# Danny Dyer reveals how Harold Pinter's death triggered a spiral of madness



Danny Dyer's recent reflections on the death of his mentor, Nobel Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter, have brought to light the significant emotional toll that loss can take on individuals. Dyer, best known for his role in "EastEnders," described the aftermath of Pinter's passing in 2008 as a descent into a "spiral of madness." In a candid interview on BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs*, he recounted how he stumbled upon the news of Pinter's death while on his way to buy cigarettes, a moment that overwhelmed him with feelings of guilt and anger at the world.

Pinter was not only a legendary figure in theatre but also a pivotal influence in Dyer's life. He first cast Dyer in his production of *Celebration* at the Almeida Theatre in 2000, marking the beginning of a mentor-mentee relationship that would significantly impact Dyer's career. Their collaboration continued with Dyer starring in *No Man's Land* and *The Homecoming*, the latter of which was performed shortly before Pinter's death. Dyer has often referred to Pinter as a "father figure," emphasising Pinter’s role in nurturing his artistic growth. During a tribute at the Harold Pinter Theatre in 2019, Dyer expressed his deep gratitude, stating, "I feel very connected to him and I do really believe he’s keeping me safe on that stage."

The reverberations of Pinter's influence extend beyond mere professional guidance; he instilled a sense of authenticity in Dyer. The playwright encouraged Dyer to embrace his working-class roots rather than hide them. Recalling his audition for *Celebration*, Dyer noted that his direct approach charmed Pinter, who exclaimed, “Hello son, how you doing?” This authenticity was a cornerstone of the mentorship that Dyer cherished deeply.

Yet, Dyer’s path has not been without its challenges. The actor's early career was marked by struggles with anxiety and substance use. A harrowing incident during a performance at New York's Lincoln Center in 2001, where he forgot his lines and succumbed to an anxiety attack, left a lasting impression on him. Pinter's disappointment was palpable, and rather than detract from their relationship, it spurred Dyer to confront his demons. He acknowledged, “The guilt of not being around him anymore and just being lost,” illustrating how Pinter's guidance was instrumental in his personal growth.

Dyer's later projects reflect both his desire to honour Pinter's legacy and to explore his turbulent relationship with fame, family, and mental health. He is reportedly developing a play focused on his relationship with Pinter, a further testament to the profound impact the playwright had on him. Though Dyer’s ascent to fame brought financial stability, he candidly admitted to the pitfalls of typecasting. “I didn’t have the luxury to worry about that,” he said, recognising the necessity of earning a living while navigating the complexities of his career.

Today, Dyer has carved a niche for himself in the industry, yet he remains anchored in the lessons imparted by Pinter. His journey serves as a reminder of the vital importance of mentorship and the deep, sometimes painful, connections that shape one's life. As he continues to honour Pinter's memory through his work, Dyer embodies the resilience borne from love, loss, and the enduring power of authentic relationships in the face of adversity.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraph 3
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 3, 5
5. Paragraph 4
6. Paragraph 2, 4
7. Paragraph 2, 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/entertainment/death-danny-dyers-mentor-harold-35206447> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/danny-dyer-harold-pinter-theatre-west-end-press-night-a4060046.html> - In February 2019, Danny Dyer paid tribute to his mentor, Harold Pinter, during the opening of 'The Dumb Waiter' at the Harold Pinter Theatre. Dyer expressed gratitude for Pinter's mentorship, describing him as a 'father figure' who guided him when he needed it most. He reflected on Pinter's influence, stating, 'I feel very connected to him and I do really believe he’s keeping me safe on that stage.' Dyer also acknowledged Pinter's significant impact on his career and personal growth.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-44080271> - In 2018, Danny Dyer and Martin Freeman were announced to star in Harold Pinter's play 'The Dumb Waiter' at the Harold Pinter Theatre. Dyer first met Pinter in 1999 when he played a small role in 'Celebration' at London's Almeida Theatre. Pinter later cast him in 'No Man's Land' at the National Theatre and as Joey in his final play, 'The Homecoming,' in 2008, shortly before Pinter's death. Dyer expressed deep admiration for Pinter, describing him as 'the only person who I feared but loved.'
* <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/television/tv-news/danny-dyer-says-harold-pinter-taught-him-not-to-hide-his-working-class-roots/39547239.html> - Danny Dyer shared how Harold Pinter taught him to embrace his working-class roots. Recalling his audition for Pinter's play 'Celebration,' Dyer approached Pinter directly, saying, 'Hello son, how you doing?' This candidness impressed Pinter, leading to Dyer's casting. Pinter encouraged Dyer to remain authentic and not hide his background, imparting the lesson that one's origins should not define their future.
* <https://inews.co.uk/culture/danny-dyer-interview-dumb-waiter-pinter-dani-254698> - In a 2024 interview, Danny Dyer discussed his return to the West End in Harold Pinter's 'The Dumb Waiter.' Reflecting on his early career, Dyer recounted a challenging performance in New York's Lincoln Center in 2001, where he experienced an anxiety attack on stage. Pinter, known for his directness, expressed disappointment in Dyer's behavior, leading to a pivotal moment in Dyer's personal and professional growth.
* <https://inews.co.uk/culture/danny-dyer-harold-pinter-plays-collaboration-238703> - Danny Dyer and Harold Pinter formed an unlikely yet profound mentorship. Dyer, initially unaware of Pinter's stature, was cast in 'Celebration' in 1999. Their collaboration continued with roles in 'No Man's Land' and 'The Homecoming.' Dyer often referred to Pinter as a 'father figure,' crediting him with instilling confidence and authenticity in his acting, and guiding him through personal challenges.
* <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/danny-dyer-harold-pinter-friendship-best-moments-a4049096.html> - Danny Dyer and Harold Pinter's friendship was marked by mutual respect and influence. Dyer, cast in Pinter's 'Celebration' in 2000, appreciated Pinter's mentorship, describing him as a 'real inspiration.' Their bond deepened with roles in 'No Man's Land' and 'The Homecoming.' Dyer dedicated his National Television Award to Pinter, expressing deep emotion and gratitude for Pinter's impact on his life and career.