



FORK HANDLES

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A week in radio

Giving us grief

Hannah Verdier

Vodka and stomach pills ... Oscar Isaac as the mayor in *Show Me a Hero*

'I would give it all up ...' Clara Amfo on losing her father



Radio 1 DJ Clara Amfo was about to run the Paris half-marathon when she got a phone call to say her dad had died. In *Running With Grief* (Radio 1), she tells the moving story of how she got through the first year without him.

It's an incredible documentary, thanks to Amfo's willingness to be so open, cry when she needs to and pinpoint those precise moments when grief hits. Her feelings are raw and her voice waivers with sorrow and disbelief as she utters the words: "My dad died." Within months of hearing the news, she landed a dream job, taking over Feame Cotton's mid-morning show. Every day she bounced around on air, but she recalls sobbing at, among other things, the Spice Girls' 2 Become 1.

An average day in Amfo's life involves having "a cute haircut", interviewing Jess Glynne and watching the 1975 play *The Live Lounge*. But that's the sort of day when she would cry twice. "I would give it all up ... if I could even hug my dad for 30 seconds," she says.

This is the sort of programme that Radio 1 and 1Xtra do so well at the moment: Amfo is the big-sister figure who doesn't hold back, letting young people who've lost a parent know they're not the only ones. "I'm just going to tell you now: you're never going to get over it," a bereaved friend told her. She learns that there's no time limit or set stages of grief.

"I don't know if I can physically handle any more pain," says Amfo as she visits her father's grave in Ghana on New Year's Eve. She's missing the feeling of hugging her dad ("like memory foam") and feels guilty for any moment of happiness. Bereavement counsellor Joan Brennan emphasises the importance of talking about it, adding: "We are human beings. We're not meant to stay wounded forever."

A year later, Amfo runs that marathon and radiates happiness. "I've been ugly-crying for the past 3K of this race," she sobs. "I feel like my dad would be happy for me." He would be proud of his strong, self-deprecating daughter, too.