



Ian Gilbert and Andy Gilbert

Gilbert Filbert
and his big
MAD box

First published by

Independent Thinking Press
Crown Buildings, Bancyfelin, Carmarthen, Wales, SA33 5ND, UK
www.independentthinkingpress.com

Independent Thinking Press is an imprint of Crown House Publishing Ltd.

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Published 2017.

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

Print ISBN 978-178135254-0

Mobi ISBN 978-178135275-5

ePub ISBN 978-178135276-2

ePDF ISBN 978-178135277-9

Printed and bound in the UK by
Gomer Press, Llandysul, Ceredigion

Background to the book

Go MAD Thinking is a leadership development consultancy providing practical tools proven to accelerate results and enable change across the business world through engaging people to think in a solution focused way. It builds partnerships with organisations who are passionate about helping people to succeed and make a positive difference. Its founder and owner is Andy Gilbert.

Independent Thinking is renowned across the education world for encouraging schools, leaders, teachers and children to think hard about how and why they do the things they do. Its founder and owner is Ian Gilbert.

The identical surnames are a coincidence. Until recently, they had never even met, even though they lived not far from one another. Then one day they bumped into each other on Twitter – and the rest is history.

This unique collaboration brings the worlds of business and education together to introduce a powerful series of thinking tools, proven to make a difference. For the first time, these tools are being made available to children and their teachers, helping young people to develop habits of mind that will last a lifetime.

As you would expect from all good tools, they are easy to describe and learn how to use, yet they can be employed to address any number of issues, no matter how complex. They are tools that children can carry with them as they grow and

enter the world of work, by which time they will have become second nature to them.

Like all apparently ‘simple’ books, *Gilbert Filbert and his big MAD box* can be read on a number of levels:

1. Simply as an amusing story.
2. As a method for developing your own thinking processes.
3. As a tool for engaging groups of young people in their own thinking.
4. All of the above.

What’s more, we have also provided some other resources to help you bring Gilbert Filbert’s thinking to life and help you employ it with your own children.

For teachers, parents and personal use

Go to www.crownhouse.co.uk/featured/gilbert-filbert where you will find PDFs to print out copies of Gilbert Filbert’s big MAD box (the inside and the outside) as well as a finger questions sheet (this will all make sense once you have read the book). A copy of the box can also be found on pages 85–86 at the back of the book. The two sides are printed back to back with an imaginary dotted line so you can cut out the box if you wish. The hands are on page 87. Both appear alongside a call to action.

Print out copies of these for each member of your class, for your child or for yourself. You may choose to do this in rough first – in which case each sheet can be printed on normal A4 paper. If you are aiming to construct the final box straight away, we suggest printing the inside and outside of the box on sheets of A4 card – the sides will line up on any standard printer.

To get the most out of the story it is deliberately split into short chapters, each relating to a step in the thinking process. We recommend stopping after each step and working with your class, your child or on your own and applying this to a problem that you want to solve. Use diagrams, pictures and key words to decorate the face of the box relevant to the part of the story. We also suggest you dedicate some time to producing the inside of the box – which is a collection of positive things that the class, your child or you identify about yourselves.

The finger questions sheet should be used to help develop what is called ‘possibility thinking’. It’s a tool you will want children to use across all areas of their work as well as their lives beyond school. You can use it too. When the final box is constructed the finger questions sheet can be folded and tucked inside, allowing the final box to be an attractive visual reminder of how you can ‘make a difference’ with your thinking. The basics of Go MAD Thinking are covered in a brief video at www.gomadthinking.com.



Chapter 1

‘Wwwyyyaaaaarrrrrggggghhhhhhhhhububububllllmshrlp ...
ftftft.’

That was the noise that had woken Gilbert Filbert up on most days since the birth of his baby sister and today had been no different.

‘Wwwyyyaaaaarrrrrggggghhhhhhhhhububububllllmshrlp ...
ftftft ... brlllulululshhhhy.’

When Gilbert’s mum first came back from the hospital with his new sister, Hilbert, she spent a lot of time with her. She would be the one to get up at all hours to stop Hilbert making that terrible noise, day or night, day and night. She would be the one feeding her. She would be the one mopping things up when it came out the other end. But then Gilbert’s mum became ‘tired’, as Gilbert’s dad explained to him one day in a way that gave Gilbert the impression ‘tired’ meant something else. That’s why Gilbert’s grandma was staying with them for a few weeks and now it was grandma, with her carefully curly white hair, who would go in and calm Hilbert down very early each morning.

When Hilbert was asleep, with his mum now in bed all day and his dad at work till late, Gilbert consoled himself with the fact that there was at least a certain amount of special time each day that he didn’t have to share with anyone but his beloved grandma. And that made him very happy indeed. Every afternoon he would rush home from school,

past the clock tower that struck thirteen once every seventeen years, past the factory – sad that it no longer made anything, along the side of the river where the supermarket trollies lay on their sides like the skeletons of robot mermaids, into the estate where he lived with its tiny orange and pink houses, with even tinier gardens where little children sat on plastic police cars watching him run by, past his annoying 6-year-old neighbour, little Arnav, who always waited for him to come back from school so he could ask him what his favourite fish was that day – ‘Sundaland Noodlefish today, Arnav!’, down the edge of his house, letting the side alley gate crash behind him and into the kitchen where he would find grandma sitting at the kitchen table with a pot of tea, two mugs and a half-eaten packet of fig rolls. In fact, no matter how many fig rolls they ate between them, the packet always miraculously reverted to half full the following day. Or was it half empty?

‘So, how was school then, Gilbert?’ asked grandma as she let her worn fingers snuffle around inside the half-empty, half-full biscuit packet.

‘It was okay,’ replied Gilbert in his customary manner. What he really wanted to say was, ‘IT WAS THE MOST BORING THING IN THE ENTIRE WORLD AND SITTING WATCHING A BADGER HAVING A SCRATCH WOULD BE A GAZILLION TIMES MORE INTERESTING!’ but he thought that might be rude, especially as grandma hadn’t been to school very much when she was a girl.

‘It was okay, was it?’ replied grandma. ‘As good as that?’

‘How’s Hilbert?’ said Gilbert, changing the subject before grandma could get round to asking him about Mr Reaper the science teacher, his arch-enemy and the only man who could make an explosion in a test tube boring.

‘Hilbert is ... well ... either asleep or noisy,’ replied grandma, with a slurp of her tea. ‘But then babies be what babies do, and babies b’aint be ought but babies, and that’s about the size of it. Fig roll?’

‘Grandma?’ asked Gilbert, hesitantly, as he took the biscuit his grandmother was offering him. Grandma raised an eyebrow. ‘I’ve got a problem.’

‘If problems were tadpoles there would be no jam till Tuesday,’ said grandma knowingly. Gilbert hesitated. His grandma had a lot of sayings like this and Gilbert was never sure if they actually made sense. ‘Anyhoo,’ he continued, ‘like I was saying, I’ve got a problem and I was wondering if you could help me?’

‘When your dear old grandad, God rest his soul, was in China,’ replied grandma before Gilbert could continue, ‘he met an old man who said to him that every problem is just an opportunity in a hat.’

‘In a hat?’

‘Right so.’

‘Why a hat?’

‘So you don’t recognise it, of course.’

‘So, what you’re saying is that I don’t have a problem ...’

‘Nope.’

‘I have an opportunity ...’

‘Yep.’

‘In a hat.’

‘In a hat.’

‘Okay,’ continued Gilbert in a hesitant voice. ‘So, my “opportunity in a hat” is this ...’

‘Go on,’ encouraged grandma as she took a large bite out of most of a fig roll.

‘Well, we have a competition at school all about “making a difference”. Whoever makes the biggest difference wins a prize.’

‘Making a difference, you say,’ said grandma, cocking her head to one side.

‘Yes,’ said Gilbert, ‘it’s ...’

‘A competition, you say,’ said grandma, cocking her head to the other side.

‘Yes, it’s ...’

‘A school, you say,’ said grandma, cocking her head to both sides now.

‘Yes,’ replied Gilbert patiently, ‘my school. Whoever makes the biggest difference wins a trip to an “attraction of their choice” next month.’

‘An “attraction of their choice” eh? Like the park?’

‘Yes, I suppose.’

‘Or the funfair?’

‘Yes, I ...’

‘Or Clark Gable?’

‘Erm ...’

‘Or the seaside?’

‘Yes, grandma!’

‘The seaside, you say ...’ continued grandma with a faraway look in her eye. ‘Very wet, the seaside, wet like an eel’s hanky.’

‘So ...’ continued Gilbert, having as much luck thinking where an eel might keep a hanky as he had working out what a Clark Gable was, ‘will you help me? I really want to win but I have no idea how to make a difference.’

Grandma was staring into space, a fig roll going round and round in her mouth as she cogitated on what Gilbert had asked.

‘Your grandad also once met another man ...’ began grandma, mysteriously.

‘In China?’ asked Gilbert.

‘No, in Leicester,’ replied grandma quickly but with no less an air of mystery. ‘He told him about a gift that only he knew about. A secret gift he had been given when he was a child – a gift he had kept hidden for a thousand years.’

‘A thousand years?’ questioned Gilbert, who knew his grandmother’s stories had as many holes in them as his dad’s Sunday pants on washday.

‘A thousand years,’ continued grandma before adding, ‘which is a very long time indeed. Especially in Leicester.’

Gilbert couldn’t help thinking that the story would have been better if it had been set in the Far East, and not the East Midlands, but he decided to encourage grandma to continue anyway. ‘Go on, grandma,’ he said, ‘did he say what the gift was?’

‘For all that time he had kept this gift hidden.’

‘Where?’

‘Well, he swore your grandad to secrecy before he would tell him. Your grandad has only ever shared the story with me, but even then I had to promise never to tell a living soul. Or the other sort. I said to him that I crossed my heart and hoped to fly.’

‘You mean “die”,’ corrected Gilbert.

‘No, fly,’ continued grandma. ‘I hate flying. Anyways up, your grandad said this man then pulls out an old shrivelled piece of paper and lays it on the bar top in front of him.’

‘Bar top?’ asked Gilbert with a smile.

‘Yes,’ continued grandma impatiently, ‘he spread out the map on top of this chocolate bar and then with a wizened old finger he pointed out a mysterious wood on his map.’

‘Was the gift hidden in the wood?’ asked Gilbert excitedly.



Gilbert Filbert and his big MAD box
is the story of one boy's desire to make a difference
and help his mother find her smile again.

It is a book about a boy, a box and a battle for a penguin but, more than that, it is a tale about families, hope and how to make dreams come true.

Gilbert's deceptively simple, entertaining story contains profound insights about how to feel self-belief and get things done.

Tricia Lennie, English teacher and writer

An invaluable way for adults to help children think through different scenarios and come to a solution by themselves.

Caroline Roche, Chartered School Librarian, Eltham College

The powerful set of thinking tools included in this book will help young people to develop habits of mind that will last a lifetime.

Drawing on proven thinking and success strategies used by leading businesses and organisations, this entertaining, accessible and humorous book is designed to show young people the power of having a goal, having a plan and making a difference.

A goal without a plan, they say, is just a wish. This book has been written especially for young people to show them how to set about turning wishes into reality by applying the sorts of planning tools usually only found in big business.

 www.independentthinkingpress.com

ISBN: 978-178135254-0



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Education Study and learning skills
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