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Foreword

I first met Martin Goodyer in Hawaii back in 1998 at a nine-day intensive programme run by Anthony Robbins. What struck me instantly was not only Martin's extremely personable nature, but also his unique ability to *want* to coach effectively. There were many in our team at the event who had arrived at Tony's event needing some help, in one area of their life or another. Martin, it seemed, was there for much the same reason I found myself there – curiosity, and an open mind to learn new teaching techniques. Martin is one of life's sponges: he absorbs information for fun, and his memory retention is akin to that of Stephen Fry! What I noticed early on was the second anyone in the group had a problem, Martin was instantly there, doing whatever he could to coach them out of their negative thought process and/or situation. It came as no surprise, then, when Martin went on to make 'effective coaching' his vocation and, inadvertently, his career.

Not a life bus!

The reason I keep emphasising 'effective coaching' is because anyone can, and often seemingly does, call themselves a coach – usually of the life kind. Many of these people are more 'life bus' than 'life coach'! Martin is not just a coach; he is one of the most effective coaches I know, and that is the key word here: effective. He is paid extremely well by blue-chip companies because he knows how to get people to take action. However, as wonderful as he is when he works with companies to bring harmony with workers and increase productivity, I feel where Martin comes into his own is when he works one-to-one with someone. This is why I am extremely pleased Martin has written this book. We all have 'WTF just happened?' moments (I love the



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Happened?**

title of the book, by the way – but then I would say that, as I had a hand in coming up with it) but, as Martin says:

It's not the 'WTF just happened?' moment that defines you, but rather what you do with that 'WTF just happened?' moment.

Although many of the actual 'WTF just happened?' moments in this book are unique to the individuals, every single one has coaching at the end which can be applied to a plethora of situations. The key is to read all of this book for the reason just stated, even if you feel a particular story has no relevance to your 'WTF just happened?' situation. The book is a form of 'conscious hypnosis' and shouldn't be over-analysed, but simply absorbed. I had the privilege of being on the same Channel 4 TV show as Martin, *The Fit Farm*, for five weeks – and now you have the privilege of having him as your coach for the duration of this book – and perhaps beyond.

So sit back, kick off your shoes, and make a nice cuppa (or fresh juice!). However bad your situation may seem at this moment, you will either feel very differently about it by the end of the book, or you'll at least have the tools to get yourself into a better place.

Jason Vale
Author of twelve bestselling books on health, juicing and addiction, and
documentary film producer of *Super Juice Me! The Big Juice Experiment*



Introduction

How to avoid
missing the point

WTF just
happened to those
'opportunities
to learn'?

We have all had 'WTF just happened?' moments - moments when your stomach turns over and you ask yourself what the heck just happened. That feeling when you teeter on the tightrope of life, wondering, 'Now what?' They are those moments when confidence eludes you, the unexpected stops you in your tracks, or when you step back and wonder, 'What the heck am I doing here?' These moments are pivotal as they can simultaneously be horribly gut-churning and yet provide amazing clarity; they may momentarily shake your self-belief but then, because you always get to make a better decision afterwards, be a cause for celebration as you use the opportunity to grow.

Like, for instance, the time I was invited to speak at a conference and thought it might be just the opportunity I'd been waiting for. I was so excited because I was to address a packed audience in an actual theatre. Not some boring hotel conference room or lecture theatre, but a real honest to goodness theatre with a balcony and everything. I arrived on the morning of the talk and while being escorted to the 'green room' was told that every one of the six-hundred seats was to be occupied.

'Wow,' I thought, 'this is going to be amazing!' Yet, amazing is not quite how I'd describe the experience.

Did I suck? Was that the problem? Well, I'm not sure, I hope not but it was hard to tell. You see, that particular 'WTF just happened?' moment occurred a few seconds after leaving the stage in stony silence, having watched helplessly as one after the other a steady stream of people walked out of the auditorium during my address. It was dreadful, and nothing like this had ever happened before. I'd always had pretty good feedback and people tended to like what I had to say, so what on earth had happened?

With profound apologies the organiser of the event informed me that the whole audience had been made up of teachers, and that today was the first day of a new term and new school year. He might have mistaken my frozen bemused smile for reassurance because he went on to admit that none of them had known they were being loaded onto coaches and shipped off to the theatre to be told how best to motivate people. He noted that, in hindsight, it might have been better to have advised them in advance and to have at least sorted out their timetables before organising a regional event. He thought that perhaps they weren't quite in the right mood to be motivated to listen to a talk on motivation. No kidding!

After he'd gone and I sat there alone in the deserted green room, I asked myself, 'WTF just happened?' How had I allowed myself to get into that position? Of course I could have had a hissy-fit and gone all 'diva' on the organisers but what good would that have done me? To be fair, I was tempted but managed to step away from it and take a deep breath and ask myself the question again, 'WTF just happened?' Cutting a long story short, I realised that the problem was mine in that a speaker should always know their audience. Therefore, the failure was mine, not because what I had to say wasn't good but because I had allowed my ego to get carried away with speaking to a full theatre rather than asking, 'How come the theatre is going to be full?' It was a lesson learned and one I have never forgotten. In fact, as I write this, more than a decade and a half after the event, it still causes me to wince with embarrassment. But it also reminds me that without asking the 'right' question, or at least a better question, another one of those 'WTF just happened?' moments might be right around the corner.

Asking better questions is important: it is a concept as well as an action. The assumption that when something happens it causes a person to behave in this way or that is flawed, because if when something happens it causes a person to think instead of respond, then the outcome is likely to change. Imagine you are driving on a motorway and ahead you see a stationary line of traffic. Many people will respond to this by cursing their bad luck and fretting about the prospect of being late at their destination. However, some will not jump to the conclusion that they are caught in a situation that inevitably means something bad. A few years ago I coached a lady who had to commute using the M25 motorway: a road that is notorious for traffic hold-ups, and her response to them had been to become stressed and agitated. There was very little she could do about traffic on the M25, but there was a lot she could do about her own thinking. Instead of rushing headlong into negative thoughts about being late, she was encouraged to stamp on her mental brakes and put a break in her thinking. It had transpired during the coaching that one of her goals was to spend time living in Italy and that learning to speak Italian was important to her, and yet despite wanting to learn she felt unable to dedicate time to it. She had tried using audio programmes in the car but was always distracted by driving, until the day she put in that mental break and asked herself a better question. Instead of unconsciously asking herself something along the lines of 'Why me?' or 'Why does this always have to happen?' she asked 'Is there any way I can use this time in a way I'd enjoy?'

To cut a long story short, she used the stationary and semi-stationary periods to engage with Italian audio language training and started having fun learning to speak Italian. In fact she started having so much fun that, in her words, 'It was very funny. I went from being frustrated about traffic to getting slightly miffed when the traffic started moving again!' Asking a better question is all about recognising that every one of us asks ourselves questions all the time, but we don't necessarily realise we are doing it. Sometimes those questions are useful and unfortunately very often they are not. Negative or self-limiting questions are a mental knee-jerk reaction to events, but are not the only choice of reaction open to us. If we raise our awareness of our own capability and of the possibility that always exists to just stop what we were about to ask, and start asking a question that is more helpful – a better question, then the chances are we'll get a better result.



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Happened?

I do enjoy learning and yet would prefer to only have to learn once. One 'WTF just happened?' moment is enough for anyone, which is why learning from somebody else's is preferable to having many more myself. If that is true for me, I guess it might be true for you too.

In almost twenty years of being a coaching psychologist, I've heard just about everything, and as well as helping my clients, I have also laughed, shed a private tear and learned a lot from them along the way. I've also noticed that some stories are repeated over and over: different people show up with much the same tale, and I wonder for a moment if it's *déjà vu*, but it's not. I've come to the conclusion that it must be a reflection of our times, or our society, or something else that's common among people. So all the stories in this book are about people like you and me. They're common to all of us because we've *all* had those moments when suddenly a voice in our head screams: 'WTF just happened?' It may not have happened to you yet, or if it has, it might not have been exactly like this – but it'll be pretty close.

I have to warn you – most of these stories don't have happy endings. They are not fairy tales, nor are they fables with deep hidden meanings; they are stories about losers. That's right, losers – people who have failed to win, missed their opportunity, or lost the plot. I tell them here because their misfortune gives you a chance to avoid a similar fate.

After crashing and burning in her new job, Imogen has never been the same.

Akiko allowed a boss who wasn't up to his job to ruin her career.

Alan convinced himself he was a loser and then proved himself right.

Andy is still broke, and Barry cursed his way through cancer.

Bev gave her love to a man who didn't share her preferences, while Carolyn lost everything she owned and sacrificed everything she'd been blessed with.

Christine got stuck in a fashion time warp, and Daphne wasted her talents and opportunities altogether.

Dean screwed up his life, and now it's too late to claw it back.

Helen got fired.

Ian lost his mojo.

Johnny still can't accept he is who he is.

Jan forgot to act on her plans until it was too late.

Karen and Michael did a great job of messing up parenthood, and Leroy was a loser when he really should have won.

Lisa was fat and couldn't seem to lose weight.

Luca has to live a life full of regrets that he can never put right.

It turned out to be a surprise for Neil that he didn't have any friends.

Oliver's reputation went down the toilet, along with all his cash.

Reece ended up paying off huge debts for years.

Rupal got leapfrogged by her junior staff member.

And poor old Steve – well, he got dumped.

Even after everything that had happened to her, Tina was still a doormat and a scammer's dream, while Tony spent years torturing himself because he made one silly mistake, and the otherwise very capable Victoria ended up trembling when she should have triumphed.

They are all losers but their stories offer you the chance to learn from their mistakes.

In among the gloom and doom, there are a few examples of how a WTF moment can lead to joy. These little rays of sunshine are intended to suggest that when you do more of whatever these people did, you too can feel the warmth. Those who are not losers, but who could so easily have been, have stories that might just inspire you to avoid the same pitfalls. They include Alison, who managed to ditch self-pity; Derek, who got over himself by asking better questions; Jenni and Albert, who seized their opportunities with both hands; and finally John, who quite simply did what he needed to do to be rich. Those WTF moments are ones to savour.



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You may have noticed that there are more losers than winners. That's because this book is mainly made up of losers' stories; it's not a self-help book. The self-help bit is up to you.

At the end of each story there are some 'take-aways', but it's not a 'do this and you shall succeed' type of book – it's more of a 'don't do this and you might not fail quite so badly as these suckers' kind of book. Here's why: self-help books are OK, but many are not great. They normally tell you to do this or that and then you'll be fine – but having someone tell you to do this or do that is all well and good when you're tucked up in bed with time to read, but when it comes to real life – well ... it's not like that, is it? Stuff happens, and by the time it's happened then it's too late to climb under the duvet and read about what you should have done. You can't do it again; it's too late. Good advice is only useful if you can remember to use it. Unfortunately (if you are anything like me), you may not remember all that good advice until it's too late. That's why this is a book of stories that illustrate how easy it is to alter the course of your own life and avoid too many WTF moments.

We all love a good story, don't we? You've only got to look at Disney to see that. Here's a quick quiz for you. (1) Which is the most important source of information for the public, Disney films or the BBC World Service? (2) How many Disney stories can you recall? (3) How many BBC World Service stories do you remember? For 'BBC World Service', you could substitute any reputable news source, and you may be able to recall recent news reports, but how many of those are as lasting as *The Little Mermaid*, *The Jungle Book* or the rest of the Disney catalogue? You won't be surprised when I tell you that most people agree that news sources are probably a more important information source, or that most people recall more Disney stories in detail than they do information about the state of the world. This is not because they value children's stories more than hard news, but because stories are easier to remember than facts. Facts may be more important, but stories stick in your brain. The stories in this book will stick with you. When you read them, you may find yourself asking 'How could this person not see what was going on?' or 'How stupid can people be?'

When it comes to those 'WTF just happened?' moments, it's likely that any information that might have protected you will have come from a news story rather than an animated tale. Most of these moments are painful, but you can recover from them.

Then there are some that are both difficult and painful at the time, and are also difficult and painful to learn from. For example:

In 2014 a father left his teenage son playing on his computer, posting on social media sites with his schoolmates. The father came home a short time later to find his son's computer open and online, but no sign of his son. Worried, he searched for the boy, and found him at the end of their garden. The boy had committed suicide. An online spat had escalated into something more serious, and the boy felt unable to cope, which led to him taking his own life.

I can't think of any story more devastating than this. His distraught parents went on to help other parents by urging them to pay attention to news reports about the way young people use the internet and social media. Even in their grief, they want other parents to pay attention and use what they hear, so that they don't have to suffer a similar loss.

You'll be pleased to know, I hope, that the WTF moments I'm bringing to your attention are nowhere near as horrific as this one, but they do sometimes feature death. This is because time is finite; none of us have as much time as we might think, and death just happens to play a big part in everyone's life – there's no getting away from that.

Useful information will stick with you, and will help you avoid the pain of regret when you recognise that a story is relevant to you, and time is relevant to us all. If you can feel some empathy with other people who've had their WTF moment, then this might just prevent you from having a similar one yourself. If your empathetic feelings are strong enough, then they will have as powerful an effect as if you'd actually had the WTF moment yourself. I bet that if you have a teenage child and aren't already monitoring their internet and social media usage, after reading those few lines, you probably will now: a similar effect will happen with every one of the moments in this book as long as I can stimulate an 'ugh' or 'oh no' or 'argh!' from you. Even those behaviours that you can't imagine yourself changing will change as soon as you decide they need to change.

For example, I used to love chocolate cake. Death by Chocolate cake with lashings of butter icing was my absolute favourite, until the day I bit into a slice made with rancid



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butter. It was an 'ugh' moment! My mouth moved faster than my brain, and before my brain had registered that this stuff tasted vile, I'd already swallowed some. In seconds I felt nauseous. It took weeks before I got the taste out of my mouth, and I could still smell the foul, nasty stuff even though I'd rinsed and rinsed with mouthwash and brushed my teeth. Even now, when I think of chocolate cake my first unconscious reaction keeps me from eating it. Of course, intellectually I know that a fresh slice of cake will taste lovely, but emotionally my body remembers the 'ugh' moment. It's enough to take chocolate cake off my personal menu.

The point is this: if you are to avoid ever saying 'WTF just happened?' your brain needs to move faster than your mouth! I don't want to make you sick but, like the chocolate cake with rancid butter icing, potential 'WTF just happened?' moments, once tasted, are more likely to be remembered.

Enjoy – and I hope these stories are as useful to you as they have been to me.

PS: A word or two about confidentiality

Here's the thing: I am an absolute stickler for confidentiality. However, I know that people learn by hearing stories. So, I have squared this circle by ensuring that the stories in this book, while true in essence, are not to be taken at face value, as I have changed more than just the names in them. Yet, interestingly, they apply to so many of the thousands of people I've met that it would be easy to say, 'That's about me!' Be assured it's not. It's not based on you, nor is it intended to specifically reflect your story. You may have shared some or all of the experiences of Daphne, Alan, Johnny or any of the other characters in this book, but they are not you, your confidentiality is intact, and unless you go around pointing out similarities between the people in here and your own story, then no one will be any the wiser.

**How to
avoid being
embarrassed by
being overheard**

**WTF just happened to
my private conversation
that no one else was ever
supposed to hear?**

Tony was angry - really, really angry. But who was he angry with? All will soon become clear, I promise. This isn't a tale of anger over good sense; it's about frustration trumping awareness and causing an otherwise careful, smart individual to miss something simple, something that on any other occasion he would have done without thinking, but because his capacity for thinking was all wrapped up with anger, he simply missed it. How can missing one simple everyday thing cause such a big issue? Frustration and/or anger are such strong emotions that they take up conscious thinking space and, when that happens, mistakes are almost bound to follow. Tony's mistake started because of frustration and ended with him getting really angry - with himself.

Tony and Gemma were on their way to the company annual conference. As managing director of the business Tony had established twenty years before and company secretary, respectively, as well as being a married couple, they weren't just the figureheads of their growing organisation; they were the heart and soul of it. They'd just come from a particularly tough board meeting and were looking forward to letting

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their hair down at the pre-conference dinner. From the first year, when Tony had taken Gemma and their three employees out to dinner and toasted the successes they'd achieved, the dinner had grown into a more formal celebration of the past year – there were formal presentations of long service awards, training certificates and outstanding service awards. Tony and Gemma looked forward to it and hoped that the two hundred or so people who they now employed did too.

Just as they weren't afraid to reward success within the business, Tony and Gemma weren't shy about sharing in that success too. Having watched just one episode of *The Apprentice*, Tony had decided that if Lord Alan Sugar felt comfortable being seen in a brand-new Rolls-Royce, then so could he. Lord Sugar and Tony hailed from the same neck of the woods, and both had achieved their success without the help of any silver spoons. So Tony got over his fears of being seen as too flashy and got himself something similar – and he loved it! However, unlike the 'bear of the boardroom', who'd sit in his chauffeur-driven Roller, deciding who was going to hear the words 'You're fired!' this week, Tony opted for a sportier Bentley he could drive himself. Well, why wouldn't he? He'd earned it – no one in the company thought any less of him because of it, and it didn't do any of their collective self-esteem any harm.

So Tony and Gemma were cruising along the M4 enjoying the comforts of a beautifully made motor car, chatting.

'What did you think?' asked Tony.

Gemma replied, 'It's OK, I suppose, but he really could have done better.'

'I agree. Evan is a capable guy, but he dropped the ball on this one, and at his salary I expect more. You know, he gets paid almost ten grand more than Sharon but she's done a much better job lately.'

'Perhaps you should promote her and move Evan somewhere else?'

'Yeah, maybe ... but I don't want to forget that he has been loyal ... it's just he can be an idiot sometimes. I'm sure he hasn't done it on purpose. You know, he's better than the job he's doing, and it's really frustrating.'

Drawing on his experience as a psychologist and taking the perspective of a behavioural change coach, Martin Goodyer offers insights into people's often irrational behaviour and suggests ways to avoid such behaviour ourselves. Reading this book won't stop bad things from happening - but it can prevent you from making it worse if they do.

This is not a self-help book. The self-help bit is up to you. Here's why: self-help books are OK, but many are not great. They normally tell you to do this or that and then you'll be fine - but real life isn't usually that simple and good advice is only useful if you can remember to use it ...

... stories, on the other hand, stick with you, and these cautionary tales could help you avoid your own WTF moments. Your empathy for these unfortunate characters might just help you to see things differently and respond in a more positive way the next time life throws something unexpected at you.

If you only buy one book to help you handle life's challenges, then make it this one.

Move on from the WTF moments and avoid too many WTFs in the future.

Annie Othen, broadcaster and journalist

Martin's approach is refreshing and the memorable stories he shares empower you to take action to combat common mistakes, unhelpful behaviours and limiting beliefs - hopefully preventing a WTF moment of your own!

Danielle Brown MBE, speaker

Although I am not naive enough to think that I won't experience any further WTF moments in my life because I have read this book, I do feel like I am far better placed to face any that may creep up on me in the future, so thank you, Martin.

Leon Lloyd, former Leicester and England rugby international, Director of Switch the Play, Partner at JMAC Capital Partners

WTF

Currently researching a PhD, psychologist Martin Goodyer has a fascinating and unique background. As well as managing international hotels, coaching executives in global boardrooms and writing books and papers on coaching, Martin has appeared on ITV's *Jack Osbourne: Adrenaline Junkie*, Channel 4's *The Fit Farm* and BBC radio.

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