

SHINE



**Rediscovering your energy,
happiness & purpose**

ANDY COPE & GAVIN OATTES

The bit before the actual beginning...

An Englishman, a Scotsman and an Irishman walked into a bar. The barman looked them up and down and said, *'Is this some sort of joke?'*

All gags started like that in the 1970s and 80s. They were hilarious, until we found out that they were actually lazy, stereotypical, racial slurs. Who knew? Alternative comedy brushed these tired *olde worlde* jokes aside, so we had to come up with something different.

*'Never trust a man
who, when left alone with a
tea cosy, doesn't try it on.'*

Billy Connolly

Which is fine by us because nobody tells jokes any more. It's all about stories, and our story didn't start like that. There was no Irishman. And no bar. There was an Englishman and a Scotsman, but they met in a café at St Andrews. They had a cup of tea, a bit of a natter and left it at that.

That doesn't work as a gag (not even an alternative one) and is not even vaguely interesting.

But what follows is. Because, you see, the Englishman and Scotsman kept in touch and when the time was right, they joined forces to write a book. This book, as it happens.

So what exactly is 'this book'?

This book, dear reader, is the best self-help book ever written. By Gav and Andy, that is. Whether it's actually the best ever, I guess the Amazon reviews will be the judge of that. Hand on heart, our aim at the outset was to write the best damned book the self-help shelves have ever seen.

The Scotsman was excited. You see, he's never written a book before, so had no idea what pain and suffering was down the line. The gnarled old Englishman's an old hand. He knew, so his excitement was tinged with scepticism. *'The best book ever'* was a nice idea (it was the Scotsman's idea), but really? The Englishman smiled politely, like we do.

Anyhow, the Englishman and Scotsman came up with a plan and went their separate ways. Gav to Edinburgh, Andy to Derby, and they started penning stuff. Well typing it, but you know what I mean.

The Englishman was struggling a bit. He was beginning to wonder how many times he could get away with saying *exactly* the same thing that he'd said in his previous five books, when *'ping'*, an email arrived. It was the Scotsman. *'Will be sending you some ideas later today.'*

That was it.

Ten minutes later; *ping*, another email from Edinburgh, entitled 'A wee bit of magic', and this time there was an attachment.

I sighed. 'A wee bit of magic'? *Wee*? The Scotsman is writing it in chuffing Scottish!

I was about to open the attachment when there were two more *pings*; 'Silly Stress' and 'Mary Poppins' had arrived, each with an attachment.

The Scotsman was flying.

I opened 'A wee bit of magic' and had a quick look. In a previous life Gav had been a teacher, plus I've heard him deliver a keynote and I'd read his back catalogue of blogs, so I knew he was okay with words. But he's unpublished.

'A wee bit of magic' blew me away. In two short pages, I laughed and cried.

Beginner's luck?

I clicked on 'Silly Stress'. *Same!* 'Mary Poppins' raised the already sky-high self-help bar to Dick Fosbury levels. It was flopping amazing; a proper sucker punch of writing that softened me up with some fun stuff before delivering a killer blow that took the wind out of me. It was the kind of writing that I had always wanted to do.

The best self-help book the world had ever seen? What if the Scotsman was being serious?

While the Englishman was reading, six more emails had winged their way down the A1/M18/M1 information superhighway, each as good as the last.

And so here we are. It's clear that the Scotsman probably didn't need the Englishman at all. Or maybe he did? Because the seemingly random bunch of stories needed a narrative. There are times when the reader needs a breather, and that's where I come in with a bit of science or a new angle, or (as is very often the case but will go totally unnoticed) some proper punctuation. Apostrophes? *Helloooo!* I wonder how the Scotsman ever qualified as a teacher. So, for the purists, I promise good grammar and no emojis. Thinking aloud, is it a generational thing – putting three exclamation marks to make a really big point?!?!?!?

A new word for you

Mephobia: the fear of being so awesome that the human race can't handle it and everybody dies.

Anyhow, there's a lesson for you already in the comparison thing that I've been doing. Gav talks about changing your focus away from being the best *in* the world towards being the best *for* the world. It's a subtle play on words that has very unsubtle connotations. It dovetails rather snugly with Simon Sinek's notion that finite players play to beat the people around them whereas *infinite* players play to be better than themselves. Applying it to life means it's not about Twitter followers, FB likes, book sales, salary earned or how funny you are. It's not about producing better work than your colleagues, or outdoing anyone. One-upmanship gets you disliked.

Matching up to the Scotsman's levels of hilarity is beyond me, so I swapped 'finite' for 'infinite' thinking. Whether I can write books that are as amazing as the ones my heroes write becomes a moot point. I've changed my focus. The greatest personal development writers of all time are not my competition. The Scotsman is not my competition.

I am my competition. Not just in writing, but in everything.

And you are yours.

In which case, joy doesn't come from comparison, but from advancement. For me, it's about producing better work than I did last time. I'm very very proud of my previous books. That means I have to up my game to be very very proud of this one.

Best of all, it's actually quite a relief to twig that I don't have to match up against the best in the world. I only have to match up to being a little bit better than me from last time. It helps enormously to have the flying Scotsman on board because he will help me be better.

And if I can help him too, we're cool.

So there you go, your first lesson and we haven't even got to Chapter 1 yet. *Progression rather than comparison.*

And so to the actual book itself...

SHINE

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*Rediscovering your energy,
happiness & purpose*

Andy Cope & Gavin Oattes

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*Thank you to my wife Ali, who always tells me I can
just when I need to believe it.*

*This book is for the over thinkers, the worriers and anyone else in the
world who turned red while reading aloud in class.*

– Gavin Oattes

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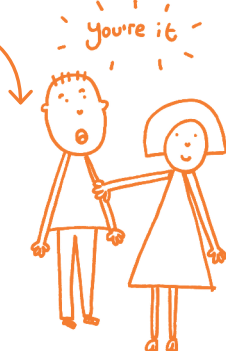
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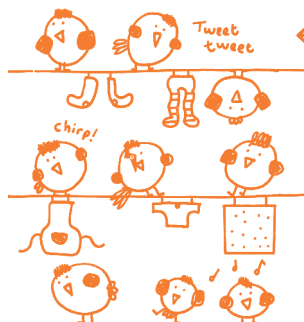
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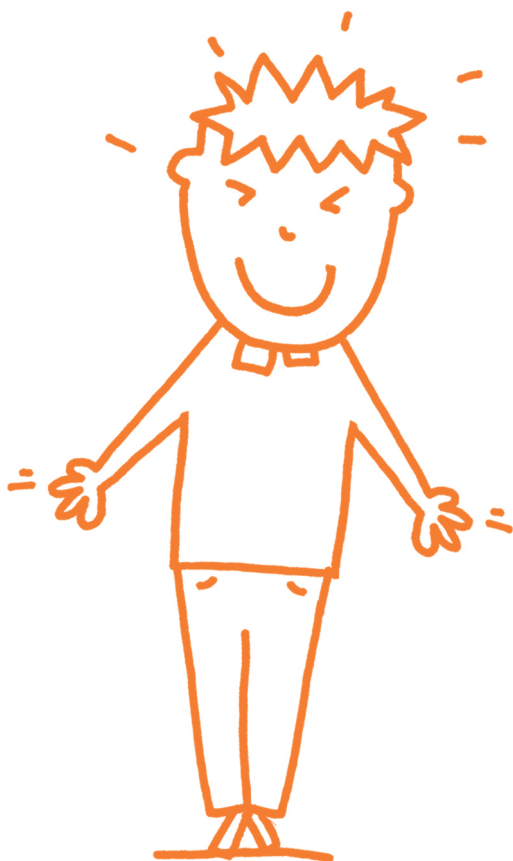
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Chapter 1

THIIIIIS MUCH EXCITED



What's it to be? Same old shit, or crazy new shit?

Welcome to the crazy new variety, in which Chapter 1 is introduced by a 5-year-old and we grapple with the concept of 'normal' and 'shine o'clock'.

Then it's adults only. We go all 50 Shades, with an explanation about why there's less sex in the city. We check out Andy's unremarkable breasts and his super-keen sense of smell before sloshing around in Thailand.

Then there's this book, that book, bad books and a very good book (with a towel) which explains what SHINE is all about. Kind of.

And if giving you less to think about isn't enough, we throw in what we're calling a 'Bilbo Bagginsism' before challenging you with the ultimate question: 'are you a wild salmon or stickleback kind of person?'

After toasting your good self we turn to births, marriages and deaths and invite you to hang around at your own funeral. Even in ghostly form you have choices – you could be death-eatery (dark and foreboding), poltergeisty (knocking on doors and shifting the vases) or Casper-like (floaty and friendly). We favour the latter. In a bizarre chapter ending, we offer up the ultimate challenge – to light up your own funeral.

Shine baby, shine!

Shine o'clock

Gav will never forget his son's first day at school, which was, bizarrely, a Friday. It was a two-hour taster visit and then he'd start his first full day the following week. Fair dos.

'You'll turn out ordinary if you're not careful.'

Ann Brashares

I woke up on the *Monday* of that week to discover Kian stood beside me at 6am dressed in full school uniform. I reminded him that his first day was, in fact, Friday. 'I know,' he replied firmly, 'I'm practising.'

He also practised Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, standing at the foot of my bed, ship-shape and inspection ready at 6am. He forgot on the actual Friday because he was exhausted by his unbroken run of early mornings, but that's not the point.

I woke him on Friday and he leaped out of bed, threw his uniform on and came sprinting into our room. Ali and I smiled weary, early-morning-parenting smiles. I told Kian that I'd never seen him this excited before in his entire life.

He agreed wholeheartedly: 'That's because I've never been this excited in my entire life.' There was a brief pause before he delivered the best bit: 'And I've been alive for five years!' His eyes grew wider and he rose to his tiptoes in glee. 'In fact, Dad, I'll show you how excited I am. I am *THIIIIIS MUCH* EXCITED!'

Please picture a five-year-old with his arms stretched so wide his hands are almost clasped behind his back, shoulder blades touching. If you're struggling, imagine an angler who'd caught a

very big fish but was also prone to gross exaggeration, and you're in the right ball park.

You can probably remember being five. Pretty much everything's exciting at that age, so to be beyond 'normal' excitement and to have ventured into '*THIIIIIS much* excited' – we're in 'unmitigated joy' territory.

That morning, my wife and I had a wonderful discussion about how, in that moment, there were thousands of young kids all waking up feeling the same – buzzing, pumped and ready to go. Raring to throw themselves into the next step of life's adventure.

We continued to talk about how amazing it is that some people remain like that throughout life. Every single springy step of the journey – the infectious energy, the buzz, the SHINE. And then we had a really weird discussion about how some people never feel like that again. Their wee piece of magic dwindles, it fizzles and vanishes. It's like your rice krispies that you poured milk on and forgot. An hour later, their snap, crackle and pop is just a mushy mess.

Could it be that some people peak at five?

There is, of course, a downside to taking the next step in your adventure. Fear. Worry. Stress. Anxiety. You are excited and yet it's tinged with what might go wrong. It might not work. You know the oft-trotted mantra of 'failure is not an option' is bullshit. Failure is an actual thing. You know because you've experienced it.

But when you're four or five – even though you're a little scared – you're *THIIIIIS much* excited.

BRING. IT. ON!

So, what about you? Did you wake up this morning feeling *THIIIIIS* much excited? Or are you the angler that caught the stickleback of joy?

How often do you wake up on a Monday morning pumped, buzzing and raring to go? Are you waking up every single day energized, happy, driven and frothing with passion? We're not talking about some days or most days, we mean EVERY SINGLE DAY!

If your answer is 'No' then there's a word for people like you: *normal*.

It's absolutely normal. It's normal *not* to wake up every day genuinely pumped full of energy, buzzing, raring to go.

In work it's normal too. It's normal for an organization NOT to have all its people waking up every morning fit to burst with excitement at the prospect of going to work and banging out world-class customer service. If you skip into work 'frothing with passion', someone's going to be making you a doctor's appointment.

Think about this for a moment.

It's normal. You're normal.

It is now the norm NOT to have people waking up energized, buzzing and raring to go to work. To go do the things they have chosen to do, every single day.

I'm going to say it once more.

It's normal. And it doesn't sit well with me. So here are a couple of rhetorical to get your juices flowing.

Firstly, *what good is having a belly if there's no fire in it?*

And secondly, *do you want 'normal'?*

I'm willing to put money on it that every single person reading this book absolutely categorically does NOT want normal.

I'm willing to wager that you are, in fact, looking for, working for, hoping for, striving for, dreaming about something absolutely extraordinary. Something exciting, engaging, purposeful, colourful – even a little bit scary. Something that makes a difference.

Something that makes you feel THIIIIIS much excited.



Can you imagine what would happen if you woke up every single day with the same fire in your belly for the day ahead that you had when you were five?

It would be extraordinary.
Abnormal even.

'Great minds think alike, but are usually a bit mad.'

Hannibal, 'A-Team'

But can you imagine what you'd achieve? And how you'd feel? And the impact you'd have on the normal?

It's a mix of frightening and enlightening, but in the most beautiful way you could ever imagine.

Moreover, it's a mindset. A choice. It costs nothing.

So raise your glass and let's propose a toast:

'To the abnormal. To the happiness outliers. To those who dare. To those who are *THIIIIIS much* excited.

To YOU.

It's time to shine.'

Less sex in the city?

So, why don't we shine? If we all started out like Kian and life was *THIIIIIS much* exciting, where did it all go wrong? Why and when did life

'Some birds aren't meant to be caged. Their feathers are just too bright.'

Arnold Bennett, 'Shawshank Redemption'

become a bit of a drag? Who or what extinguished the passion and pizzazz?

We suspect the modern world has a lot to answer for.

Humans are like an analogue receiver in a digital world. We have a multitude of TV channels and a dazzling array of social media, yet our attention is limited. Therefore, the only information that snags our attention is the truly exceptional 99.99th percentile. All day, every day, we're flooded with the truly extraordinary or excruciatingly mundane.

The internet sets clickbait traps, tempting you in because, come on, who doesn't want to know what their favourite soap star from the 1980s looks like now? You won't believe it, right? So you spend 20 minutes clodhopping through a maze of clickbait trash, accidentally clicking an advert or two on your way through the minefield, and the end result is, well, not quite as truly amazing as the headline said. *She looks kind of the same but a bit older.*

Meanwhile, 20 minutes of your life have ebbed away and you feel the need to go and have a shower to scrub away the stench of gullibility.

The rest of the internet is the best of the best and the worst of the worst: cutest kittens, funniest jokes, biggest breasts. And our own lives seem a bit dull by comparison. My breasts are nothing to write home about, I can't tell a joke and, worse still, my cat is not clickworthy.

In an overcrowded marketplace there are two cool tricks guaranteed to lure readers. Firstly, choose a cool title (see above)

and second, chuck in a couple of quickies that will pique your readers' interest ...

Did you know that men with a poor sense of smell have small willies? That's one of those niche facts that is just plain stunning. Chaps, not only is it true but it's something you'll remember and maybe mention next time you're in the pub with your mates. Chapesses, it's something you might mention to your other half when he's got a stuffy nose.

Secondly, and totally unrelated, I've just been reading an article by Ragnar Beer (Göttingen University) suggesting that the less sex you have, the more work you seek. Roll that one around in your head just for a moment. A rubbish sex life is associated with longer working hours?

Then allow yourself a furtive glance around the office. If Beer's correct, those who consistently stay late aren't getting any! Have a wry chuckle to yourself ...

... and then the penny suddenly drops. *You're the one working stupid hours* and goddamit, Beer's spot on!

Beer's line of thinking is that if you're sexually deprived you need an outlet for your frustration, and one such outlet is more time in the office. I can see that this might be true, that those who work silly hours get less sex, but I'm not convinced about the causal direction. Do you work longer hours *because* there's no sex at home, or is there less sex at home *because* you work long hours? (For the record, we're both married to teachers, so sex is out of the question on a school night anyway.)

Putting the sex thing to one side, there's a deadly serious point about the long working hours culture that we've allowed

ourselves to adopt. It's not just detrimental to your love life, but also to your productivity, health, longevity and happiness. Workaholism is like an internal time bomb, destroying relationships from the inside.

'Don't seek happiness. It's like an orgasm: if you over-think it, it goes away.'

Tim Minchin

We're not arguing against the need for long hours. Sometimes. And in small bursts. The problem is that it's become 'always' and 'the norm'. If you think that sneaking off at 4pm is 'half a day', you're part of the problem.

Human beings are built to withstand stress. Indeed, stress is good for us. In small bursts, that is. The idea is that life trundles along, then something out of the ordinary happens, which, because of its novelty, causes us some anxiety. Our body/mind responds appropriately and we get over that particular hurdle, after which we return to 'normal'. We're the same as before but now we have a bit of extra learning. So the pattern we're built for is normal normal normal normal *stress* normal normal normal normal *stress* ...

The modern world has conspired against us and the pattern is far less of the normal and much more of the out of the ordinary. Thus, the pattern is stress stress stress stress *normal* stress stress stress ...

Stress is indeed the new black. There is far less downtime and our minds and bodies are living in a perpetual state of anxiety. There's a gradual build-up of the stress hormone cortisol. Back in the day, our active lifestyles helped clear

cortisol out of the body. Nowadays, our sedentary existence allows it to build up. So, while stress in short bursts is good for you, our inability to rid our bodies of it causes chronic symptoms. It's not a feeling of permanent awfulness, more a background shrill of being hassled, drained, prickly or on edge.

That's the best-case scenario! It's easy to accelerate to anxiety, panic attacks and prolonged sadness. Sadly, 57 million anti-depressant prescriptions per year (in England alone) tell us that we've reached an unprecedented number of people who need meds to cope.

There aren't any laughs in that folks.

I'd like to write more but, got to dash, I can smell that someone's left a tap on next door. Gav, can you take over for a bit?

'That book'

My first book. I'm *THIIIIIS much* excited!

Isn't it fantastic how patiently a book will wait to be read?

And isn't SHINE a fabulous title? It has some wonderful connotations. As a verb, 'to shine' can mean to emit bright light or to be conspicuously competent. As a noun, 'a shine' is to have a sheen or lustre. Used in this context, it's nicely positioned at the sunnier end of 'rain or shine'.

It's also a liking or fancy, as in the phrase 'to take a shine to'.

All good. All desirable.