

INTRODUCTION

When I started writing, I was planning to just keep notes describing my living donation experience for me to look back on. Living donation is where a living person donates a single kidney, a segment of the liver, or part of a lung in order for a person to receive a life-saving transplant. As I read, researched, and offered to become a living donor, I was convinced that it was an amazing thing to do. But I also realised the biggest obstacle that stopped most people from coming forward as donors was fear. People were afraid the operation could go terribly wrong; they were scared that in future their remaining kidney could be damaged through illness or an accident, thus putting their own lives at risk, and for many, the stakes were just too high.

My personal experiences as a potential donor lead me to write this book for various reasons. First it was to give people an insight into the practicalities of being a living kidney donor from a donor's perspective; this could make things easier for a person looking for a donor for their life-saving transplant. Following my research, I believe if you provide people with relevant information and real life experiences of organ donation, it will give them a better understanding of the process. This will in turn help them to make an informed decision whether to donate or not.

Second it was for people who have the desire to become a living donor for a loved one but struggle with the potential risks involved with having such a major operation. The risks and fears of being a donor are real and many will find it difficult to see beyond that; they will often say, "But what if...?" But if we allow ourselves to focus on the "what if," some of us would not be married, have started a business, or even followed our dreams today. When we see the people we love struggling with a life-threatening illness, the truth is, with the right support we can turn our "what if something goes wrong?" into "I want to help change their life." The third reason was to raise the profile of organ donation within the Black and Asian communities as there is a desperate need for more Black and Asian donors to come forward. The final reason for writing the book was to show people the real value of saving a human life. The majority of us are born with two kidneys, but we can live healthily with one, which allows us to be living donors. Some of us have loved ones for whom life is a daily struggle of hospital appointments and dialysis. To be willing to help them, and the majority of us do, takes tremendous courage, hopefully my story will testify what can happen when we take a different approach to living organ donation.

The book narrates my family's story as potential kidney donors. It's a factual account of a personal journey that began when I offered to donate a kidney

to my brother who needed a life-saving transplant, but ended with my brother's need for a kidney practically saving my daughter's life. Our emotional journey captures the love of a family in a personal and heartfelt way. It takes you through our tests, trials and tears, but also portrays our joy at being potential donors.

Living kidney donation is our loved one's fast track to a transplant; it is very successful in the UK, representing 38% of the total number of kidney transplants. The book details the procedure to remove a kidney (otherwise known as laparoscopic donor nephrectomy), the medical tests, and the stages of the living donor assessment process, the potential risks, the emotional impact, recovery after the operation, getting back to normal and living with one kidney. When a person needs a life-saving transplant, family members and friends are the best ones to help speed the process up by offering to become their donor, but asking them is often very difficult, our story could make that process easier.

The decision I made to become my brother's donor was one of the most rewarding decisions I had ever made, and as the story unfolds, it will become clear that although our donor assessment process had many twists and turns, it is a story about bringing hope to others. May our experience as potential donors be a starting point for taking you on your own personal journey in giving someone the gift of life.