



REAL LIFE

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF SASHA DELANEY

FOLLOW THE 35-YEAR-OLD SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANT, LIVING WITH CYSTIC FIBROSIS, ON HER DAILY ROUTINE



“One thing’s for sure, all of my mornings start with the one essential thing in life – coffee!”

Living with cystic fibrosis (CF), my mornings are, by nature, quite hectic and very regimented.

I am usually up between 5.40am and 6am depending on what nebulisers I am on, some take longer to inhale than others. It is then that I do my chest clearance physio using a PEP mask – this keeps pressure on my airways as I breathe out allowing me to clear my lungs. Physio is followed by my nebuliser (an inhaled antibiotic) my inhalers and oral medication. I usually take about ten tablets. Breakfast is a must as I have CF-related diabetes and I need to keep my blood glucose stable. However, one thing’s for sure, all of my mornings start with the one essential thing in life – coffee!

Once that is out of the way I make myself more presentable to the world with as much make-up as the time left allows and then I am on the road from Kildare to Dublin no later than 6.40am. On a good day I am in work by 8.15am. In order to keep going, I usually have a second breakfast, normally porridge after a dose of insulin.

I work as a Special Needs Assistant in a lively and dynamic secondary school in Dublin. I check the timetable for what classes I am needed

in or any meetings that I have scheduled. If I have time before class, I will check my emails for notices of events happening that day. We are a staff that values collegiality and my day is usually full of informal meetings about school life. We do, of course, have formal meetings scheduled into our diaries too. Help, advice and support are always on hand.

My lunch always begins with another round of medications. I carry my afternoon medications in my handbag so I don’t forget them, as well as leaving Post-it notes everywhere reminding me! I am a big fan of food and so it is normally leftovers, curries, stir-fry or salads, with lots of vegetables. Then, more coffee. Once a week at lunchtime, I co-run a social justice group for Junior Cycle students so lunch is eaten quickly before that meeting at 1.20pm. If I can at all, I will try and get out of the building for ten minutes for some fresh air.

Without doubt, education is something I am extremely passionate about and I always knew I wanted to be a part of it. There is such power in having a good education. I love my job and all aspects of it, especially enabling students to access the curriculum

regardless of circumstances. I believe every student should have proper access to the education system. There is a common misconception that working in a school is easy but it has its stresses and challenges like other workplaces. I often sit in the evenings thinking of students and how I can help them. When I was in school, I had great help with my illness and realise the importance of that support.

I leave work at 3.45pm when the school day ends and aim to be home by 5pm, traffic allowing. My evenings are often as hectic as my mornings, as I try to grab a snack and hit the gym at least three evenings a week. Exercise is vital for people with CF and, without it, I would be a lot sicker. I also find that it really helps relieve the stress of the workday and helps me to sleep much better. I do classes in the gym as well as some weight-lifting. A hot shower always feels better post-workout.

Then it’s some dinner and maybe a bit of television for an hour before it is back to the medication regime and preparing for the next day. I like to have everything ready for the morning – breakfast things out and medications organised, as it saves an

awful lot of time and means I am less likely to forget something important, like my oral steroids. There are more nebulisers or inhalers before bed, as well as a pint of medication I need to drink to help my bowel function, as CF also has a massive impact on that too. If there is time, I like to unwind with a good book or some Lego, and I am certainly not averse to a cuddle on the couch with a movie.

I try to be in my bed and asleep by 11pm. Less sleep and my health declines pretty rapidly – recovery during sleep is crucial. I need to be well rested in order to face it all over again the next day. Having something like CF is similar to having a second job. It takes up a large chunk of time during the day and so I need to have the physical energy to keep going. **WW**

Sasha is a patient ambassador for Cystic Fibrosis Ireland. 65 Roses Day, which was due to take place on April 10, has gone virtual. You can donate online now at 65RosesDay.ie