On your marks, get set ... GO!

Join **Jonnie Peacock**, Paralympic sprinter and *Strictly Come Dancing* star, as he shares his journey from football-loving kid to gold-medal-winning athlete in this joyful guide to help you find your happiness!

With chapters on embracing your uniqueness, finding what you love, stepping out of your comfort zone, bouncing back from adversity and working as a team, this empowering book is packed full of Jonnie's own stories alongside practical tips, tricks and journaling opportunities.

Written in collaboration with children's mental health expert **Laura Earnshaw**, complete with lively illustrations by **Ashwin Chacko**, this book will help you embrace your passions, maximise your potential and be unstoppable.

Are you ready to race?



Laura Earnshaw is the Founder and CEO of myHappymind, the UK's leading mental health education organisation.

myHappymind
www.myhappymind.org

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JONNIE PEACOCK → YOU CAN DO ANYTHING!

GOLD-MEDAL-WINNING PARALYMPIAN

JONNIE PEACOCK

→ YOU CAN DO ANYTHING!



Find your happiness.
Chase your dreams.
Be unstoppable.

Written in collaboration with Laura Earnshaw
Illustrated by Ashwin Chacko

BLOOMSBURY


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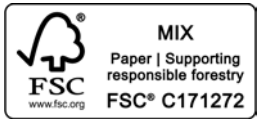
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To every single person who strives for a better tomorrow and breaks the boxes we are all put in!

–J.P.

CONTENTS

The Starting Line ***11***

CHAPTER ONE:
You are Unique! ***25***

CHAPTER TWO:
Find What You Love! ***51***

CHAPTER THREE:
Make it Happen! ***77***

CHAPTER FOUR:
You are Electric! ***103***

CHAPTER FIVE:
Change Your Lane, Change Your Game! ***129***

CHAPTER SIX:
YOUR Personal Best! ***149***

CHAPTER SEVEN:
The Team Behind Your Dream! ***177***

CHAPTER EIGHT:
Pass it on! ***201***

The Finish Line ***227***

Extra activities ***234***

About the creators ***236***

Glossary ***238***

Thank yous ***239***

One last thing ... ***240***

BEFORE WE START



Hi, I'm **Jonnie**. Paralympic gold-medal-winning sprinter and author of this book. You'll hear **much** more about me later on, but before we get stuck in, I wanted to explain how to use my book. Before you say, 'What do you mean *HOW*? I don't want to have to *DO* anything, I just want to *READ* it' – don't panic. Basically, alongside my story and life lessons, I've packed this book full of activities called **Happiness Hacks** and **Rest Stops**. These activities link to the ideas I'll be sharing with you. You can choose to try them out, or not, it's completely up to you. Either way, let me explain a bit more about them ...

Each activity comes from either things I do already or have learned through coaches and people in my life, or from the amazing **Laura Earnshaw**, who's been collaborating with me on this book (and coined the term Happiness Hack). She is a leading expert in the science of happiness (a bit like a happiness coach) and some of these activities are **actually used** in her organisation called myHappymind (more on page 237).



That's Laura!

One thing I've suggested is that you keep a **journal** to try out these ideas (see page 44), but if you don't want to do that, you can write on paper or even this book.

If you're allowed and you aren't sharing the book or borrowing it from the library!

As you work through each chapter, I also want you to make a **plan** to keep hold of everything you've read. This is your **Race Plan** (another genius Laura idea). After each chapter, I'll ask you to summarise what you've read by filling in one lesson or 'lap'. This means that by the end of the book, you'll have a written **plan** to get you started on your **happiness journey** and sprint to the finish line – all eight laps of it. In fact, you'll be such an expert by then that you'll be able to help your friends and family fill in their own plans. After all, **sharing is caring**! I've even added a handy template with all the questions on page 222 you can either fill in or copy into your journal or onto some paper.

The other thing I'd like you to do is write down how you're feeling **RIGHT NOW**. I'll be asking you to compare how you feel before and after some of the activities, but for now, just write down how you feel **this exact moment**. You can either write it below or on a piece of paper. You could even write it on page one of your journal.

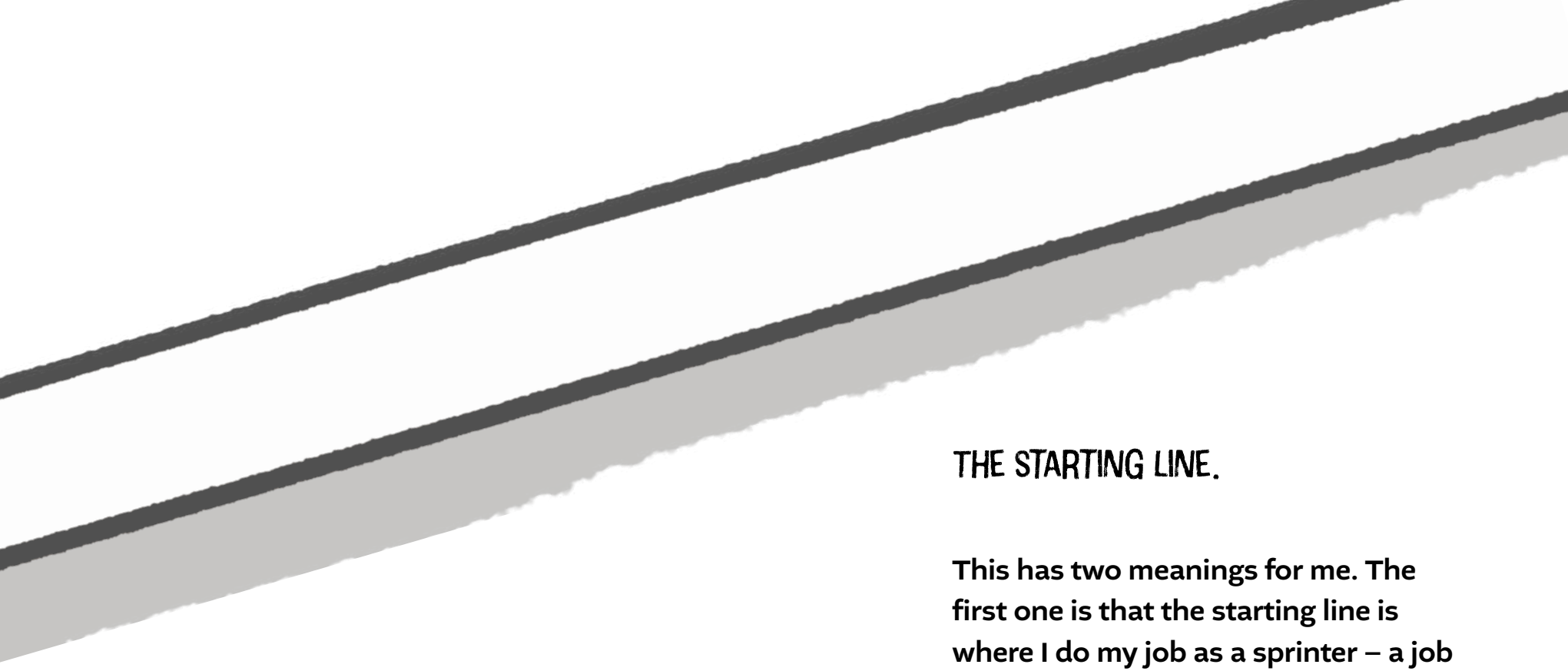
I feel .....

We'll come back to this later on!

That's all for now. It's time to get started.

TURN THE PAGE AND LET'S GO!


THE
STARTING
Line



THE STARTING LINE.

This has two meanings for me. The first one is that the starting line is where I do my job as a sprinter – a job I've trained for since I was your age and absolutely love. The other is that this is the first line of my first ever book and I can't wait to get going.

Let's START!

HI THERE.

I'm Jonnie, and

I'm **happy** to meet you.

Spoiler alert: this might be a big clue for what this book is about!



YOU MIGHT HAVE PICKED UP THIS BOOK BECAUSE YOU KNOW ME, OR PERHAPS YOU JUST LIKED THE COVER. IT'S COOL, RIGHT? BUT THIS BOOK ISN'T JUST ABOUT ME. IT'S ALSO ABOUT YOU.

You might be thinking, *Hang on a second, that's YOU on the book cover, not ME!*

And yeah, you're right, that *is* me on there. I am a ballroom-dancing, dog-loving, medal-winning, record-setting Paralympic sprinter, and maybe **for now** I might be faster than you. But remember the title of the book? It's about **you**. YOU can do anything. So you're going to catch up, quickly, and you'll go far. With your body AND your brain.

When I am there at the starting line, my muscles are ready. My brain is ready. I can still notice things like the **sound** of the crowd and the **movements** of the sprinters next to me, because I'm only human (well, mostly human), and I **react**.

I think, focus and EXECUTE.



No, not execute in a scary murdering way! I shut out the noise in the stadium and in my head, and FOCUS on the job I am there to do … **to run as fast as I can**. It's really the only control I have – to do the thing I have trained to do and do it in the best way **I possibly can**.

This is what I want to show you. I want to teach you how to be your own BEST you.

It's tricky being your age, I know. Not so long ago, I was there myself. You're trying to figure **everything** out (not just your maths homework, although that can be pretty tricky too!) and become the person you want to be. But it isn't always EASY. Some people and circumstances try to pull you down. And sometimes when you try to untangle it all, you might get a little down on yourself and feel like you're tumbling through a trapdoor. The **fear** can be unreal, and before you know it, you might knock yourself out of the race.

I DO KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT RACES, THOUGH. AND THEY AREN'T OVER UNTIL THEY'RE OVER. IT'S WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE RACE AND HOW YOU FACE IT – AND DEAL WITH IT – THAT COUNTS.





So how do we deal with it? You might think a little bit of **change** could solve everything. If only you were taller, faster, smarter, cooler, had more awesome hair … you get the idea. But there is a better way to jump over life's hurdles than being someone else, and that's being the **best** and **happiest** version of yourself. Everyone can figure out what makes them **smile**. It just takes a little working out. And that's what we're going to do in this book! I'm going to **coach** you to be your best.

I say coach because that's what I know. I couldn't have got so far and definitely wouldn't be so fast without my own. But coaches aren't just for sport (although they are important if you want to be a pro like me) – **they're for life**. In this book, I'm going to try my hardest to be your coach (yes, just for you). I can show you what's worked for me, and what ideas and activities can help **you** succeed. It's just like practising your chess moves or football tricks, but this time, it's life skills – the kinds of things that shape you into the person **you really want to be**. Who knows, maybe a gold medallist?

See you at the starting line!

Listening and learning are so important, so I've got another kind of coach on board, too. That, of course, is Laura, who you met at the start of the book. She's our incredible **happiness coach** and will be at the starting line all the way through to the finish line for your sprint to your smile.

Awesome!

I'll also share some words from people who have inspired me on my own race to be the best. I'll sprinkle in some other cool stuff, too, like how many muscles it takes to **smile** and what outside temperature is the best for being HAPPY. Yep, there really is an ideal temperature for happiness!



I'm also going to ask you try out some activities that have helped me discover what makes me happy. Get ready to pour a bucket of ice over your head – I **promise**, it'll be worth it! Plus, if you feel up for it, I'd like you to ask yourself how you're feeling every now and again and write it down. Your mood is likely to change throughout this book, so keeping track will be an interesting experiment!



It's impossible to be happy all the time, of course. It's normal to feel sad, angry or frustrated sometimes, too. But the lows only make the highs better, right?

AND DON'T FORGET, YOU REALLY CAN DO ANYTHING. THAT'S NOT JUST BECAUSE IT SAYS SO ON THE FRONT OF THE BOOK. IT'S ALL TRUE. PROMISE.



At the end, I hope you'll get to know yourself better. I really believe that this is the key to everything: **finding the true you**. Focus on your own goals, and become the very best version of yourself – whoever that may be.

You will read about me and my experiences, too, because it's my book. Obviously. But also because I hope that by sharing my story, I can help you (if I don't bore you to oblivion first!). My aim is that by the final page (all the way on page 240) you will have found plenty to think about, lots to write about, happy hacks to try, extra-resilient superpower strength and a better understanding of **who you are** and **what makes you** SMILE.

SO, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR ... ?

ON YOUR MARKS,

GET SET,

GO!



CHAPTER ONE

YOU ARE UNIQUE!

OH, WAIT. FALSE START!

Before you turn the page and we sprint away, I have six questions for you to think about. It's a bit like a warm-up exercise to get your brain turned on.

See if you can answer these questions as quickly as possible, then look over them and think about what you wrote. (If you're with a friend, compare your answers. I bet they won't be the same!)

Ready?

1) If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would it be?

Made-up words are allowed.

2) What is your pet peeve, or the thing that really drives you up the wall? (If you have a pet named Peeve, you can skip this one.)

3) What's the thing you like most about yourself?

Are you funny or tall? Do you have cool hair or can you jump really high?

4) If you could choose another name for yourself, what would you pick?

5) What superpower would you grant to the entire world, if you could?

6) What's something that always makes you laugh or smile so much that your face hurts?

YOU ARE UNIQUE!

We're beginning chapter one for real now!

Now you've answered some questions about *you*, it seems only fair I share a little bit more about *me*. I was born in Cambridge, in the UK, in 1993. I didn't live in Cambridge though. I lived on the outskirts, with my parents and three big sisters, in a little village called **Shepreth**. Would you believe one of the things the village was most famous for (before me!) was **sheep washing**? Yep, people herding sheep to Cambridge stopped in our little village to give them a bath. So, I basically grew up in a **launderette for sheep**.

Baaaa ha ha!

I was always **running**, **jumping** and **moving** about as a little kid. I loved to eat apples from my gran's tree, I loved learning and school, but mostly I loved football. My grandpa on Mum's side, who I never met (but was named after), was a keen player and a real **inspiration** to me. Just knowing I had someone like him in my family sparked my interest in playing football – which started me on my **sport-loving path**. My sisters



taught me loads too. They were always **competitive** with me and **challenged** me to discover what I was good at (or not so good at). This included bike riding, nail painting and atomic wedgies.

Don't ask!

Then, when I was five, I got an illness called **meningitis**, which is when the lining around your brain and spinal column gets infected and acts up **big time**. After being put into a coma, the doctors managed to get the meningitis under control (phew), but complications from the illness led to a load of pressure building up in my leg (uh-oh). I won't bore you with all the medical details, but this meant the doctors had to amputate my leg to save my life.

NOT fun!

It was really tough to begin with. For starters, I had to learn to walk all over again. To run, jump, move and play football **all over again**. It was also tricky because, as you know, when you're a kid you just want to be the same as everyone else. And now I was **different**. But luckily for me, I had the most **amazing** support and I worked hard to get to grips with my new leg. Finally, after a while, I **learned** to cope.

TO JUST DO WHAT I COULD DO AND EVENTUALLY COME OUT THRIVING. TO WALK AGAIN SO I COULD RUN.

And speaking of thriving, my journey eventually led me to **sprinting** (more about that later). Turns out the art of running really fast is what propels me (literally and figuratively) forwards. By finding what makes me, **me**, I went on to win **Paralympic**, **World** and **European** sprint titles and I am still running, still believing. Still **smiling**. And I never knew this life was possible.



Of course I know not everyone will become a Paralympic champion. But everyone **can** find what makes them smile. Be it horse riding or DJing. Which brings me back to you – because what did I tell you about this book? **It's about YOU**! So, let me hit you with a big idea, one of the most **important ideas** I want to show you about yourself. Hopefully it's something you've noticed from the questions I asked you earlier, or from reading my own **one-of-a-kind story**. But here goes ...

... YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY, TOTALLY, 100 PER CENT UNIQUE!

Give them back!

He really needs that!

You might have your mum's eyes or your dad's hair, but you are **completely one of a kind**. You, me, your friends, teachers, parents, dog and stick insect are like **no one else**.



But what does that mean in numbers? Well, there are 8.1 billion people on Earth today. It's pretty impossible to imagine a number that size, so imagine this. Think of a big stadium like London's Olympic Stadium. Say every single one of those 80,000 seats is filled and the crowd is going bonkers, perhaps for the appearance of a young amazing Paralympic sprinting superstar? (Sound like anyone you know?) Then imagine each of those seats is its own Olympic stadium, also **filled to the max**. That works out at 80,000 times 80,000. Add another 1.7 billion people and that's how many people there are in the world. And counting!

That's going to be one long line for the loo.

STILL, AMONG ALL THOSE PEOPLE, THERE IS JUST ONE YOU.

"Maybe you're not meant to fit in. Maybe you're supposed to stand out."

– Taylor Swift

FAST FACT:

If your name happens to be Muhammad, there are at least **150 million** other people in the world who have the same name as you. But what's cool is that each Muhammad is still different from the next. You are, and will always be, your own unique Muhammad.

What does unique mean? Well, if you ask a dictionary, it will say that being unique is **being one of a kind**. Unlike anything or anyone else.

The French created the word 'unique' by borrowing from the **Latin** word *unicus*, which means 'the only one'. (Like a unicorn = one horn, or unicycle = one wheel.)

FAST FACT:

At least 60 per cent of all English words have Latin roots. This ancient language has given us many words we still use today, like *ad infinitum* (which means 'doing the same thing over and over again forever') and vice versa ('the other way around')!



Some people think being called unique is an **insult**. Kind of like saying someone is weird, strange or doesn't belong. Someone who needs to change. But that's not right. Think of the **unicorn**, or the unicycle. Or think of me. If I'd been just like everyone else, I wouldn't have had the life I've had. And how **rubbish** would that have been?

You see the world in your own way, even if you don't think about it that much. You have your own opinions, ideas and thoughts. **You were born to be you**. And you know what? The world needs different thinkers to progress. Think about Albert Einstein – he had his own opinions, ideas and thoughts and he **changed the world with them**.

All the experiences you've had, the things you like and dislike, your personality, the ways you communicate, your interactions with family and friends and so many other things, down to what you eat for breakfast, have made you **what you are**.

Eggs, please!

REST STOP

Always be yourself

Make a list of five things that are unique to you. You can use really small handwriting or a secret code if you don't want anyone to see. This could be anything from the mole on your pinky finger to your favourite book or the way you pronounce certain words.

But how do you know if all of those things you wrote down are **REALLY** unique to you? There might be someone on the other side of the world with a mole in the exact same spot. Or a few million people with the same favourite colour as you. Well, there's one thing that makes you really, truly, one-of-a-kind unique. Can you guess what it is? The answer is right at your **fingertips** ...

FINGERPRINTS!

If you're lacking limbs like me and don't have fingers, look at a friend's or family member's.

Look at the tips of your fingers. Do you see those little scrunchy, squirmy, wiggly lines snaking around on them? When you touch things, the oil and dirt on your hands leave behind **marks** we know as **fingerprints**. The patterns on those fingerprints come from those little squiggly lines.

This is weird, but these fingerprints were formed **before** you were born. When you were just hanging out in your mum's tummy. Even stranger, no one else in those multiple stadiums we spoke about earlier has the **exact same prints** as you. Literally NO ONE. What's even STRANGER is that those funny prints can be used to catch bad guys.



Cool.

And do you know what else is a bit like your fingerprints? Your **brain**! Yes, it's squishy and covered in squiggly lines – but it is one of a kind too. With its own unique thoughts, feelings and opinions. I want you to think about that every time you look at yours or someone else's fingerprints. Think of your brain, and how it's like **no one else's**. Does it get much cooler than that?



FAST FACT:

Koalas have very similar prints to humans. So, if you decided to commit a crime, the FIRST crime you should commit is borrowing a koala from the zoo and letting it leave its fingerprints at the crime scene, instead of you. Genius!

See how much you have learned already, and it's only chapter one?

REST STOP

Your unique brain

I like to think of my fingerprints as outward representations of my brain. They are unique to us, just like that lump of goo between our ears that makes us who we are. Combined with toe prints, palm prints, lip prints, elbow prints, ear prints and stump prints, you're as one of a kind as can be. (That's right, if you don't have any of those body parts, chances are you have a stump, which has its own unique print).

To make your own outward representation of your brain, I want you to use some ink, paint or melted chocolate and put your different prints on this page or in your journal (more about that on page 44). Ask your friends to share their prints too or ask them if you can see their fingerprints if you're missing a limb like me.

Take a look at the different prints. Compare yours and your friends. What do you notice? What does that tell you about you and your friends' brains?

You might need a magnifying glass for this one!

Why am I telling you all of this? It's because I want you to **remember** that you are you, and you are **the only you**. From your fingerprints to you brain. But the thing is, lots of times the world would prefer you to change. To come out of your lane and merge with everyone else's. This can sometimes feel good – so you don't stand out too much. But, as a sprinter, if I left my lane I'd crash into someone and get disqualified. The same goes for you.

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

You put the 'u' in 'unique'. I hope you're starting to **believe** me. Here's the thing: I was a kid once. When I was in school, I really did not want to be unique. I wanted to dress the same way, talk the same way, like the same things, act the same way as everyone else. You know what I mean. You don't want to stand out like a sore thumb, no matter if it has its own individual thumbprint. You want to fit in. You want to be liked.





SHOUT OUT!

Dan the Man

My first coach, Dan Pfaff, had a brilliant approach to almost everything. He told me not to worry about things I cannot change. Just worry about what's happening in my lane. OK, you might not work in a lane like I do, but you get the idea. Relax and see what happens. Don't change because you think it'll make something easier. A thousand things could happen, and not all of them are going to be the 'Worst Thing Ever'. Some of them might even be the 'Best Thing Ever'.



Happiness Hack

Happy in your skin

Think about someone you love and why you love them. Now think about something that is 100 per cent unique to them. (Don't say fingerprints! That's too easy.) Ask yourself whether you would want that person to change to match everyone else?

I doubt it.

Now apply that to the things you might want to change about yourself.

Would you really want to change the bits about you that make you <u>you</u>, even if it makes life easier sometimes? Or do you want to be you, the truest version of you, and just be happy in your own skin?



"Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it."

– Bruce Lee

The problem is, it's ***impossible*** to fit in with everybody. Remember all those people filling 80,000 sports stadiums? Everyone with their own likes, ideas, thoughts and even insecurities?



We are not meant to be the same. We can't force people to like us or agree with us or understand us. Or even be at all interested in us! **It's way better to get to know and to like yourself**.

Shake hands with yourself (and your or your friend's fingerprints) and say, 'This is me. I am unique. I don't need to change myself. I only need to understand myself as best I can, and **run on my own track**.'

BEING ONE OF A KIND CAN BE FUN! AND WHETHER YOU STAY THAT WAY OR NOT IS UP TO YOU.

I didn't always feel happy about being different, but now every time I get to the finish line I think, *I want to do that again. I love what I do. I'm glad I'm me*. And the more you **understand** about yourself, the less you are going to be like everyone else. And the more you're going to smile.



So here's how we're going to capture your own story. Let's start by **opening the book of you** ...

Happiness Hack

Write it out

There is one cool way to learn about who you are and what makes you unique: **start a journal.**

Yes, I know you already have one book in your hand, but think of this as a Buy One, Get One Free sort of offer. I am encouraging you to create your own book that you can look back on. One where you are the author. You can use it as you read through this book. And it will be all yours … you might even say it'll be unique.

What to do:

1. Get yourself a notebook. Any notebook will do. It can be big or teeny tiny. It just depends what YOU like best.

2. Find yourself a pen or pencil – anything you can write with. You can use pink ink, black ink or glow-in-the-dark ink – it's completely up to you.

I like using a pencil so I can rub out any spelling mistakes!

3. Go wild designing the cover! You can draw on it, put stickers on it, use markers or add graffiti. You could even add your fingerprints! Whatever you fancy. It's your book and you can do what you want with it.

4. The book you create is going to be your friend, so you need to give it a name. I once had a diary called my 'Paralympics Diary'.

Can you guess when I wrote it?

Here are some journal name ideas to get you started:

- **The Big Brilliant Book of Me**
- **You Can Do Anything**
- **Hands off!**
- **The Koala Did It, Not Me**
- **Jonnie Peacock Told Me to Make This**

Sorry, already taken!

Even cooler if you also add your handprint to the front!



Now you've got what you need to make a journal, here's how I think this could work. Throughout this book, I'll give you some starters to get you ... erm, started. Ideas, activities, questions, moments to reflect. All sorts. Try to write those bits down in your journal. But remember – these are just **starters**. You can write anything in your journal you want. You also don't need a journal if you'd prefer to scribble in this book instead.

I'm only going to say this one more time but DO NOT write in this book if it's a library book or you're sharing it with someone else!

Expressing yourself in a journal is pretty **cool**. It's a great way to understand yourself and communicate your thoughts. It's also a good way of finding out what has been making you **happy** or **sad**. **Question yourself!** Scribble and doodle away! You never know what you might find out. Why? Because ...



... YOU CAN DO ANYTHING!

RACE PLAN: LAP ONE

Your best bits

Write down three things you like about yourself. Then write down what the people in the list below might say are your three strengths:

- A teacher
- A grown-up in your life
- A friend
- That pigeon who's been staring at you

Ok, maybe not the pigeon.

Hold on to those words. Write them down in sparkly gel pen and underline them. Come back to those words whenever you feel like the world is trying to make you be someone different.

You can use this space for any notes you want to make about what you've learnt in this chapter!