



Alex Jones joins forces with mums to take on 'The Mother of All Challenges' for Sport Relief 2018

- The One Show's Alex Jones will be taking on the epic challenge alongside four inspirational mums to help raise awareness of maternal health and fundraise for Sport Relief 2018
- Launching on Mother's Day, the challenge takes place across six days (11th – 16th March) and will see the group battle freezing temperatures, agonizing blisters and challenges they never thought they'd face – all in support of Sport Relief
- Follow their journey on The One Show every night from 12th March, 7pm on BBC One

The One Show presenter, Alex Jones, will be taking on another monumental challenge this Sport Relief – but this time, she won't be alone. Alex will be joined by four inspiring mums from around the country as together they travel across the UK for a relentless schedule of swimming, hiking, cycling, caving and running.

The Mother of All Challenges for Sport Relief, will see the team push themselves to the limit as they face a series of five gruelling challenges across six days - including swimming in Loch Ness, cycling through the Lake District and coastal running in Wales.

The challenge will raise money to help vulnerable people in the UK and across the world to live happier, healthier and safer lives as well as raise awareness of maternal health issues. It is one of the causes funded by Sport Relief money and something close to the group's hearts as each of the four mums have experienced their own maternal health issues.

The four mums are:

- **Amal Hassan**, 31, from London. Amal is a trained doctor specializing in Sports Medicine.
- **Debbie Williams**, 50, from Bristol. Debbie is a support worker for adults with learning difficulties.
- **Jodi Dowse**, 28, from Bristol. Jodi works at BlueBell, a charity providing emotional wellbeing services to families during pregnancy and after birth.
- **Leigh McLean**, 44, from Glasgow. Leigh works for a construction company.

Helping them on their way will be former Olympian, world-renowned sports scientist and physical activity expert Professor Greg Whyte OBE.

Starting at Loch Ness on Sunday 11th March – Mother's Day – the team will brave the freezing cold as they swim a section of Scotland's most famous loch. With the risk of hypothermia always in mind, the mums will be doing a relay swim, testing their bodies to the limit as they plunge into the treacherous lake with average temperatures of five degrees Celsius in March.

Day two on 12th March will see the team lace up their hiking boots as they try to conquer Helvellyn via Swirral Edge in the Lake District. This narrow ridge is not for the faint at heart. The mums will be dealing with the terror of standing on a narrow walkway with valleys falling away to either side. The gruelling mix of climbing and walking includes a daunting ascent of 870m and 800m descent.

The challenge shows no signs of slowing the following day, as Alex, Amal, Debbie, Jodi and Leigh will test their endurance; cycling up three of the Lake District's toughest passes. This will include climbing up the Kirkstone Pass, following the edge of Windermere's shore and up the very steep Hornister Pass and Newslands Pass.

Our mums will next travel to Alex's home country of Wales, the setting for the next leg of the challenge on 15th March. Heading deep underground, they'll crawl their way through tight passages and have to navigate a maze of dark caverns to make it out of Porth Yr Ogof cave in the Brecon Beacons. In normal weather conditions a dry rocky river bed leads up to the main entrance to the cave, but following rain this may quickly become a raging torrent as the Afon Mellte (the Lightning River) lives up to its name. A challenge not for the claustrophobic!

After their long and taxing week there is no let up on the final day of the challenge. Friday 16th March will culminate in, quite literally, a marathon finish. Our fearless mums will tackle a relay coastal run across the hilly Welsh coast, taking in clifftop views, secluded coves and wild landscapes. The test of endurance will finally end with a triumphant crossing over the finish line in Swansea.

Alex said:

"I have taken on challenges before, but this is a whole week's worth of tests. Tackling them as part of a team of mums makes this the most special thing I have done for Sport Relief. It will push us out of our comfort zones and really test us physically, mentally and emotionally. I can't wait to get started with these fantastic women."

- Alex, Amal, Debbie, Jodi and Leigh need the public's support to keep them going on *The Mother of All Challenges*. Donate at www.sportrelief.com/mums
- Inspired by this challenge? Whatever moves you, do it for Sport Relief. Head to sportrelief.com to find out how to get active and make a difference, including downloading the free app and joining the national Billion Steps Challenge.

Follow Alex and the mums on their journey by tuning in to The One Show each night on BBC One during the week of the challenge.

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Notes to editors

Sport Relief brings the nation together to get active, raise money and change lives. Since 2002, Sport Relief has raised over £335 million. The money raised by the public will be spent by Comic Relief to tackle the critical issues affecting people across the UK and the world. This year, Sport Relief culminates in a week of activity from Saturday 17th to Friday 23rd March, leading to an unmissable night of TV on the BBC.

Comic Relief is a UK charity which aims to create a just world, free from poverty – where everyone is safe, healthy, educated and empowered. Since 1985, Comic Relief has raised over £1 billion. That money has helped, and is helping, people both at home in the UK and across the world. For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit www.comicrelief.com *Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland)*

Mum Biographies:

Amal lives in Wimbledon with her husband and 11month old son. During a difficult pregnancy, Amal felt like a completely different person. She suffered physically from Pelvic Girdle Pain, which eventually progressed to cause her difficulty just walking. The inability to exercise in the way she had always enjoyed caused Amal to suffer mentally as well as physically with her everyday coping mechanism removed.

Just before Christmas in 2016, Amal gave birth to her son following a long, traumatic labour with doctors rushing to get the baby out immediately after his heart rate slowed down. Once her husband went back to work, Amal began to struggle with everyday tasks due to pain from the birth, and difficulty establishing breastfeeding. She was, however, excited to get back to exercising after the birth, but was disappointed to discover that her pelvic floor had been injured as a result of the birth, and she also had a tummy gap, meaning everyday movement was still difficult.

After being diagnosed with post-natal depression, Amal focused on getting strong and fit again in a sensible way, guided by her women's health physiotherapist and her postnatally qualified personal trainer.

She got back on track using social media to connect with a network of like-minded mums who are equally passionate about maternal health and well-being, and believe it's fundamental for women to keep active during and after pregnancy, but in a safe way, so that they don't develop further physical health problems. As part of this group of mums, Amal is working hard to bring the importance of access to women's health physiotherapy into the limelight.

Debbie lives in Bristol with 2 of her daughters, whilst one is at university and her eldest lives in her own place. She feels very lucky to have 4 beautiful daughters, after experiencing 2 miscarriages in her life.

During the birth of her daughter Ellie, which was Debbie's third pregnancy, Debbie had a placenta abruption which meant she had to have an emergency C section and Ellie had no heartbeat for 19 minutes. Following this was a difficult 8 weeks in hospital for Debbie and her newly born daughter, where it was uncertain if her baby would even survive. Doctors thought Ellie had brain damage, and at one point they asked if they should turn the life-support machine off but Debbie refused and wanted to keep fighting. Ellie is now a happy and healthy 11-year-old.

Despite Debbie's fears for similar issues in her fourth pregnancy, everything went relatively smoothly, until around 8 months after the birth when Debbie suffered with delayed grief and depression. During this time, she struggled to leave the house and often suffered with panic attacks. Debbie eventually got help from the doctors, who prescribed her medication and suggested counselling, which she found very beneficial. Following her experiences, Debbie was inspired to work as a support worker for adults with learning difficulties - a job which she absolutely loves.

Jodi lives in Bristol with her partner and two children. Six months after moving to Bristol and meeting her partner, Jodi got pregnant very quickly. During this time, she had no real family nearby or friends, but was overjoyed to be expecting a child. However, the birth was traumatic as her son had dystocia and got stuck which led to Jodie losing a lot of blood. Jodie barely remembers the birth, and when she held her son, she didn't feel like her baby belonged to her.

She went out a lot, and would do anything in her power to not be a mum as she didn't feel a motherly connection to her child. Jodie describes this time as very dark, and she felt very alone.

When her son was about two years old, Jodi met her new partner. With her partner's support, she saw a doctor and began going to a group of other mums in similar situations which helped her to get better.

Jodi decided to try for another child but was worried that her post-natal depression would return. Everything was going well, until around six months into the pregnancy when Jodi became obsessed with getting her baby out of her body. Jodi went to see a mental health nurse, who decided they needed to get the baby out as soon as possible, so Jodi had a C section at thirty-six weeks. After holding her new baby for the first time, she instantly felt a connection, and they became a very happy family.

Now, Jodi often goes running to help clear her mind. She wanted to share this with other women who need time to just be them, and to achieve something. So, Jodi set up exercise classes for women only but now it is open to everyone.

Jodi wants to do this challenge so she can achieve something, and to show everyone that she is strong, but also to raise awareness of her story so others in similar situations can go get help.

Leigh lives in Bearsden, a small town just outside of Glasgow with her husband Colin, and her three children.

When Leigh met her husband, she already had son Ross from a previous relationship, and they hoped to try for another child. After struggling to get pregnant, Leigh and Colin decided to use IVF treatment.

Leigh discovered that it was quite a taboo subject that wasn't often discussed, and had trouble finding someone who she could talk to about IVF. Following this, Leigh openly talks about her experiences of, going through two cycles of IVF.

The first time was devastating for Leigh and her partner as she unfortunately miscarried. The second time was a success to full-term, and Leigh gave birth to twins, a girl and a boy.

Leigh describes herself as a 'glass half full' person, as she always tries to see the positives in any situation. She first got into fitness in her late teens, where she would go to the gym and loved exercise classes, and now she goes to the gym constantly.

She is taking part in the Mother Of All Challenges for multiple reasons, she wants to challenge herself mentally and physically, and to prove to her kids that they can do whatever they put their mind to.