

# 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

**Laura Davis:** [00:00:00] In this episode, we're chatting to Alison Christie about how she's navigating the world of freelancing after her breast cancer diagnosis.

**Laura Moore:** You're listening to JFDI with The Two Lauras. This is the weekly podcast where the two of us chat about all things related to business as a freelancer. We're on a mission to help more social media freelancers to build profitable businesses that fund their lifestyle and work around their families. This podcast is where we share tips, advice and inspiration about business, marketing and social media, and we occasionally have the odd rant about it too.

In today's episode, we're joined by Allison Christie. Allison is a freelance ads manager who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2022. Having gone through treatment and come out the other side, we wanted to bring her onto the show to share with you how she's managed to continue running her business while going through treatment.

**Laura Davis:** After the show, you might have more questions and we'd love to welcome you into our free Facebook group, The Social Media Managers Hub to join us there. Go to social media [00:01:00] managers hub.com or search for The Social Media Managers Hub on Facebook. Pop your email address in and we'll let you in so we can continue the conversation.

We'd also love to know where you are listening, so snap a quick selfie or take a screenshot, pop it in your stories, and tag us @thetwolauras.

Okay on with the show. Welcome, Allison. Firstly, before we get into the nitty gritty, how are you?

**Allison Christie:** I'm good. This is going to be fun.

**Laura Moore:** Good. It's so nice to see you here.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, it's good. This is a good thing to talk about.

**Laura Davis:** Yeah, I think it's really interesting before we kind of get into it to share. Nobody's life is easy, is it? And we all have lots of challenging times. But yeah, when you're



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

a freelancer, that often comes with unknown territory of how you kind of move forward and how you cope with these things.

So hence why we thought this was a good one to chat with you. And obviously you were more than happy to do that.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah.

**Laura Davis:** So before [00:02:00] we kind of talk about you and you're getting your diagnosis, where, tell us about where you were prior to that. What was, did your business look like, like what were you doing?

**Allison Christie:** Sure. Yeah. So I've been self employed for about nine years now. I left working in local government way back in 2014 when my youngest child was born, and started out as a techie VA doing lots of membership tech and all those things, quickly moved into social media and ads. And then niched further down into ads on Meta and Pinterest and TikTok from there.

And in 2022, I'd also actually started a subscription box business. So I decided it was time to do something else and, you know, grow the business in a different way and have two businesses running side by side. But, but that was the before.

**Laura Moore:** I forgot you had that business.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, I know.

**Laura Moore:** That was great. I love, yeah, I remember you sent us, at one point you sent us, I want to say [00:03:00] penguin poo, but it wasn't that.

It was something like that. It was like some chocolates or something.

**Allison Christie:** Puffin poo.

**Laura Moore:** Puffin poo. That was it.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah.

**Laura Davis:** Puffin poo?



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

**Laura Moore:** That was amazing. Go Google it if you're listening and you fancy some puffin poo. I'm sure you'll find it.

**Laura Davis:** Okay, so then let's take us to, so, 2022, you obviously got that diagnosis. What was that kind of initial -

**Laura Moore:** Before we talk about that, can you tell us, I think it'd be really useful for people, how did you get that diagnosis?

**Allison Christie:** Okay, so I'm ancient.

**Laura Davis:** You're not.

**Allison Christie:** I am, I'm over 50. So when you turn 50, I don't know if this is just Scotland, maybe it's UK wide. But in Scotland anyway, when you're 50, you get just a routine mammogram. That was what I went for. I had absolutely no symptoms whatsoever, no lumps or bumps or, you know, funny goings on.

Completely oblivious and unaware as to what was coming. I just went for my mammogram, [00:04:00] thought, oh, that's not very fun. And then, you know, walked out the door and never thought about it again until I got a letter maybe six weeks later. Which was a bit bigger, maybe, than I thought that envelope was going to be.

I expected one sheet of paper, but then when I opened it, there was a booklet, there was instructions for where to go in hospital, there was a hospital appointment and because of where I stay and I'm not on mainland UK there was also travel arrangements and flights and all these things in this envelope and just was like eh, what now?

So that letter basically just said okay well we need to you know look into things a bit more might be nothing because it's your first mammogram you know your boobs might just be a bit weird so but we wanted a closer look so and that's, that's what I thought was, oh yeah, it'll be me, I'll be being awkward and weird, so they'll find nothing, but off I went for that appointment.

**Laura Davis:** Did you have any doubt?



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

**Allison Christie:** I had no idea what was coming, because [00:05:00] you, I mean, you know, I could feel nothing. And a doctor at one point in the journey had said to me it probably would have been two to five years before I would have felt anything. So, I would be walking around for the next, if I hadn't gone for that first screening, I'd be walking around now, maybe, you know, another three years into the future before I'd ever been aware of anything.

So, go for your screening for all these things. Do it. Because that's five years ahead of where you might be, you know, if you do find something. So, yeah, it was only when I was at that appointment and they kind of said, you know, it might just, you might just get another mammogram and then we'll say everything's fine.

Or you might get an ultrasound too, or you might also get a biopsy. We'll just, they'll see how it went on the day, as to what you needed, and on that day it just seemed to be getting a little bit more serious as the morning wore on. First it was a, you know, a mammogram, things will be fine. Then I was like, okay, well, we'll maybe do the ultrasound now.

And [00:06:00] then that consultant was kind of saying, yeah, it kind of looks like we're heading down the biopsy route next. And so the more that day went on, you were like, right, okay, maybe this is getting a little bit serious now. And that gives me shivers when I say it. Because it's just, you know, you're like, oh, right, okay.

So, so yeah, this is changing. And the tone just changed a little bit. Everyone just got a little bit less. Cheery and chatty, I would say, and a bit more professional and trying to distract you a little bit because you could see you were starting to get scared and starting to feel the, oh shit. So, you know, trying to distract you a bit more.

And I'd also noticed there was lots of people coming and going, but I was still there. This was lunchtime. Four hours later, I was still there going through all these tests. So by the time you left there that day, I mean, I think I was four to five hours. The time you left, you were like, right, pretty sure they wouldn't be doing all that if they weren't at least suspicious of [00:07:00] something, so.

From there, you've got to wait for those results to come back and I think it was probably three to four weeks I had to wait and that was probably the toughest time, really tough because you're just in limbo and you can't you can't tell anyone, really because you don't,



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

might be nothing, you don't want to overreact, you're trying to keep going as normal, but also your head is just so filled with all the what ifs.

So, when you do eventually get that next appointment and you go to the consultant and they say, yeah, well actually we found some breast cancer, then it's kind of a bit of a relief in some ways because at least then you know for sure and you're like and then you know they start the whole "we'll do everything we can, we're gonna go through all these treatments, we'll throw everything at it. It's really early, you're really lucky that it's been found so early, so, you know, there's lots of positives." So at least then you can start planning for the treatment and the what comes next. [00:08:00] So yeah, completely out of the blue, two or three months that just, yeah, turns everything upside down really.

**Laura Davis:** So how was it in that time frame? So from when you got that letter with all the leaflets to that point of diagnosis, what time frame are we talking, a couple of months did you say?

**Allison Christie:** I think for me it was three months. Yeah.

**Laura Davis:** And so did, how did that impact your kind of work? Like, because surely that's quite hard to have that in the back of your mind and still deliver.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, definitely. I think I, at that point, I closed off a lot of my diary because you'd just, you know, there's just so much that you can head can handle in a day. I closed off a lot of my diary for things, you know, like power hours and those kinds of bookends and just thought I'll just concentrate on the client work that I have.

I stopped doing as much on my own socials and all those things because yeah, you're just, your head's just so full of all these other [00:09:00] things, and you just don't know what's going to come next. So, as much as you can do the work you're already doing, it just made it harder to then push yourself to go out and do new things, really.

And I'd also not long started that subscription box business too, so I was trying to build that and trying to, you know, get those subscriptions increasing and do lots of socials for that too. So the balance between the two was really tough and as soon as I got that diagnosis I knew that one of them had to give so I just stopped the subscription box pretty much there and then because, yeah, I just knew this was not the time to be trying to grow



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

something that's new. It just had to, it has to wait for a year or two years, that's fine. It just, you know, it has to, I've had to find space from somewhere.

**Laura Moore:** And when you got that diagnosis, like, did they give you any support in terms of this is how it's going to impact your work life, this is [00:10:00] what you're going to need to do, this is where you can go for, I don't know, any benefits or any support like that?

Or was it just, you're just left to get on with it and you've got to deal with that yourself?

**Allison Christie:** When I got my diagnosis there was also, like, a Macmillan nurse with the consultant at that time, so they're the ones that, they kind of tell you are going to, you know, pick up the slack and answer all those questions and help you coordinate different appointments and, and for me, that extra travel and all those things.

But really, when it comes to things about employment or benefits or what you're entitled to, then, yeah, you are pretty much left to get on with that and find that out for yourself. And there is lots of information online, but it's kind of up to you to go and find it.

**Laura Davis:** Which must be hard when your mind must be full of, you know, all the worries and, I'm guessing, the anxiety that comes with that kind of diagnosis. To then have to figure that kind of stuff out must be quite overwhelming.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, exactly, because you've already got the things of thinking about, well, what [00:11:00] about, you know, my family and my kids and your husband and your normal life, to think about the impact on them, but you've also then got the, well, what about me and what I love doing and because, well, we all know when you're self employed, it's not just a job, but you, you know, you pour so much of yourself into it too.

You love it. That's why you do it. So, the thought of not being able to do that was kind of like taking another bit of me away as well, which, yeah, I didn't like that idea at all.

**Laura Davis:** And of course there's the added worry that you don't get sick pay.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah. A hundred percent. Yeah. Definitely. I think most of the advice that I was finding was very much around being employed and being able to claim benefits and all those things, which I wouldn't have been able to claim any of, I don't think.



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

Even though there was bits of information that said, you know, if you're self employed, you can look at these benefits and things like that. I just knew that I wasn't going to be able to get any of [00:12:00] them. And if I did want any income of my own or to just even keep my business ticking over, it was going to be down to me to do that.

**Laura Davis:** 'Cause it's not, it's not just about the income. Is it? It's about keeping your business, you know, yes, obviously for some people they'll have to have that income and that, that is a worry. So for some people they can have different tolerances of what they need to earn, but it's not all about that. Is it, you know, you've thrown your heart and your life into growing a business for nine years and then you don't want that to just fall by the wayside for however long.

And I guess at that starting point, you don't know how long this is going to go on. You don't know how long the treatment is. You don't know how you're going to feel, how the treatment will literally make you feel. Will you be able to work? Won't you be able to work? So there's that kind of emotional attachment aside of not wanting to lose what you've grown.

And obviously businesses, you can bring them back after a couple of years, but that's still an added worry.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, as soon as you get [00:13:00] that diagnosis, it's kind of, I mean, obviously it changes everything, but then you become, you're just always waiting on the next thing, whether it's the next appointment, whether it's the next test result, the next treatment to start, you're just constantly waiting on the next thing.

And you know, it's all very well managed and everyone's great that you, that you deal with and they make it as stress free as possible. But when you just don't know and, and also you just don't have control over it, that's tough. But especially, especially I think for self employed people who, who have that control and who can decide who they work with and who they don't and, you know, let's be honest, we quite like, you know, being in control of our own lives and deciding what we do and then all of a sudden you can't. You can't commit to anything.



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

You just can't make those decisions because yeah, I'll come up with this great idea and I'll start doing it. But in three months time, well, I might have to stop it. So why would I set myself up to fail? [00:14:00] There's lots of that.

**Laura Moore:** Yeah, and there's the responsibility of the clients as well, you know, kind of behind the scenes. That's kind of a weight on your shoulders as well, isn't it? And like, so did you have those conversations with your clients? Did they know what was going on?

**Allison Christie:** At first I didn't tell my clients. I, I kind of just needed to get my own head around it and just let the dust settle on that. And also I couldn't really tell them very much at that point, I didn't know. I knew there was an operation to come first and then I knew depending on the outcome of that operation, the next phase of treatment would be radiotherapy or chemotherapy or both, but I just couldn't tell them when that might be or what that might look like for my business.

So I had the operation and that's just for me, it was just in and out in one day because, you know, it was pretty straightforward. So. It was kind of, I just treated that like any other minor medical [00:15:00] thing that you might have to go to hospital for. It's not a reason to stop working with clients. I, you know, just told them I wasn't going to be available for a few days and then just left it at that.

But I did tell them when it was getting to the point of, I had the test results back and I knew what the next phase of treatment would be, but I still couldn't tell them when that would be and it turned out it was three, four months later than when I told them. So, you know, I still told them in plenty of time that for me it was just radiotherapy and not chemotherapy.

I managed to miss out on chemotherapy by just a couple of percent in how they work it out. So. That was good, I think. Sometimes you're not sure. But yeah, I told them in plenty of time, so that you could kind of work around things. And because this had all been going on for so many months, there was a natural drop off for some clients too.

Projects came to an end, and I just didn't bother filling that space again. I didn't, you know, I let leads fall quiet. I [00:16:00] didn't follow up on some things because I just didn't want to take on anything new. It's fine to finish off things and fine to work with long term clients, but for new things, I didn't want to commit and then not be able to do my best, basically.





## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

**Laura Davis:** And how did the clients take it, your long term management clients? I'm hoping you're going to say they were amazing.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, absolutely, they were amazing. They were shocked that this had obviously been going on for so long and they had no idea because to them things were just continuing on as normal and they would never have had any inkling at all that maybe things were, you know, maybe there was some struggles going on somewhere.

So that was good. That was really reassuring to know that you'd still been working as you had been before and they hadn't, you know, picked up on your head being up your bottom someday, so. Yeah, so that was, that was good, and they were very accommodating when it came to, well, whatever, and whenever treatment is going to [00:17:00] be, then yeah, we'll work around it, which was good.

But also, you've also have to always remember in the back of your mind that you are a freelancer, so you're not an employee, so you don't have rights as such, they can just decide if, you know, if things were looking like it was going to be longer treatment than it was, or I was going to be off for longer and worse side effects, then they could just say, actually, let's just bring things to a close.

So you always had that in the back of your mind.

**Laura Davis:** Did any of them end their contracts early or?

**Allison Christie:** No, nobody did.

**Laura Davis:** There's always this worry that in anything, any kind of illness, any things that pop up in life that our clients are just going to go. Go away. Like, and actually I genuinely think we're all humans, aren't we?

You know, we've all, unfortunately probably cancer has touched probably everybody in some way or not. And when you get ill kids, chances are your clients [00:18:00] potentially have got children or have children in their life, or they're aware of it and they are humans and nine times out of ten clients do respond as a human would, you know, yes, long term, you've got to have those kind of conversations, but it's kind of, it's reassuring to hear that that is the response you get, because I do sometimes think that we build up this fear that our clients are just gonna robotically go "right, out, this does not make business sense" and



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

get, you know, and replace you with somebody else or robot or something. But, so that is reassuring to hear.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, it is always a worry, but I think probably if that's the response you were expecting from some clients, there's probably going to be other little red flags in there too before that point, and it would make you think maybe we're not a good fit.

**Laura Moore:** Yeah, 100%. Very true. Definitely. So you've got to that stage where you have had the diagnosis, you know what the treatment's going to be, you're [00:19:00] starting treatment. You've got some of those clients still, some are naturally dropping off. How did this actually affect you in terms of like, income?

**Allison Christie:** So I worked out that I lost, well didn't lose, but you know, when I was at my lowest income it was down by 70 percent of what it would have been.

If I, you know, just had those clients. So yeah, you'd lost essentially two thirds of your business income. Which is a lot. Yeah. But also, kind of was okay with that. I mean, I wasn't in some ways, because you're like, that's a lot of money to be down. But at the same time, well, I knew I could cut costs. And, you know, as a family and all the rest of it, we'd be fine without that extra income.

It's not like we were going to be planning on going on any big holidays soon, so it's okay. So, we were fine to go down and just, yeah. Just work around it and I was kind of happy enough to, to know that my business was still alive and you were still had enough to keep it going, but I didn't want that [00:20:00] fear of a long term client ending for other reasons that have nothing to do with me having cancer is just always there, you know, when you're down to just a couple of main bits of work, you're like, that's just too risky.

Don't like that. And also I knew that if one of those did come to an end I wasn't, really wasn't going to replace them so it would just be, they would just die off and that would, that would be it. So I had to, I had to have a bit of a word of myself and think, well you're not going to take on long term clients now, that's sensible for everyone, them and you.

There are other things you can do, you know, what can you do? And kind of giving yourself the advice that you would give someone else if they were asking you like, so what can you do? You've got lots of knowledge and skills. And you do have services here that you don't



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

really offer that much. So, maybe focus on those things like power hours and strategies, and audits, and things that, that meant I could book just a few slots in my diary, didn't have to be filling the whole week, and I [00:21:00] could just kind of work around it.

you know, a shorter time commitment. I didn't have to commit to months of working with a new client, but I could still use my skills and keep up to date and do what I love doing. Although that's also a bit of a problem with that because I actually didn't really like doing power hours. I just was like, ugh, power hours, ugh.

**Laura Moore:** So how did you get over that? Well, I had, what I did was I kind of fake booked myself a power hour and I kind of went through the whole process and just looked at, well, what is it I don't like about them? Because the actual call part, I like that part. I like the, you know, being able to help people and seeing what they're struggling with and answer their questions.

But it was all the other bits at either side that I didn't like. The getting them booked in and then the, kind of, off board and at the other side that I didn't like and then when I started looking at it and looking back at power hours I'd done before, some of them, I was spending - don't shoot me - some of them I was maybe spending three hours on [00:22:00]

**Laura Davis:** Oh, Allison.

**Allison Christie:** I was maybe spending three hours on one power hour.

**Laura Moore:** A power three hour?

**Allison Christie:** So I was basically doing a three hour nurture package for the price of a power hour because I'd be Oh, there's this information you might like and here's some examples of this and look at these ads. They might be a good idea for your business and I was giving them a whole, you know, massive notes afterward.

**Laura Moore:** And you'd built a service that you didn't like because you were over delivering.

**Allison Christie:** 100 percent over delivering and also when I look back on it over delivering for the client as well because, you know, once you've been on an hour's call with



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

anyone for something that's sometimes a bit complicated, your brain is a bit fried and here I was after it going, here, have all more stuff.

And they're probably sitting at the other end going, stop, that's enough, you can take no more.

**Laura Moore:** Go away, Allison, you're overwhelming us.

**Allison Christie:** Basically, I really was. So yeah, I had to just make them work better, [00:23:00] get proper systems and processes in place, and just get happy with delivering what it was people are actually asking for.

I mean, if they wanted all that extra stuff, they would have booked a nurture package surely, so I kind of just had to be, that's what somebody asked for, that's what they get, here's the recording, book in if you need some more. That works far better. And then I did actually start to enjoy them after that.

**Laura Moore:** That's what I was going to say. Did you turn it into a service that you actually liked delivering? Because that's good to hear.

**Allison Christie:** Definitely. I think I'd offered them in the past and they'd kind of always just sat there as an option and, you know, if somebody booked in for them it was fine, but then I was like, oh, and then I, you know, was feeling myself that I needed to deliver more, but actually when you break it down you're like, no, this is what somebody asked for.

That's what you deliver, instead of, yeah.

**Laura Moore:** And so once you'd sorted out all of these different services, you now like your power hours and stuff. And I'm assuming that some of the other [00:24:00] services you kind of tweaked to work around you as well. Did that have an income in kind of bringing that income back up to where it was before, or almost where it was before?

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, so I worked that out too, and on, on the worst months, once I started doing more power hours, I was at 50 percent of what I was doing before, but I was really happy with that because, well that's 50 percent of the income I had and I wasn't working the same amount of hours because, you know, I just had more time in my week as well, so I was earning half of what I was before but I had a lot more time just to, you know,



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

go through treatment and not feel the time pressures and the time commitment pressures as well.

So, I was more than happy with that, but some months when I was doing more audits and strategies and things too, I was only 15 percent short of my previous income. So.

**Laura Moore:** Amazing.

**Allison Christie:** That was amazing.

**Laura Davis:** And in terms of the [00:25:00] enjoyment of your, like, job pre, pre 2022, post 2022, when you've kind of upped these other service offers, in terms of just enjoyment, how does that, and how kind of satisfied you are with your business?

Are you grateful that in many ways that's happened so that your business looks a bit different now in terms of your offers and your kind of diversity of that income or is your, is your plans to kind of go back to how it was before?

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, my plan is definitely not to go back to how it was before. No way that, no, that was, that was not clever.

And I do want to make more changes too. I don't know what they are yet, but I know there's things that I just don't want to be the same as they were pre 2022. Yeah, I'm just relying far too much on one to one work. So I want to change that somehow, I don't, I don't know. We'll see how, we'll see what I come up with.

But certainly, [00:26:00] yeah, the power hours and strategies, definitely, I enjoyed them so much more. Because I think when you can see people having those little lightbulb moments of, okay, that's how that works, and then you can explain things and kind of break things down and just the feedback that you get a lot of the time too about how that way you've explained something just makes it so much easier to understand or we've been YouTubing and Googling this for weeks and months but you've just, you know, explained that in 15 minutes or something so it's just a really nice job satisfaction in there too

**Laura Davis:** I think power hours as well remind us that we know what we're doing, or we are the experts, aren't we? It's nice when you, like you say, you share a piece of advice or you show them something and they get that lightbulb moment and you go, oh yeah, I



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

forgot everyone didn't know this. Because I think we take for granted sometimes how much [00:27:00] we know compared to somebody who doesn't work in social media.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah. And also people just being able to ask those questions that they think are stupid questions when they're not stupid questions, if you don't know, you don't know, but just having the space on a call to be able to ask those things and like, what does that actually mean? Yeah. You know, and being able to explain things that you completely forget that people don't understand. They're all like, what's that about? I don't know. So, yeah.

**Laura Moore:** Do you think all of this has changed like your outlook and your opinion on being freelance?

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, it has.

**Laura Moore:** Like, has it made you more happy to be freelance or more or less?

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, I think, weirdly, it's made me more happy to be freelance. I mean, I know that sick pay when you're in the pressure, when you're self employed is more, but also, if I had had a job, I know I wouldn't have just said, right, that's it, I'm going off sick now, I'll see you as soon as my sick pay runs out in a year's time.

I know I wouldn't have done that, I would have still kept [00:28:00] working, you know, maybe I would have taken more full time off.

**Laura Moore:** Can you imagine if you had have done that and had have left an employed role for a year, and what would you have done? Sat around your house, like waiting for the next thing to happen?

**Allison Christie:** Exactly.

**Laura Davis:** Was working sometimes a relief that you had that? You know, you might go through that treatment, you might have felt a bit rough, but at least you knew that you had that escape, I guess, to, to work. How, how was that for you?



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

**Allison Christie:** I mean, yeah, I mean, everyone's different. For some people it would have been, you know, a nightmare, but for me and probably, yeah, I'm going to guess most self employed people, it was.

It was an escape and a joy just to be able to do your normal stuff some days and another thing to fill your head with so you're not thinking about all the cancer stuff. You can just get immersed into somebody's ad account and, you know, building out campaigns or looking at results or trying to figure out why [00:29:00] something's, you know, working or not working.

Yeah, it was just an escape to not think about it. And it was also an escape back to the me before cancer. Because it, I mean, it changes you forever. You can't not go back. Any big experience changes you forever. So, you know, it's kind of just still being me. When I was struggling with who the now me was, I could still go back to the old me and just get on with my work and do my stuff.

Yeah. Definitely a relief.

**Laura Davis:** If there was somebody else who had a similar experience to you, or was going through similar now, what would you tell them? Like, what are your kind of top tips? Like if you would bump into a freelancer tomorrow who had just been diagnosed with cancer or another, any kind of medical worry, what would you be saying that they should be doing to help them through that process?

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, probably just, I'll just sit with it for a little while. Don't make any decisions right away. [00:30:00] Don't feel that you have to just close your business or, you know, keep working as normal. Just, just let it settle a little bit. You will still be able to carry, because there's always the next thing to wait for whether it's the next appointment or the treatment plan or the or the whatever else so you've got time, unless it's an emergency of course. But you know you've got time usually to to just sit with it and get your head around it a bit.

It will probably work out different from how you imagine as well I mean the things that I thought pre cancer that I would think about, I never think about things, you know, you'd see on telly and stuff before, if people had breast cancer, they'd be like, oh, but what if my boobs look weird or if I lose my boobs?



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

I've never thought that once. It's just never occurred to me. So yeah, I think it'll be different from how you imagine. Plans will change. Don't be too hasty to plan everything or change everything because this, this is a long journey and [00:31:00] plans change all the time. Time scales change, deadlines change, dates for when things are going to happen change.

So you've got to learn to get comfy with that, which is hard when you're used to being in control of how things, what you do, it is hard. And that's probably the biggest lesson is accepting that you just don't have control. That's tough. And other than that, get support and just get informed, read up on everything because it's a whole different language and a whole different world that you enter with all these new terms to learn and what it means and you've got decisions to make and you need to know what the impacts of, you know, making those decisions are, so there's lots of great support out there.

Macmillan have great online forums. I spent a lot of time on them in the beginning. Macmillan nurses are fabulous too. We also have a charity in the north of Scotland called Clan Cancer. That's really helpful as well. Breast Cancer Now, Cancer Research [00:32:00] UK. If you're on Instagram, Ticking Off Breast Cancer is one of my favourites and Dr.

Liz O'Riordan as well. She is a breast cancer surgeon who has also had breast cancer. She's now in her second time of having breast cancer, so she knows it from both sides. Um, so yeah, get informed as well, just start learning.

**Laura Moore:** And ask questions. Like, obviously I haven't been through the same journey as you, but like, with William, with his disability and the operations he's got to have, sometimes you can just feel like, obviously depending on like what the surgeons and the doctors are like in the room, sometimes you feel awkward asking questions, don't you?

Like, you shouldn't really ask. Because they know what they're doing, but I just think you sometimes just have to just grow a pair of balls and just be ballsy and ask, ask those questions and get those answers because you're not a mind reader and they know all that information, but just like us in our jobs, they forget that we don't know. So you have to ask and get those answers.

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, and it is, it's the same, I mean, there's a whole different language that you'll know from going through [00:33:00] William's treatments





## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

that, you know, that I don't know and absolutely so many different things that you just have to, you have to become an expert pretty quickly and you've got to learn to advocate for yourself.

Yeah, I mean, at the appointment where I was told I had breast cancer, I didn't do what they do on the telly and just crumble and not take anything in. I was like, right, okay. So, and then just started asking questions, even if they were stupid to, you know, things that seemed obvious. I just started asking loads of questions because I was just like, I need to know, I just need to know things.

I just need to feel you've got some control over, yeah, and some knowledge about what's coming. So yeah, just. Start as you mean to go on.

**Laura Moore:** I've just got another question on that as well. Like for, because obviously you've been through it, so you're on that side. How can somebody who's on the other side support a friend, family member, work colleague, when they're going through that?

Like, what would you have wanted somebody to say to you, ask you, do to help you?

**Allison Christie:** I [00:34:00] mean, I have such a lot of amazing support, and support will come from places that you just don't even really expect. It's It's, it's amazing. But the other side of that is support sometimes doesn't come from where you thought it probably would as well.

It's, yeah, there's, you know, some, some people in some situations where you thought maybe be closer through it, but that didn't, that didn't work. So if you're supporting someone through it, try not to have expectations of what you think the person going through it will want. Just ask them instead, you know, just ask them, what can I do to help you?

And don't just do the, if you need anything, let me know, because we're not going to let you know. Nobody's going to let you know.

**Laura Moore:** It's more like, instead of saying like, let me know if you want me to cook you a dinner, you ask them, what do you want me to cook you for dinner tonight?

**Allison Christie:** Exactly. Yeah, exactly.



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

And don't, yeah, turn up with flowers or send flowers or something like that if you feel that's what that person wants, [00:35:00] but don't do that just because you think that's the right thing to do. Just ask them what they would, maybe they would rather just have a cup of tea. And you did the dishes, or, you know, or you went out for a walk, or go out for a coffee or something and just do something to get them, you know, doing something different. Don't, don't assume.

**Laura Davis:** I'm guessing, and correct me if I'm wrong, but you don't want everything to be about cancer. You know, you still want to be able to go for a coffee with a friend and not have to talk about it. I guess there's a degree that you want, and this will obviously be different for different people at different stages, but I'm guessing there are times where you just want a degree of normality, and, is that right?

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I'd still be going and doing, you know, school run and school things and not talking about cancer, because why would you, at the school gates, you know? It's not, yeah, it's not your normal topic of conversation, so yeah, just, you've still got to live your life and you've still got to do the normal responsibilities you have in your home and all the rest of it, so.

**Laura Davis:** Oh, you mean someone [00:36:00] doesn't do the laundry for you?

**Allison Christie:** Well, if they, if I've missed out on that service, I'll be very disappointed.

**Laura Davis:** All right, so. Obviously now you're well and all is good, which is obviously brilliant. So what's, like, what's next? Where are you going now with your business? Are you going to bring back the subscription box? What is it that you're going to kind of plough on forward with, with your kind of freelance business?

Tell us a bit about what, where you're going.

**Allison Christie:** Okay, so I, when treatment finished, I decided I'd give myself a year to just let that bit come to an end. Come to terms with that, I suppose, because nobody tells you this bit, which is that once treatment ends and everyone goes, That's great! Yay, you're finished!

You're actually not. That's when you're, the mental side of it kicks in and you get out of fight or flight mode or whatever and you actually have to start processing all those big



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

feelings and I'm not, I'm not [00:37:00] terribly feely, so, but you've just got to learn to, yeah, you've got to learn to accept that you're going to have some feelings now and just learn to work through that.

So I decided that after treatment ended I would give myself that year just to, you know, just chill and not expect too much of myself. And just, once I realised that all those big feelings and all those big fears and all those, well, what now and what ifs were coming up, then just like, right, well, let's not just pile any more pressure on ourselves.

So I've got, I think, three months left of that. So I'm starting to think about what might come next. And for me, it's probably changes around a better balance between one to one and other products and services. And looking back on it, when you're not working as much, you know, that's when all the ideas start to come up.

And you start to think, Oh, I could do this.

**Laura Moore:** Yeah, that always happens with Laura and I. If either of us have, has a day off, our Slack is full of ideas.

**Laura Davis:** Which is why we don't have days off anymore! [00:38:00]

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, well, you know, then those ideas, Oh, I could do this and I could do that. But then when you're going through treatment you're like yeah but I can't though can I? So you start to get a bit peed off all these ideas because yeah well I can't even do it because uh. So I think for me this next few months is going to be looking at those ideas and just thinking what might be good going forward.

**Laura Davis:** Did you write them all down?

**Allison Christie:** I've got yeah various bits of notes and various places and various half, half ideas still in my head but yeah hopefully I haven't lost any good ones.

**Laura Davis:** Amazing. So three months time, basically, we're all going to be sat waiting for these, the big reveals.

**Laura Moore:** Get the party poppers out. No pressure, Alison.

**Allison Christie:** No pressure!



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

**Laura Davis:** Love it. Okay, Alison, so before we wrap up, if there was one final tip you could give someone who is [00:39:00] continuing to work and have, has a freelance business and also struggling with a cancer diagnosis, what would you give them?

**Allison Christie:** Sure. So if you're continuing to work, commit to a bit less than you feel you can do right now, because especially if you've got treatment to come, don't overcommit yourself at the beginning.

Outsource more if you can, even if that means there's less money in your business. It's going to help you keep your business running if some, there's someone else there that can take over from you when you need a break. Raise your prices as well. Definitely do that because then obviously you're bringing more money into your business without having to work as much.

It just makes sense. And you're probably going to need that little cushion if you're not able to work as much. So definitely do that too. I mean, take the chance to stop working on the things you don't like doing as much too. If there's things that you do that you're still doing because you know, you've always [00:40:00] done them then maybe stop doing them, change them around like I did for the power hours to just make it work better for you too.

**Laura Moore:** Love it. Thank you so much Allison for sharing your story.

**Allison Christie:** That's all right.

**Laura Moore:** This has been a really great episode If people want to come and chat with you and ask you questions or outsource you or anything like that, where can they find you?

**Allison Christie:** They can find at [allisonchristie.com](http://allisonchristie.com) and they can also find me on Instagram and LinkedIn and Facebook @allisonchristieonline as well.

**Laura Davis:** Allison, with two Ls, isn't it?

**Allison Christie:** Yeah, I don't, it's so awkward.

**Laura Moore:** Not awkward, special.

**Laura Davis:** We'll put all the links in the show notes anyway. People can come and find you that way.



## 092 - Navigating Life and Business with a Breast Cancer Diagnosis with Allison Christie

**Laura Moore:** Thank you again, Allison. It's been a joy to speak to you and the rest of you listening, we will be back this time next week in your ears.

In the meantime, come and find us in the Facebook group, The Social Media Managers Hub, and let's carry on the conversation. We'll see you then. Toodle pip! [00:41:00]

**Laura Davis:** Bye!

