



Karen

Living Donor

I still remember the first time my now husband took me out for dinner. He rolled up his sleeve to show me his “buzzing” arm. Despite being in a medical field, I had never seen a fistula before and didn't know that these were essential for someone to perform haemodialysis. “Do you want to feel my vibrating arm?” he asked. It seemed like a less confronting way for him to tell me about his ongoing health concerns. He then told me a little about his previous kidney history and what was expected in his future.

As we got to know each other better, he told me all about his failed transplant years earlier and other operations he had needed along the way. Each time saying that it was all stable and nothing to worry about. After we had known each other about a year his kidney function started to deteriorate. His mother had been tested previously for donation so we assumed that this could happen and we may be able to avoid dialysis all together. I had thought about putting my hand up as a live donor, but with his mum willing and knowing they don't last forever then thought we might need mine later on. Organ donation was not new to me as in my last year of high school, my uncle received the amazing gift of a heart transplant, which still continues strongly today.

When they ruled out David's mum as a possible live donor, I broached the subject with David. Initially he dismissed it, but I was insistent we find out if it was an option. That started a 12-month journey of specialists and tests to work out whether it would affect my health and if we were in fact as compatible with kidneys, as we seemed to be in our relationship. This was a very stressful and trying time, which I understand was important, but certainly I feel if we hadn't been as committed to each other and determined to get past dialysis and continue living our life together it would have been easy to pull out of the



process. But eventually all the test results were positive and we were told we could set a date.

So, after arranging my mum to come from Queensland to look after my 6 year old son, we set a date. At this stage I was a little scared, but my primary motivation was to help get David back on track and stop the immediate need for dialysis. We knew that my kidney is probably not going to be a lifelong solution, but if it gave us a few years to continue our relationship, travel, and hopefully spend our life together. So exactly 2 years to the day after we met we were admitted to the Melbourne Private Hospital and had the surgery the next day. The surgery was an immediate success, with my little kidney settling in and working well from the start. It was quite a painful procedure for me, not having had any surgery previously, so my recovery was a little slower than anticipated, but it in no way made me regret what had just happened.

We celebrated our 7th “transplantiversary” this year. We celebrated our 6th Wedding anniversary this year as well, so we have stayed as compatible as the little kidney.