

# MINA BLAIR



## Not for the last time...

It takes a great deal of courage to write about the most emotional and challenging aspects of your life. Mina Blair's book 'Not for the last time' is her moving and yet uplifting account of a spiritual search for meaning, that began with the loss of her 12-year-old daughter Francesca.

In her thought-provoking book, Mina asks 'what happens after the worst happens?' It is every parent's nightmare to endure the death of a child. "I find it hard to remember who I was before Francesca was born; the extraordinary years she was with us passed so quickly." Yet, in the years that have followed her loss, Mina has experienced a transformation she never thought possible.

Her book lovingly reflects on her life with her daughter, how she found meaning and hope, as well as the motivation to make brave decisions to change many aspects of her life. Firstly leaving the pressures of working in the corporate world to become a counsellor, then travelling to Bali to train as a yoga teacher, graduating in 2017.

Mina now runs her own yoga practice from her base in West Sussex, teaching Hatha yoga and a bespoke form of yoga that works on the body's subtle energy system, mind, and emotions. Her podcasts on all aspects of wellbeing have also attracted a loyal following.

Mina also became involved with Ugandan based educational charity, The Jinja Educational Trust (JET), which she writes about in her book and how she was particularly touched by her experiences of visiting three orphanages connected to the charity. "Something softens inside as you hold a malnourished baby that was found abandoned in a field, or on the roadside, or church steps. Or a baby brought in by a friend of a 13-year-old girl who was raped and is now unable to care for her child physically or psychologically. Every child in the orphanage represents one less child abandoned; a life saved, a new potential."

"Reflecting on all the privileges we enjoy in the UK, all the things we take for granted would be a gift in this part of the world, grabbed with both hands and cherished. What do we really have to complain about?"

On her trips to the charity, Mina has been accompanied by her eldest daughter Karina and her husband, Hamish. "JET provides new classrooms, latrines, water sources and even a cow to provide milk for the children. We, in turn, had brought with us school supplies, and

as representatives of JET, we visit the projects to see how everyone is doing and get updates from them."

Mina's book explores many different aspects of her life. "When I thought about it, hadn't the universe always given me what I needed and asked for?" From meeting her first husband Malcolm and having her family, to finding the spiritual and emotional support of a wide range of people who seemed to show up in her life at just the right time. From her dear friend and village vicar Colin, who helped her explore and discover her own spiritual path, to her second husband Hamish, then meeting just the right people to help her on her new career path as a yoga teacher.

Even Mina's choice of new canine companion seemed to have been directed. "When I needed to open up my heart more, I found a dog-breeder who matched me with Barley." It took a little while for Mina to adjust to having a bundle of fun and to fully bond with mischievous Barley, who at times tested her patience, but who has become her constant companion enjoying long walks across the South Downs.

The final chapters of Mina's book are full of spiritual insight, as she found the last thing to open up was her heart. "My heart was the last stop. It had to happen in that order because I couldn't go near it initially, like a post-operative wound that is so sensitive and painful you can't bear anyone touching it. But then gradually it heals, and it's okay to go there, the stitches come out, and it doesn't hurt as much. It can tolerate a bit of pressure on it. Over time all that is left is the scar that indicates something happened, but you have recovered."

"The good news is that you can start to open whatever has been closed at any time. And yoga lovingly holds your hand the whole way. You see, when your heart breaks, it ultimately breaks open." Mina quotes Eknath Easwaran's words: "Through pain, we learn there is no event, however tragic, from which we cannot learn and grow."

"The title of the book was inspired by Francesca; when we were taking her back home from hospital, she would always say: 'not for the last time'."

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