



# How to be More Awesome (and the *School Planner* edition): guidance for use

Prepared by: Tim Slack and Suzanne Quinney, Appreciating People  
January 2018

### Welcome

This guidance is based on two years' experience of developing and using How to Be More Awesome, and provides advice and guidance on how to introduce the two journals into a variety of settings.

### How to be More Awesome, original version

In the two years since the publication of the Awesome Journal, the most effective uses of the journal are in small groups and one-to-one support work. For schools it has been the most useful as:

- Coaching and pastoral support for individual students. A tool that can provide a systematic process to encourage personal development, promote resilience and act as building blocks for building on strengths
- A workshop process and programme for tutor groups, building on existing strengths, promoting wellbeing and widening horizons
- A self-programming personal development tool
- A resource for teaching English and activity programme
- It can also be used a positive education resource for a full year group as part year wide wellbeing programme

The journal can provide the basis for a youth work activity programme – as well as a personal development programme – for youth groups, using the exercises as group activities over a six-month period. We've also seen some use as a resource for home schooling.

Although Awesome has initially designed for young people, aged between 14 and 21, the biggest change has been its take-up as a personal development tool for adults. There seems to be an attraction to its quirkiness and play based approach – it can't be the jokes!

### Guidance for facilitators

Based on experience and feedback, this is guidance and advice on introducing the journal to students and youth groups...

- Firstly, read through the book and familiarise yourself with the content and activities. The best way is to try it for a couple of weeks, and then reflect and review its personal impact
  - Watch the Shawn Achor TED talk, *The happiness advantage*
  - Spend a week doing the *three good things* exercise, or 20-day programme (and then reflect on its impact)
  - Make the cover your own by adding artwork
  - Use the outline lesson/workshop plan
  - Allow for flexibility of use. It hasn't been constructed as a linear resource/programme. Be prepared to respond to group needs. Use the *three good things* exercise as much as you can – it's simple and effective (pages 12 to 35)
  - Be aware that, for many students, identifying and understanding their strengths can be a real challenge. It's suggested that some pre-work and discussion takes place on what strengths and skills are. A useful way to do this is to get students to explore and list the strengths and skills their friends and families think they have. It's also a good idea to do this work before undertaking the personal SOAR task (page 40/41)
  - Encourage students to reflect on what they are experiencing and learning. An underlying theme is to encourage curiosity
-

---

## Appreciating People

- Support students to think of the journal as precious and personal thing. Create an exhibition of student covers and a competition of journal photographs in unlikely places. (The journal has already been sold in 15 countries)
- Many of the tasks and activities can be used as a basis for group discussion
- We've seen tutor groups successfully doing an activity like 'Make a list of the things you really enjoy doing...', as a two stage process (page 13). Stage one involves creating a personal list; stage two includes sharing and discussing the list as a group, and then drawing up a group plan to do more of the things students enjoy.
- Read through the underpinning methodology and approach
- The exercise menu on pages 36 and 37 provides a rich source of further activities when appropriate.

### First session/ workshop

Here is the format and outline for the first two sessions. Its length will depend on the time that can be allocated, but we recommend allowing at least one hour.

- Give out journals and get students to write in their names and complete the task on the first page. This could include providing art materials to bespoke the covers
- Show the Shaun Achor TED talk on *The happiness advantage*, and, at the end, get people to share what they enjoyed and noticed
- Explain to students the format and the experiences you have had using the resource
- Use the following activities as icebreakers and learning resources as an introduction to content. At the end of each activity, explore in small groups the following questions:
  - What did they enjoy about the activity?
  - What did they notice in themselves and others?
  - What did they learn?

### Activities

These three activities provide a combination of fun and reflection...

This first activity is not in the book. Ask students one by one what is the best thing they've done in the last seven days. Ask them to share it as a story. After each of the group has shared their example through group discussion, tease out how people felt about sharing the story. What did they notice in themselves? Were there any similarities with other people's stories?

### Try:

Task 6 *Talking stick*, in pairs (page 89)

Task 8 *Different uses of a ruler* (page 106)

Complete the session by introducing the 20-day programme and completing the activity on page 12/13

### Next stages...

Following the first introductory session, the next three stages are:

1. Undertake the 20-day programme and reflect on its impact
  2. Complete the SOAR task
  3. Work with students to identify how they want to work through the tasks and exercises
-

---

## How to be More Awesome: the student planner edition

This edition is a remodelled version of the original Awesome journal, reconfigured to be a resilience and wellbeing programme wrapped around a student year planner. It was developed in response to the original workbook experience, and testing at the Studio School, Liverpool. This new edition is now part of the school's annual programme, and is available to other schools and other education establishments.

Feedback from the use of the original journal provided the opportunity to redesign the process and journal contact. The significant changes include:

- Building in a 28-day *three good things* programme, with a weekly review
- A more structured programme with weekly sessions, and sign off by a parent/guardian and teacher
- More space for planning and time management
- Simplifying the activities and review process
- Structuring the programme around a year planner

From feedback we've had, the process has worked well, with increased parental engagement, and has supported student wellbeing and resilience. The 28-day programme for year 10 and the easier teacher review sessions were particular successes.

## Guidance for facilitators

We recommend that you use the same facilitator guidance as for the original How to Be More Awesome, above. The only differences are:

- In the introductory workshop, concentrate on getting students to understand the 28-day programme
- In the weekly meeting, support students to share the best examples of *three good things*
- If whole year groups are using the journal/workbook, consider ways to share student experience and learning through school assemblies
- Build in times for reflection and sharing feedback, especially at the end of the academic year

## Further advice

If you need further advice, please don't hesitate to contact us on email: [tim@appreciatingpeople.co.uk](mailto:tim@appreciatingpeople.co.uk). We'd also love to hear about student experiences and successes.

## New developments

In November 2017, in partnership with the Canal & River Trust, Appreciating People developed *Number One*, an activity workbook and journal. Its content draws much from the Awesome journals' approach, and promotes curiosity and wellbeing. There are activities encouraging use of the waterways, learning more about the waterways museums and a 21-day *three good things* and seven-day gratitude wellbeing programme.

Copies are available in the [www.appreciatingpeople.co.uk](http://www.appreciatingpeople.co.uk) shop.

In February 2018, work begins with students at the Studio School to develop a *three good things* app. We are also developing a simple exercise book version of *three good things* and the gratitude activity programme.

---