a real insight, and anyone newly bereaved, although perhaps not straight away.

It is a very easy read. The tone is at a level and pace that makes you feel that you understand the language and content. The picture of Rio makes you want to read it. I like the size of the typeface and have no issues with the layout.

I loved this book and read it in two days, Rio is knowledgeable and very descriptive in a positive and negative way. He is very honest at expressing his family's feelings. An excellent read, but it could be difficult for some.

### **I have had cervical cancer (56-65) (June 2018)**

I thought this would be all about Rio losing his wife but it is also autobiographical, about his childhood and career so not solely for someone impacted by cancer. Rio doesn't focus on his wife's death, or the lead up to it, but more on the aftermath and on practical observations and help. It could be useful before or after bereavement. I could relate to many of the emotions and events before and after. There are some great tips on what to do after bereavement that would have been useful beforehand.

It is a very easy read despite the topic. It is narrated in the first person, which makes it very personal. The text is easy to read and the chapters aren't overly long. There are several pictures throughout, which are a nice touch and bring home the text.

I could relate to a lot of what Rio talks about and it made me feel that I wasn't crazy. It is also humorous in parts, making a very hard subject easier to read. I expected to become a lot more emotional when reading it, but instead I found it well-written and enjoyable. The football speak becomes a little tedious at times but it is perfect for men and women who love football and can relate to those bits a lot more than me!

A great read with the right mix of humour and thought-provoking honesty. There are many bits that I could relate to, useful advice and tips, and links to organisations that can help. I've recommended it to my sister. She still struggles to talk about my dad and what happened. It will help her see that this is not uncommon. She's also a big football fan so the fact that it is not just about cancer may help. Despite the topic and my fear of the emotions it would stir up, I found it an incredibly enjoyable read. Suggestions like death being put on school curriculum rang so true. I was left feeling that I was not isolated in my feelings all these years later.

**I'm not recently bereaved, but still trying to come to terms with the loss of my dad 10 years ago. He was 49 and told his cancer was terminal at diagnosis. (26-35) (May 2018)**

This book conveys human emotions that anyone may identify with. The difficulties experienced by the author can affect anyone, not just those impacted by a recent bereavement. It is best read beforehand to prepare and to at least be able to recognise the rollercoaster when it arrives.

The book is structured between the past and present and this is entwined with the documentary that the author is working on towards the end of the book. This is done well. The tone is very easy, reassuring and comforting. The simplicity and starkness of the situation is expressed in a non-stylised way, which makes it very accessible to the reader and is ultimately moving. Pictures personalise the content and bring it to life. The cover is simple but makes you want to read the book.

I like the journey and the breakthrough experienced by the author, which everyone must go through at some point. It will help people come to terms with how to manage their emotions (or lack of). Rio is spot on in identifying that, as a society, we don't talk about death, but it's the only certainty. As a successful footballer, never taught to fail, coming to terms with these events shows that realisation of the bereavement process is vital to be able to cope when it occurs. Success does not make you immune.

Rio has bravely expressed his emotions and struggles given his upbringing whereby expressions of such emotions were not necessarily learned. Being able to do this for his children was an absolute necessity and he recognised this. So many others, as his book says, have not coped and have taken the route of alcohol, depression or other negative influences. However, this book shows that there is light at the end of a dark tunnel and ultimately there is hope. Hope is clearly the last message of the book and whilst one will never get over the death of a loved one, he or she can find the strength to carry on and experience life in its fullest form. Super book; well done, Rio.

### **Former carer and daughter of cancer patient who died three and a half years ago (36-45) (May 2018)**

I was interested to read this book after watching the TV programme about Rio's grief. The most powerful part of the book is where he talks about this, when he began to recognise his and his children's need to grieve. The first part paints an interesting picture of why he behaved as he did. Family upbringing can have a huge impact.

It is very easy to understand, as if Rio is sitting chatting with a cuppa. It looks good and does not shriek death and dying. It could be read at any time during the grieving process. Even if one has not grieved for someone, it is a useful insight into what can happen and the impact that it can have on a family. It could also be useful for those grieving for other things, for example, the loss of a way of life through illness.

Rio is very honest, not only about his feelings but also about the fact that he didn't know how a washing machine worked, how to do his daughter's hair, what to get ready for school, for example. What an arrogant man and true chauvinist one might think, but Rio and Rebecca had agreed that he would concentrate on work and she on the children so that they could have a great life together when he retired. Sadly, this was not to be and Rio had to deal with the consequences of this decision, but he learnt. He also learnt how to grieve and remember his wife positively with his children. His love for the children shines through. What is interesting for me is when he writes about the death of his mum and sees what he went through with Rebecca reflected in his siblings as they try to accept that their mum is dying. I enjoyed this book and would recommend it but the TV programme is better.

### **Living with cancer (myelodysplastic syndrome) (46-55) (April 2018)**

This book elaborates on Rio's TV documentary in 2017, in which he agreed to seek bereavement support following the loss of his wife, Rebecca, from breast cancer and how he and his young family have coped. It talks through the shock of his wife's cancer recurring, her final weeks in a hospice before her death, and dealing with his children through this time. There is a lot more background about Rio and his upbringing and how his life as a professional footballer contributed to his challenges in dealing with the death of his wife. It is a difficult read at times, but Rio identifies some practical steps to take in the run up to the death of a loved one and afterwards, particularly in relation to supporting children through bereavement.

It is easy to read and avoids technical jargon. The preface describes how the book can be viewed as a memoir and/or guidance manual, directing the reader to specific pages that include practical tips on coping with the loss of a parent or loved one; these are presented in the form of “some of the things I have learned”. Whilst only a small proportion of the book is dedicated to practical guidance, it does have some suggestions on providing support to children, what to tell them, involving them in funeral plans and talking about the parent they’ve lost. People in similar scenarios may find reassurance in Rio’s candid accounts of his emotions and relate to some of the challenges described.

The book is superbly written and feels like it’s genuinely written from the heart. It includes a lot of commentary about Rio’s upbringing and outlook on life while a professional footballer; the relevance of that context is made apparent in how it contributed to his challenges in dealing with the death of his wife. As a well-known sportsman, he uses his profile and unfortunate circumstances to demonstrate the emotions of bereavement and offers the practical steps he took to help cope in the circumstances, acknowledging how hard it was to reach out for help and resist the temptation to turn to alcohol and busy himself with work.

It will depend on the individual and their circumstances, but I’d certainly recommend it to those supporting the bereaved. Much of the account relates to Rio’s young family and supporting them to come to terms with the loss of their mother; for that reason, it’s probably most relevant to someone with similar family circumstances. Parts of the account, for example, where it describes the final few weeks of Rebecca’s life, could be highly emotive for someone recently bereaved. As someone living with cancer who spends much time worrying about how my immediate family will cope in the event of my death, I found it hard, but comforting, to read how Rio navigated it. His advice, based on the various support services he accessed whilst doing the documentary, will be useful to someone who has been bereaved and could potentially encourage someone to seek counselling.

### **Living with ovarian cancer (36-45) (March 2018)**



This is best read after bereavement. The cover and title are appealing and the content is easy to read and understand but the author appears very self-absorbed throughout.

It provides insight re widowers, but it is very football orientated. I feel it reads as an autobiography and there is not much detail about the actual cancer patient. However, it illustrates the author’s emotional journey and the knowledge gained through the experience to make conscious changes to his behaviour. There is also a lot of information regarding contacts for help and support.

### **Previous bowel cancer patient (56-65) (June 2018)**

# Further information

## Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

## Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

## Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

**Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.**

**It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.**

**We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)**

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