

Ectopic pregnancy made me live life

Joanne Jones tells Amy Salter how a brush with death gave her the courage to set up her own business

ASSHE lay doubled over in agony, Joanne Jones's holiday in Egypt had taken a sudden turn for the worse.

The 27-year-old from Birkenhead had jetted off with partner Ingo, 34, leaving daughter Amelie, then nine months, with her grandparents.

But days before they were due to return, Jo experienced horrific abdominal pain.

"It felt like I was in labour and the doctor sent me to hospital where I was injected with pain killers," she recalls.

The following day Jo felt so much better the couple spent the rest of the holiday quad-biking and riding camels on the beach, but back on Merseyside things deteriorated.

"The pain started again so I went to the doctors, had an internal examination but was given the all clear."

But a week later the young mum, then a casting agent for Lime Pictures, collapsed.

"I decided to go to hospital

where I gave a urine sample. Straight away they said 'you do know you're pregnant?'"

But Jo had no idea she was expecting.

Following a scan, the doctors informed her she'd suffered a miscarriage but a later scan revealed Jo had in fact had an ectopic pregnancy that had ruptured. She needed surgery immediately.

"Ingo was working away, so for two hours I was alone and terrified. He once ran a pub and a customer died of an ectopic pregnancy so that was stuck in my mind.

"I kept thinking of my daughter and what would happen if I wasn't there. I was also worried that if I survived I'd never be able to have kids again."

With reassurances she was in the best place, Jo battled to stay calm, but three emergencies meant she wasn't operated on until the following morning where doctors removed one of her fallopian tubes.

"I was really worried about the wait but did feel in safe

hands and the operation went smoothly."

But although a terrible ordeal the experience prompted a life-changing decision.

A firm believer that work shouldn't just be something that pays the bills, Jo decided to live out her dream of running her own casting agency.

"I realised life is for living. I'd been in the same job for 10 years and worked in casting so long I wanted to go for it on my own."

But the process wasn't without problems.

"Ingo was running an events company that was staging folk festivals across the country and they were so successful, the timing seemed right to hand my notice in. But not long after the floods hit, the festivals had to be cancelled and the company went bankrupt."

Meanwhile Jo's business, Bananafish Management, hit the ground running.

"It's completely exceeded my expectations and the actors are getting work. One is in an FA Cup commercial that will run on Sky and two have got parts in the new George Bamy film."

After a decade of working with

stars, Jo is keen to promote her corner of the country.

"There's so much going on in the North West but no one to showcase the talent.

"I want to change the perception that all the big agencies are in London."

As well as helping struggling actors the young mum is also keen to raise money for The Cystic Fibrosis Trust, a charity close to her heart after she watched a friend lose her mum, brother and sister to the disease.

Jo recently raised over £1,000 doing a sky dive and plans to do more charity work.

Despite still having pains from the ectopic pregnancy, Jo tries not to let it hinder her life and with the business officially launching in the new year, it seems there's no time for negative thoughts.

"I just have to tell myself that even if it doesn't work out, at least I can look back and say I had a bloody good go."

◆ **Bananafish Management launches at Life Restaurant and Bar on January 26.**

If you are interested in extra work or acting, contact Joanna on info@bananafish.co.uk

LOVING LIFE: Joanne with her daughter, Amelie

Picture: ANDREW TEEBAY / at211107c

