

ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

Calum Best, British-American model-turned TV presenter, and son of footballer George Best, was in Dublin recently to raise awareness about the genetic link associated with alcohol dependence.

"Your genes are not your destiny," he told *Irish Country Living*.

"Although it is in your genes, it doesn't mean you have to end up that way. There are lots of people out there who can say: 'My dad or mom was alcohol dependent but I'm not.'"

Calum Best was highlighting research by Lundbeck which showed that nearly two-thirds of people in Ireland believe alcohol dependency has a genetic component (can run in families).

"People have to realise that once they start that pain-numbing cycle – drinking to kill the pain – all they can do is go downhill from there," he says.

"I would say to older men, think about your children. I would say to younger men, drink in moderation and think about your health and bloodline. I could have gone down that same road at 24 when I lost my dad. It was a real tough time for me. I was numbing the pain, drinking every night. Instead of sitting at home and thinking about the fact that I had lost my dad, I would go out and not think about it by getting wasted."

Calum's mother, Angie, helped him get his life back on track at a time when everything was "a blur" for Calum.

"It meant having support, but I was at a stage where I wanted to better myself as a person. That was also around the time I got the chance to make a documentary called *Brought Up By Booze*.

"Through that I got to talk to many alcoholics, kids of alcoholics and support organisations. I learned how to find some closure and found a way of helping others to get out of the cycle too. I want to pass on the message that it's not all doom and gloom. There is a genetic risk but you don't have to follow that genetic line."

Dr Garret McGovern, who runs an outpatient clinic for those with alcohol dependency at Priority Medical Clinic in Dublin, joined Calum in putting across this message.

"We need to be more aware of how much we are drinking in this country," he said.

"In a survey of 26 countries, Ireland was in the top three after Hungary and Luxembourg.

We drink too much and we have a very chaotic relationship with alcohol. Far too few people are coming forward for treatment. If alcohol is affecting your relationships, your work and your health, you should seek help. We need to hit this problem earlier and reduce the stigma around seeking help."



Go with the flow

If things happen for some reason greater than we can fathom, maybe it's best to just go with the flow, writes **Fiona Hoban**



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I recently spilt a packet of sprinkles (the kind you sprinkle on top of trifles and ice cream, hence the name, I guess) and they scattered all over the kitchen floor. They went absolutely everywhere (not unlike sand, which seems to make its way into the most unlikely of places).

I stood there in dismay, knowing full well that it would be a difficult task to sweep them all up. I thought to myself: "Imagine if you had to try and count them." Impossible, surely? Looking at the kaleidoscope of colours on the floor, they reminded me of the impossible vastness of the universe with its galaxies, stars and planets. No matter how hard I try to understand even the basics of planetary science, I invariably end up shaking my head saying: "Nope, you've lost me."

In an attempt to delay the task of sweeping up a universe of sprinkles from my kitchen floor, I Googled planets, stars, universes, galaxies (and a recipe for pineapple upside-down cake). This is what I found:

A galaxy is a system of stars, planets and other stellar material held together by gravitational attraction. There are at least 100 billion galaxies in the universe. The Milky Way is one of these 100 billion galaxies, and it consists of 400 billion stars. One of the 400 billion stars in the Milky Way is the sun, and it is the sun that keeps our planet, Earth, in orbit. If the other 100 billion galaxies have

a similar number of stars to that of the Milky Way, well, that's a lot stars.

(Self-raising flour over plain flour for the pineapple upside-down cake, by the way.)

I was so bamboozled at this stage that I thought it best to just go get the brush and sweep up the sprinkles. As I did so, I remembered a lovely quote I came across recently: "No snowflake falls in the wrong place." It seems to suggest that there is a grand plan. Everything happens exactly as it is meant to happen. Such an idea appeals to me. I find it oddly comforting, and it invites me to let life unfold, to trust that essentially it's all good.

No snowflake falls in the wrong place and maybe no sprinkle falls in the wrong place. They fall where they fall. But was their falling in the first place inevitable, part of some grand plan? If so, is it not futile for me to think "this wouldn't have happened if you'd have been more careful"? Is my carelessness part of the grand plan? Do I play any part in how things play out? Do I take any personal responsibility for sprinkle-gate?

I don't know, and I can never resolve fully this question. How much of life is freely chosen by us, how much of it is part of a bigger plan over which we have no control or choice?

It's time for some pineapple upside-down cake – and I think I'll throw a few sprinkles on top for the sheer heck of it. **CL**

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- **Common cold (runny nose):** Around one and a half weeks.
- **Sinus infection:** Around two and a half weeks.
- **Cough** (often after a common cold): Around three weeks.

A EUROPEAN PROBLEM

It is accepted across Europe that action needs to be taken to curb growing resistance to antibiotics. Inappropriate use of antibiotics is considered a waste on four fronts, according to the HSE:

- A waste of a precious life-saving resource. We are running out of antibiotics because bacteria are developing resistance faster than we can develop new ones.
- A waste of your money on GP and prescription fees or taxpayers' money.
- A waste of time for the patient.
- A waste of time for the GP who doesn't need to see patients with a cold or flu. **CL**