# Star of Clueless, Elisa Donovan Picks AICR As Her Charity to Support Cancer Prevention and Survivorship

Actress Elisa Donovan discusses her cancer prevention advocacy with the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR).

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For over 20 years, Elisa Donovan has been a part of iconic pop culture phenomena. She began her film career playing Amber in Paramount Pictures comedy Clueless. She followed that up with another pop culture hit, the television series Beverly Hills, 90210, playing bad girl 'Ginger LaMonica' and then played Morgan Cavanaugh in Sabrina The Teenage Witch. Recently, Elisa was picked by Sheryl Sandberg to be the voice for her #1 bestsellers Lean In and Option B. The audiobook for Lean In was #1 on the charts and also won a Grammy nomination. Elisa's own book "Wake Me When You Leave" was released on June 8, 2021. The book is her very personal memoir about losing her job, her relationship, and her father to cancer, all over a very short period of time. Through her grief, she began to connect to her father in a series of visitations and dreams, helping her to heal and rebuild her life. The film version of "Wake Me When You Leave" is currently in development, with Richard J. Bosner as producer. The film will mark Elisa's screenwriting and directorial debuts.

After losing her father to cancer, Elisa found inner peace in becoming an ambassador for raising awareness about cancer prevention and healthy survivorship. She is convinced that diet, weight management, physical activity and other lifestyle factors have a huge role to play in reducing cancer risk and in surviving cancer. She has selected AICR as her chosen charity for this advocacy. Here is more from Elisa Donovan on how raising awareness of cancer risk factors is so important.

**Q. We are so thrilled that you have picked AICR as your charity. It is a privilege to have you on board. Do you mind sharing how you came to this decision?**

**A.** I lost my father to cancer in 2004. It was incredibly painful to watch him deteriorate and to feel so impotent to be unable to do anything about it. It was particularly eye opening and frustrating to me that the full picture of his health was not considered in his treatment. At that time with his particular care, his diet, lifestyle and physical fitness were not considered to be vital in his treatment as they should have been. I was dumbfounded by this. In recent years, I have wanted to

align myself with an organization that looked at cancer and cancer research with this full spectrum approach. One of the first things I read about AICR was the importance they placed on a healthy diet and healthy lifestyle as not only combating cancer when in treatment, but also as a tool for overall health and wellness.

**What do you want people to know about their diet and lifestyle habits?**

**A.** That old school idea that "You Are What You Eat" is really important! But with important updates: In other words – when we put processed, unhealthy, chemical foods into our bodies, we are actually creating disease. It's not just that unhealthy eating habits and lifestyle choices can make us gain weight or not look our best, it's that they are actually hurting us. The body needs to be active for proper circulation and for food to move through our system. Often, we don't even need to make extreme changes on a daily basis to be healthier. If we can start to create awareness around these things, small adjustments can be made that will make big shifts in our overall health.

**How do you want to use your celebrity status to raise awareness about cancer prevention and healthy survivorship?**

**A.** I want to use it in whatever way will be most impactful! To draw attention to the research and data behind these ideas, to attract more resources, to educate people – lack of education is a big missing piece in this puzzle. I would love to contribute to making a shift in perception in our culture about this disease.

**You have just launched your memoir, what is it about – tell us more…**

**A.** I am so thrilled to be sharing this book with the world. It is about the period of time when my father was diagnosed with cancer and died, when my relationship ended, and when my television show was canceled all in a very short period of time. I was stripped of everything that made my life make sense to me. My whole life turned upside down. The book chronicles the downfall of everything and then the effort to rebuild my life. I hope that this book will bring readers, especially those struggling with the loss of a loved one, a sense of hope and comfort. We are very uncomfortable with pain and grief in our society, and I hope this book helps people to feel more empowered to share their challenges and sadness. There is no way around these things – there is only through. And when we can walk through the grief and the pain, we can really heal and have a greater connection to humanity – a deeper love of life, a more joyous existence. This book also has so much humor in it, because just like life – death does not cover the full spectrum. There is absurdity, challenge and pain, and there is also laughter and love and joy in life's full cycle. My hope is that we become more willing to include all facets of existence into our lives, not just the one dimension we see with rose-colored glasses.

In addition to her entertainment career, Elisa supports women struggling with eating disorders and is a proponent of spreading awareness and recovery. She has had pieces published in the "*Chicken Soup for the Soul*" series of books, and had her recovery story featured in the book

“*Feeding the Fame*” and documented for *TEEN* People. Elisa has spoken about recovery on many television shows including *20/20, Entertainment Tonight, Access Hollywood* and *Dr. Drew’s Headline News*.

Additionally, Elisa has filmed a cooking show for the Food Network in June. She has selected AICR as the charity that receives donation for her participation.

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