

# → SouthGlosConnect ←

10 activities designed to make you think, reflect and act... 

He hadn't been up there for years. Probably decades! In the faint light of the attic, the old man shuffled across to a pile of boxes that lay near one of the cobwebbed windows.

Brushing aside the dust, he began to lift out one old photo album after another. His search began with the fond recollection of the love of his life long gone. He knew that somewhere in these albums was the photo he was looking for. It was the black and white one, when she had that smile. Patiently opening the long lost treasures he was soon lost in a sea of memories. The old man wiped away one or two happy tears. Although the world had not stopped spinning when his wife left it, the past was more alive than his present emptiness.

Setting aside one of the dusty albums, he pulled from the box what appeared to be a diary from his son's childhood. He couldn't recall ever having seen it before or even the fact that his son had kept a diary. Opening the yellowed pages, he glanced over the entries and his lips turned up at the corners in an unconscious smile. His eyes shone and he chuckled aloud. He realised he wasn't just reading the words, he could hear them, spoken by his young son who'd grown up far too fast in this very house. In the utter silence of the attic, the earnest words of a six year old worked their magic and the old man was carried back to a time almost forgotten. The spidery handwriting reflected on important issues for a six year old - school, football, holidays, arguments with his big sister - entry after entry stirred a sentimental hunger in his heart. But it was accompanied by a painful memory that his son's simple recollections of those days didn't tally with his own. The old man's wrinkles became more deeply etched.

He remembered that he'd kept a business diary. He closed his son's journal and turned to leave, having forgotten the cherished photo that had triggered his initial search.

Hunched over to keep from bumping his head on the beams, the old man stepped down the wooden stairway to his office. He wasn't sure what creaked most, the stairs or his knees!

He opened a glass cabinet door, reached in and sought his business diary. He placed the journals side by side. His was leather bound, his name embossed in gold. His son's was tatty and frayed with a hand drawn picture on the front. The old man ran a bony finger across the name 'Jimmy' scribbled on the cover.

He opened his business journal and read some of the entries. There were notes from meetings, often very detailed. Every single day was crammed with business appointments. Sometimes the evenings too. He remembered back to those times he sure was driven in his career. It was for the love of his family that he'd chased success so hard. The old man was drawn to an entry much shorter than the rest. In his own neat handwriting were these words, 'Wasted a whole day fishing with Jimmy. Didn't catch a thing!'

With a deep sigh and a shaking hand he took Jimmy's journal and found the boy's entry for the same day, June 4th. Large scrawling letters pressed deep into the paper read, 'Went fishing with my dad. Best day of my life.'

(TAKEN FROM 'THE LITTLE BOOK OF BEING BRILLIANT' BY DR ANDY COPE)

# ?? Questions...

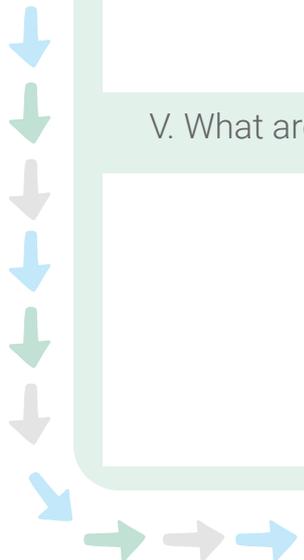
I. What are your initial thoughts and feelings about the story you've just read?

II. What is your definition of 'happiness'?

III. ... and how well are you living it?

IV. Describe the kind of parent/guardian you want to be?

V. What are the 3 wisest lessons you've learned about happiness in your life so far?



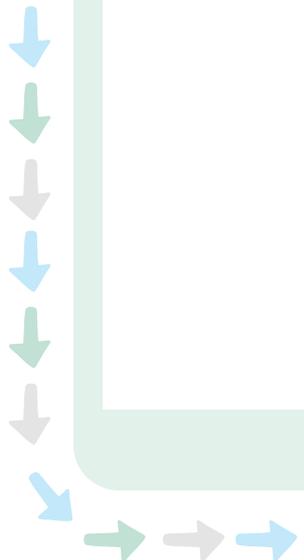
## Activity 2: Impact

Watch Martin Burder talk about the [4-minute rule](#) and reflect on his FAB comment.

I. How do you make others feel?

II. How do people act as a result of spending time with you?

III. What do you make people believe about what's possible?



### Activity 3: The Story of your life (so far)...

Everyone possesses what Anne Masten calls 'ordinary magic' – an inner resilience that enables human beings to bounce back after adversity. Bereavements, job losses, unfairness, health issues, relationships that turn sour... everyone experiences adversity with some having more than their fair share.

The truth is that nobody is happy all of the time. Every human being on the planet experiences bad days, bad weeks and 'not so good' years. But 'ordinary magic' kicks in and we learn to bounce back.

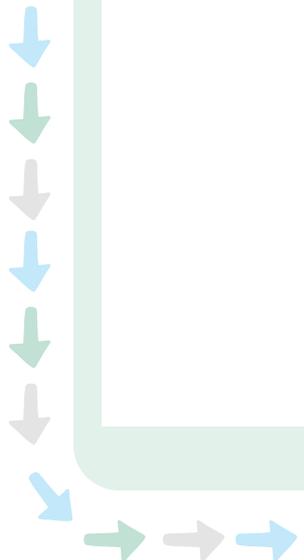
Often, it's the most difficult circumstances that teach us the biggest life lessons. In Positive Psychology it's called 'Post Traumatic Growth'. A major illness, the loss of a loved one, a soured relationship... these can sometimes act as a springboard to learning and forward momentum,

It's worth reflecting on your life so far – the good, bad and downright ugly – to dig up the true meaning of life.

Spend a few minutes thinking about your life to date – what has had a significant impact on you so far?

I. Think about milestones and events that have been important

II. What achievements are you pleased about? What did you learn?



III. What 'less than happy' experiences have influenced you? What did you learn?

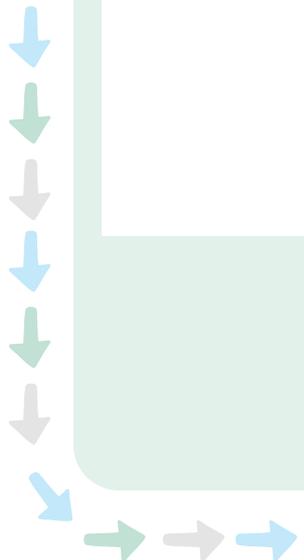
Blank writing area for section III.

IV. Write a list of things you feel good about in your life

Blank writing area for section IV.

V. What, for you, is parenting 'success'?

Blank writing area for section V.



## Activity 4: Read and reflect on Al's story 🧐🧐

There were so many things that Al was either slow at or couldn't seem to do at all.

Poor Al. Even as a young child people recognised him as being mentally slow. It took him so long to learn to talk that his parents consulted a doctor. His family labelled him 'the dopey one'.

At school, Al didn't fit in, neither with fellow students or teachers. To the other kids he was a freak because he had zero interest in sports. One teacher told Al that he'd never amount to anything and that he should drop out of school immediately. As a result, Al hated school.

Al dreamed of being a teacher but suffered rejection after rejection. It took him 9 years before he eventually got his first teaching job. And if all this wasn't enough, Al was also incredibly absent minded:

He often lost stuff. If he went away he'd forget his clothes or even his entire suitcase

He once went for a walk and couldn't remember the way home  
He would sign letters with the person's name he was sending them to, rather than his own name!

He never drove a car and his relationships often ended in failure.  
But... all we've talked about is what Al couldn't do. Fortunately, he didn't focus on his weaknesses. His strength was creative thinking and rather than thinking in words, Al thought in pictures. He thought about things that nobody else did:

Al imagined what it would be like if he were to travel on a bullet at the speed of light

Or whether space might curve, making the distance between 2 points not necessarily a straight line

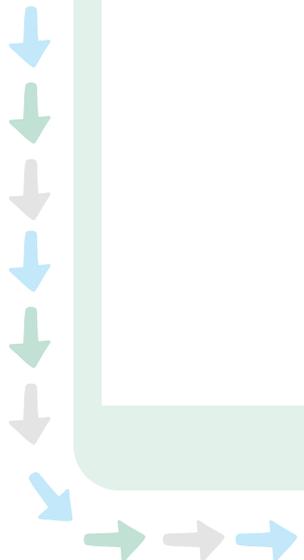
Or whether time might be relative rather than absolute, so that if one twin went on a space trip at the speed of light, he'd come back a different age from the twin who'd been left behind

With his incredible imagination he helped prove the existence of atoms and dreamed up science's most famous equation:  $e = mc^2$

Al was, of course, Albert Einstein, considered by many as the greatest genius who has ever lived. So, Einstein was like most of us - good at some things and really bad at others. Fortunately he worked hard at developing his strengths and refused to let his weaknesses hold him back.

I. Imagine you were 'young Einstein' – would you have thought of yourself as smart or stupid? Why?

II. What can we learn from AI's story?



## Activity 5: Goal Setting Madness

Achieving goals is a mix of will power and way power.

To tap into your will and way-power, the Art of Brilliance team suggests you should go large. In modern language, you should supersize your goals. To kick start your ambition you need to set a Huge Unbelievably Great Goal, something that excites you, an achievement that is on the edges of your ability. You won't achieve your HUGG by next week or next month and certainly not by accident.

In the picture below, your HUGG goes at the top of the pyramid. It doesn't just whet your appetite, it drenches it in motivation.

Clue, if your HUGG doesn't excite you, you've not framed it correctly.

The massive goal will seem daunting which is why we break it down into smaller, more manageable steps. Each block of the HUGG becomes a SUGG – a set of Small Unbelievably Great Goals - things you are going to have to do every single day. Fill the whole thing in and you've got an exciting vision to aim for plus a host of small habits to commit to.



## Activity 6: Growth Mindset

Watch Will Hussey talk about [Small Change, Big Difference](#).

Think about Will's end point. Pick a high achiever and imagine them, age 10. How do you think they became a high achiever?

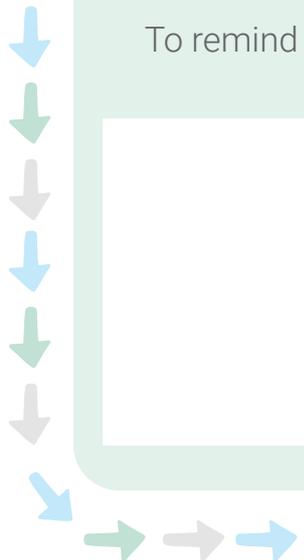
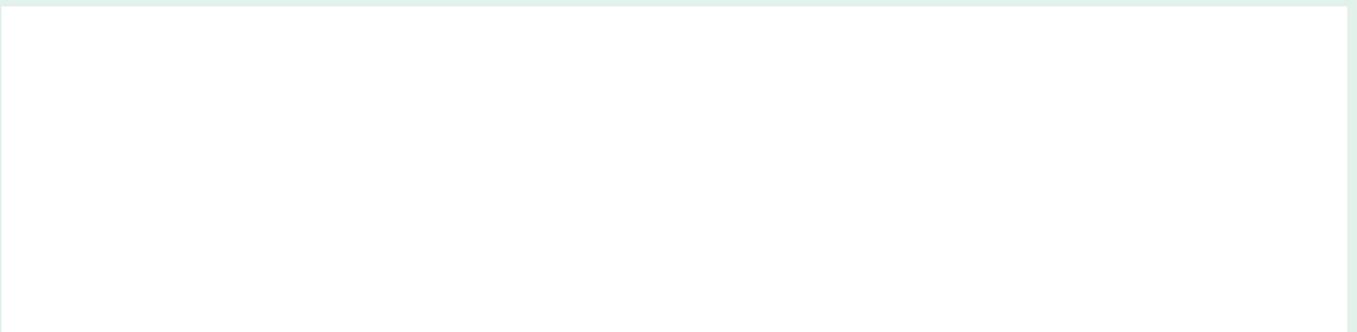


## Activity 7: Passion and purpose

If you listed 20 things that you're lucky to have but might be taking for granted, it's likely that your children and your health will feature at the top.

In the hurly burly of modern life it's quite easy to forget that family is the number one factor in personal happiness, closely followed by purpose.

To remind you of the basics, watch Dr Andy Cope's short video and have a go at the activity: [what's your sentence?](#)



## Activity 8: Read and comment on the parable of Cotton Candy

Everyone worries, but if there was an Olympics for worrying Candy's mum would be going for gold. In fact she was so good at worrying that she's started to worry about her worrying. Then she started to get worried that she was worrying too much about worrying, which worried her some more.

Told you she was good!

Candy's mum lived with Candy's dad, in a house that they worried might be too small, in a neighbourhood that they worried might be too rough. Candy's dad was also a worrier, but in a slightly different way. He was what we might call an over-thinker. He specialised in imagining the worst, and if that happens it'd lead to something dire, and if that happened it'd trigger something completely terrible

A sort of worst case scenario dominoes.

You get the picture.

A worrier and an over-thinker who sat and watched the news every night – war, famine, disasters, volcanoes, pandemics, dodgy politicians, job losses, forest fires, plane crashes, terrible weather, global warming, economic catastrophe – the world sure seemed like a terrible place.

Candy's mum and dad totally forgot that the news broadcasts all the worst disasters, wars and earthquakes from across the world. It slipped their mind that that's what 'news' is – deviations from the norm.

They had temporary amnesia that they lived in Filton which was safe and nice and non-earth quakey. During TV news reports Candy's dad was always quick to remind Candy's mum about the siege of Gloucester in 1643 – 'If that flares up again it'd be proper nasty because it'd wouldn't be swords and stuff, it'd be drones and nukes.'

Anyway, that's the backstory. I keep referring to Candy's mum and dad but Candy hadn't even been born at this stage of the story.

Eventually, she popped out, so tiny and precious, into a world that was so big and scary. They loved Candy so much that they vowed to protect her from danger.

All danger. Always.

Everything was going swimmingly until their little girl was six. She was playing outside when she fell and grazed her knee. She wandered in from the garden, her bottom lip wobbling, a little bit of blood dribbling down her shin.

'Oh my goodness Princess Candy,' said her mum. 'What has that nasty garden done to you?'

The little girl was scooped up, hugged, her knee sorted, dinosaur Elastoplast applied, crying stopped... job done.

Except, not quite. Candy's grazed knee wasn't the end of the matter. In fact it was the just beginning. Her mum and dad were determined that the big bad world wouldn't do any more harm to their precious little princess.

It all got a little out of hand. Let me explain.

Age 7, Candy wanted to play football. 'Ooh, that's dangerous,' said her dad. 'I watched some football on the TV and they kicked each other. There was tripping too. One man fell over and rolled around like he was badly hurt. And if the ball hits your head you get Alzheimer's.'

So Candy got wrapped in cotton wool. Literally. Her dad went to the chemist and cleared the entire shelf. He bought three trolleys of cotton wool, and rolls and rolls of Sellotape and he wrapped Candy up.

It was difficult to play football, but she tried her best. Eventually she got too hot and gave up. He dad un-cottonwooled her. 'Excellent,' he said, inspecting her knees and elbows, 'no damage done.'

Age 8, Candy asked her mum, 'Is it okay if I have some swimming lessons?'

Her mum looked horrified. 'Swimming?' she gawped, 'in a pool. Made entirely of water!' Her mum shivered at the thought. 'What if you drown?'

So the very next day dad arranged for the plug to be pulled and the swimming pool to be emptied. They watched as the water glug glugged away and then Candy was allowed in. She had a lesson, splashing around in the dryness, front crawling in the fresh air, breast-stroke walking into the deep end. Mum and dad looked at each other, pleased as punch. 'Look at our little girl in the deep end, on her very first lesson!'

On the way home Candy commented that her swimming lesson had been, and I quote, 'weird and not much fun'.

'But at least you didn't drown,' smiled mum.

Age 9 and Candy hardly dared to ask but she eventually plucked up the courage at teatime; 'Mum, you know that tall tree in the garden. Do you think I could climb it?'

Dad nearly choked on his jacket potato. Mum looked very worried. 'It's such a tall tree,' she said. 'What if you fell down. Or got to the top and couldn't climb down. You'd be stuck there forever, and die.'

Dad chipped in, his domino thinking in overdrive. 'Or if you got to the top and there was a storm, with lightening. It could strike the tree and that'd be worse than terrible.'

But Candy really wanted to climb the tree so, that night, mum and dad had a secret discussion and the next day Candy awoke, opened her curtains and - ta-daaaa the tree had been chopped down. Yes, her loving father had been up all night chop chop chopping and then cutting all the sharpest branches off so that his little princess could climb the tree.

Safely!

He sure did love his little princess.

Candy climbed the tree. It was a bit boring but at least she was safe.

Age 10. Candy had seen some of the other children playing on a playground in the local park. She'd given up asking because she knew the slide would be too slippery, the swings too swiny and the climbing frame too fally-downy. But there was one piece of equipment that looked epic so that night, after tea, she put her Princess Candy eyes on and said, 'Daddy, would it be okay if I had a bounce on a trampoline?'

Her dad winced. He imagined all the things that could go wrong with a trampoline. Falling off and hurting yourself was the most obvious danger but all that bouncing might make his daughter sick, or she might pull a muscle, or she might bounce so high that she she'd be hit by a plane. He looked at those pleading eyes and decided he'd make his little princess a safe trampoline.

He got some cushions from the lounge and put them on the back lawn. Candy was allowed to jump up and down on the cushions for as long as she wanted.  
Which wasn't very long.

It wasn't such fun as an actual trampoline, in fact it was hardly any fun at all, but at least she was safe. 'And that's the main thing,' beamed dad.

Look here dear reader, I think you've got the point. The pattern was set.

Age 11, roller skating... no wheels.

Age 12, rugby... she was allowed to watch it on telly.

Age 13, horse riding... on a rocking horse.

Age 14, cooking... nothing hot or sharp, so she was allowed to peel a banana.

Age 15, art and design... no glue or scissors.

Age 16, exams... what if she failed and felt bad? To avoid feelings of disappointment, Candy was removed from exams.

These are just a few examples of what happened to Candy when she was a child. But, as happens to us all, eventually she became an adult, then middle aged, then old, then really old, then ancient.

Ancient Candy sat in her chair. She'd lived a very safe and long life. Her great grandchildren visited her in the nursing home. Lulu scrambled up onto Candy's bony knee. 'Tell me about the adventures you had growing up great grandma,' she asked.

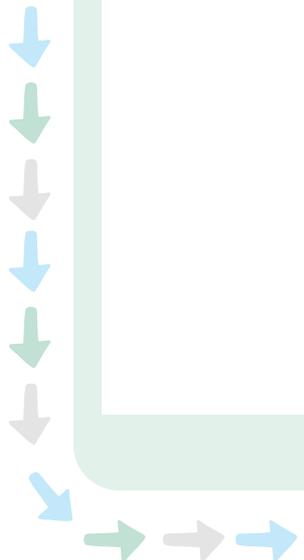
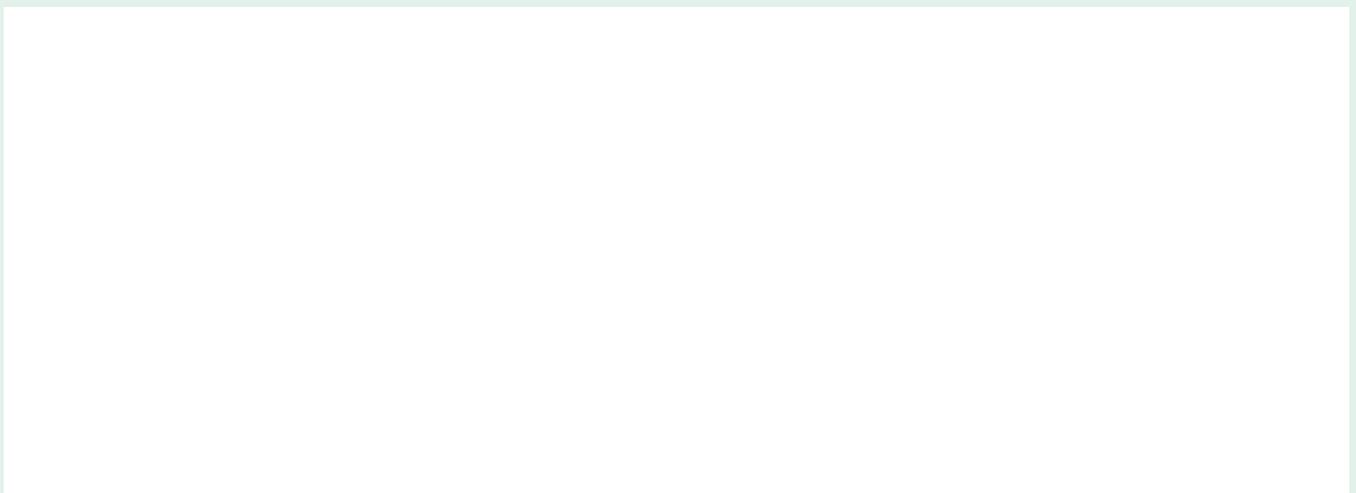
'Adventures?' asked her great Grandma.

'Yes, you know, games and fun and stuff,' beamed tiny Lulu. 'Expeeeeriences!'

Grandma Candy sat back in her chair, tears welling in her ancient eyes.

**(TAKEN FROM THE HAPPINESS REVOLUTION BY DR ANDY COPE AND PROF PAUL MCGEE)**

I. What are the implications of too much risk?



II. What are the implications of too little risk?

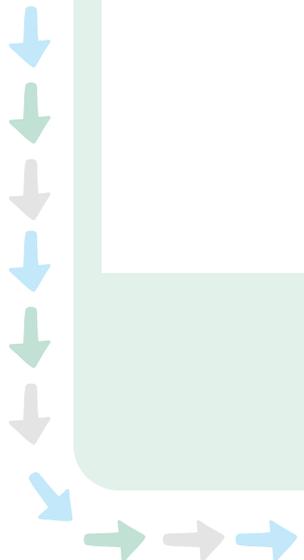
Blank space for writing the answer to question II.

III. "All successful people have failed time and time again. That's why they're successful."  
Agree or disagree? Why?

Blank space for writing the answer to question III.

IV. When you're as old as Great Grandma Candy what would a 'no regrets' life look like?

Blank space for writing the answer to question IV.

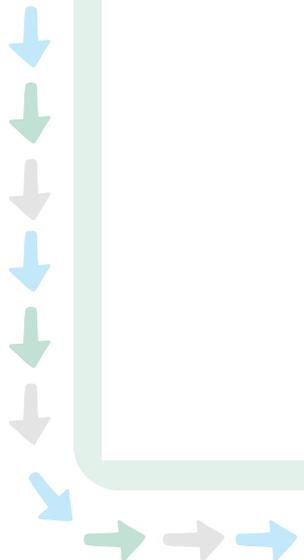


## Activity 9: Be the best for the world 🌍

I. Be the sort of person your children, parents, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandma, grandad, bestie and next-door neighbour wants you to be. Which is...

II. Be the kind of parent your children's teacher wants you to be. Which is...

III. And while you're in the mood, let's take it to the next level. You may as well be the kind of person you want to be. Which is...



## Activity 10: Cloud 9

Imagine there's a version of you sitting on a fluffy cloud. It's nice and comfy up there, and the view is fantastic!

Your amazing vantage point gives you a chance to look down on you and your family. Watch them as they go about their daily business. Pay particular attention to yourself. Watch and listen to yourself as you interact with the world.

