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— **Paul McGee**, *The Sumo Guy* and *Sunday Times* bestselling author

# THE LITTLE BOOK OF BEING BRILLIANT

DR ANDY COPE



THE LITTLE  
BOOK OF  
BEING  
BRILLIANT



# THE LITTLE BOOK OF BEING BRILLIANT

Dr Andy Cope

WILEY

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*To my wonderful family.  
Yes, even the weird ones.*

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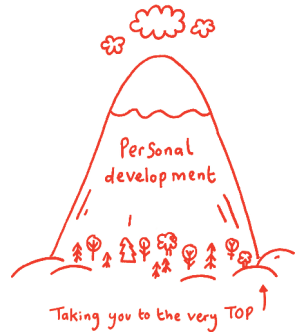


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# Foreword

People often say they remember where they were when major things happen in life. For many it can often be a catastrophic incident in the world. They remember where they were on 11th September 2001, what they were doing when they heard the news about Princess Diana, or when Tony Blair told us we were at war once again.

Rightly or wrongly I've never really thought like this. For me it's what I was doing the first time I heard Bowie. Like, *really* heard Bowie, where it made me stop dead in my tracks. Or the first time I watched Christopher Reeve play Superman and it sent shivers down my spine. Or the first time I saw Ultimate Warrior on the telly, making his entrance to the wrestling ring and being transported to another world in my imagination.

These are the moments that stay with me. The moments I draw inspiration from when it's needed.

Never before in life has a book done this. And by 'this' I essentially mean 'changed my life'.

Movies and albums absolutely. Perhaps even the odd TV show. People definitely. But a book? No. I enjoyed reading but was never a reader.

That was until 2012.

I happened to find myself in a well-known high-street bookstore with my young son. I seem to remember *The Gruffalo* being the order of the day. As we headed for the checkout I was drawn to a book called *The Art of Being Brilliant*.

*What a shit title for a book* I thought. *Who even buys this pish?*

I felt compelled to have a flick through. Every page I stopped on smacked me in the face with truth and wit. The way it was written was just how I think. It was like someone had climbed into my brain and stolen all my thoughts, made sense of them, and put it in a fucking book. It was my book. Who's this arsehole that's written my fucking book?

Andy Fucking Cope.

Absolutely furious, I bought it.

And then I read it. And then I read it again. I read it twice in one sitting. It made me laugh, it made me cry (Jimmy's Diary), it made me think, it made me angry, it made me think some more, and, most importantly, it made me do. It gave me permission to do all the things I'd thought about but didn't know how. It brought clarity and focus to a very busy head. It gave me a sense of belief.

I loved it. I still do. And I love Andy Cope for writing it.

Fast forward a few years and our paths finally crossed. They say you should never meet your heroes as it's never what you hope it's going to be.

David Bowie. Christopher Reeve. Ultimate Warrior. Andy Cope.

Andy is one of my heroes. Unlike my other heroes he's very much alive. I met him, and he was everything I hoped he would be.

We talked. We ate soup. He asked me to write a book with him. I said yes. We wrote *SHINE*, the best self-help book ever written.

*BOOM.*

And now he's penned this one, the *second* best self-help book ever written! It's Andy's greatest hits, gathered together in one epic page-turner. No plot spoilers from me but it's got everything you *wouldn't* expect from a personal development book; goats, Munchkins, Bon Jovi, the paranormal Olympics, the word *erschlossenheit*, and an actual chapter called 'Yogi, Boo-Boo, and the Homos'. He even dares to pick a fight with Buddha and literally nobody ever does that, ever.

Laugh, cry, squirm, and learn. You'll remember where you were when you read *The Little Book of Being Brilliant*.

Enjoy!

**Gavin Oattes**

*Trainer, keynote speaker, stand-up comic  
and best-selling author*

# Thinking Allowed



19th July, 9.48pm. Picture this. My wife and I are sitting on a patio in Majorca. Inland Majorca. Classy. Not Magaluf Majorca. The sun's set and we're winding down after a hard day of winding down.

I like to think of myself as a go-getter, someone who squeezes the maximum out of life. But I also like to be in bed by 9pm. Holidays are different. It's more like 10 or even 10.30. Lou's reading a trashy novel. I look up from my Kindle and ask, 'Tourette's. Why is it always negative? Why don't they blurt lovely stuff. "I love you!" "You're amazing!" "Gosh, look at that sunset" kind of thing?'

Lou reaches for an olive but doesn't break away from her book. 'Repressed thoughts', she replies as the olive goes in.

I'm impressed. She's guessing, obviously. But logic tells me she's right. Tourette's must be what Freud was rabbiting on about with his Id and Ego stuff. However, it's not her actual answer that spurs me on, rather her ability to have this thought while choosing an olive and without breaking away from her chapter. Multi-tasking at its best.

'Do you ever wonder about your thinking? You know, *think* about your thinking?'

She sighs and breaks away from the book. 'I'm aware of it now,' she huffs. 'When it gets interrupted. And at night. When it keeps me awake.'

I decided to prod. Gently. 'So, at 3am you're lying there thinking? You're thinking so much that it's keeping you awake. You're the one doing the thinking.'

'Yes. Obviously.'

'If you're the one doing the thinking, have you ever thought who's the one *noticing* that you're thinking?' Please note, this is the kind of conversation that you can only have after 25 years of marriage. It's not a first date question. At least, not if you're wanting a second.

Lou penetrates the Majorcan dusk with one of her Paddington stares. There are no words but just the merest shaking of her head which I'm taking to mean *WTF? You're disturbing me from my book, for this?*

‘Or that nothing’s real?’ I dare to venture. ‘It’s all created in your mind. Literally everything. Your book. Even Majorca.’

She adds a sigh and long blink to her Paddington stare. She hits her book against the table so there’s a loud thud which, to be fair, is a good way of making her point. I have to admit, her book does look real.

‘Majorca’s not real? That’s ridiculous shit. It’s an island. We’re sitting on it. Whatever’s in your head, write it down and we’ll publish it when you’re dead. I don’t want people thinking you’re a dick while you’re alive.’

I resumed my Kindle chapter thinking she’s probably right. The world’s not ready for this.

At least not until Part 4.





## Part 1

# WELCOME TO THE PLEASURE DOME





Welcome. Is it okay if I admit to being a teensy bit nervous?

Part 1 begins gently enough with how NOT to write a book, whether to align myself with Bowie or Kajagoogoo, and the likening of life to a charity jigsaw.

Then there's some heavy breathing and no breathing while we contemplate the brevity of life and the eternity of death. We begin to understand about Mondays and Fridays and I have a stab at writing the shortest personal development book the world has ever seen, a snappy two-pager. You might be able to call it a day after that?

But I recommend you hang in there while we get lubed up for lashings of S&M, with a nice cup of tea and slice of cake afterwards.

Animals feature quite heavily in this opening salvo. Frogs; do you prefer them fried or boiled? There are three apocalyptic horses, an exhausted coyote, captive dolphin, golden goose, and lots of excellent sheep. Oh, and a kangaroo.

We learn why a bank robber smeared lemon juice on his face, alongside a whole load of other interesting facts that don't make it into this book. That sentence doesn't stack up but not to worry, the whole thing is deliberately crafted to have an air of *je ne sais quoi*, a whiff of the unusual, a stench of something being 'not quite right'.

Part 1 is a rip-roaring tour through modernity that smacks you round the face with several realizations designed to gain me some 'idiosyncrasy credits'.

It's an awakening. Hello. *Helloooooo!* WAKEY WAKEY! The best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up.

Life's for living, so let's crack on ...

In true *Sesame Street* tradition, each section of the book is brought to you in association with a new word. Part 1 is sponsored by the word **Sólarfrí**. Icelandic / n. / səʊ.lɑːfriː / soh-lah-free. A sun holiday, i.e. when workers are granted unexpected time off to enjoy a particularly sunny/warm day.

## Enough Already!

Have you ever tried to write a book? For the uninitiated (and I appreciate this might just be me) it doesn't start with pen, paper, or laptop. It kicks off with cleaning my fridge out. Nine times. Then you spend some time alphabetizing your CD collection and sorting your spice rack. Then you open your laptop and some emails have pinged in. *Well they'll need answering, rude not to.* Then you'll have your usual webpages and social media accounts to check out. I'll generally bleach the toilet and then stick the kettle on because I can't write without coffee.

Back to my desk and a few more emails have popped in – *gosh I'm soooo popular* – and someone's retweeted a couple of my tweets. I have to return the compliment, obviously!

Then I decide to change the CD system. It's been niggling me. I'm overloaded with Ts, because foolishly I've put The Clash, The Ramones, The Carpenters, The Who, and all the other

'The' bands under 'T'. Schoolboy error. With 'The Clash' now safely categorized alongside Chopin, I sit down at my laptop, crack my fingers and knuckles, take a deep breath, and decide it's time for a sandwich.

We all know Jesus was a carpenter but he never actually sang on any of their records.

*Mark Walker*

And so to business.

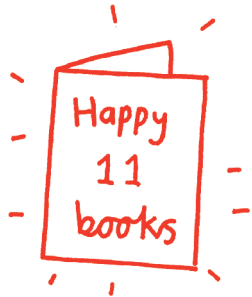
Welcome to book 11. Yes, eleven! I'm counting them on my toes.

Double figures feels like an anniversary. A time to look back and reflect.

You might be such a loyal follower that you've read and absorbed all eleven. In which case, I salute you. A warrior of personal development. You've read them on the beaches. You've read them in the hills. You've never surrendered. You've been with me through the mud and bullets.

Or you might have casually picked this book up at the airport and are wondering who the heck I am?

I've written this book for both sets of readers. After 11 albums, David Bowie was allowed a Greatest Hits compilation. Ditto Fleetwood Mac, Abba, and Bon Jovi. I think Kajagoogoo had a greatest hits album too?



Anything Kajagoogoo can do I can do too.

Isn't it about time I stopped being too shy shy and compiled the last 10 years of writing into one simple tome? Whether you deem it to be a timeless classic or pop fluff, I've delegated that judgement to you.

With that burden lifted from my shoulders I'm free to crack on with track 1 which is, I believe, something of a wedding playlist containing, as it does, something old, new, and borrowed.

But first, something blue.

Check the book charts and you'll notice a pattern to the current crop of bestsellers. As a result, I toyed with calling book 11 'The little book of being TOTALLY FUCKING brilliant'.

Thankfully, I'm not that desperate for a number 1 hit. Yes, some naughty words might creep in, but not emblazoned on the cover where the kids can see them. I'm not a monster.

Here's a beautiful non-naughty new word for you: Sonder. You know that craziness in your head, the whirring of thoughts and insecurities? Sonder is the realization that each random passer-by is living a life as vivid and complex as your own – populated with their own ambitions, dreams, routines, worries, and inherited craziness. Sonder hints that the inner dialogue always veers towards the negative and it ain't half shouty.

But it's not just you! Sonder applies to the human race. Yes, everyone else is insecure too, even the ones who seem to have their shit totally together. They actually haven't! They're filled

with self-doubt and the same negative shouty voice, so chill, we're all a little bit crazy and a whole lot insecure.

Sonder means you and I are alike. It's easy to become addicted to the endless cycle of lack, an emptiness, a feeling that there should be something more. Your life feels like the second-hand jigsaw you bought from a car boot sale – you don't rejoice that there are 497 jigsaw pieces, you fret at the missing 3.

We're all gripped with a nagging feeling that something's missing. Your *je ne sais quoi*. Death is coming, life is relentless, what on earth are we to do?

Chaos is the new normal. I used to feel like one of those cartoony figures that's just run through a wall, leaving a massive Andy-shaped hole. I set out to fill the hole with wi-fi, money, midnight snacks, work, and general busyness. Rather than create gaps in my diary I was always looking to fill them because ... well because that's what everyone else was doing.



Andy-shaped hole 5

If life failed to deliver I pulled my socks up and chased harder. If you'd freeze-framed my fellow commuters and work colleagues it's as though we were in a self-administered formaldehyde, permanently and perfectly suspended in a state of doing, exhaustion, and angst.

Applied to you, let's look back over the last 20 years of your life. Twenty years ago, you wanted more money and a better job. You got them. *Tick.*

You wanted a decent car. With cup holders and a secret sunglasses compartment. *Tick.*

You wanted kids. Better than average ones and BOOM, here they are, the apples of your eye (or the sties of your eye, who knows?). *Tick.*

You wanted a nice place to live, with decent furniture and cupboards full of clothes. Check your wardrobe and count how many pairs of shoes you have and hey presto, *tick, tick, tick* – your wishes have been granted.

You've been blessed by the 'enoughness fairy'. In fact life has provided riches beyond your wildest dreams of 20 years ago. You're drowning in glut.

The question is, *are you any happier?*

Which brings me on to the question that launched my research, a notion that swirled around for a while before I dared ask anyone else. *Could you be happier even if nothing in the world around you changed?*



The answer in my own head was a resounding ‘yes’ which was an admission that the world didn’t need to change around me. Indeed, the world wasn’t going to change to accommodate me (the world is as it is, more of that later) but I actually had untapped happiness within. I had the potential to be happier but I wasn’t being. My happiness was like one of those gushing oil wells, but firmly capped.

By me!

It was puzzling. Maybe I was unusual? While the rest of the human race wandered the planet bigging themselves up and congratulating themselves on how fabulous they are, I was the one in seven billion weirdo giving himself a right mental kicking.

But then I remembered Sonder. The craziness. The whirring thoughts. The inherent human condition.

So a few weeks later I was doing a keynote and I dared to ask the audience the same question: *Could you be happier even if nothing in the world around you changed?* There was a murmuring and then about 290 of the 300 hands raised, puzzled expressions etched. They too had never considered it before. In terms of happiness I wasn’t alone. It seemed that human beings are standing in their own way.

But why?

And, more importantly, how can we learn to step aside and let the sunshine in?