

Creased up



Tickled pink



Gobsmacked

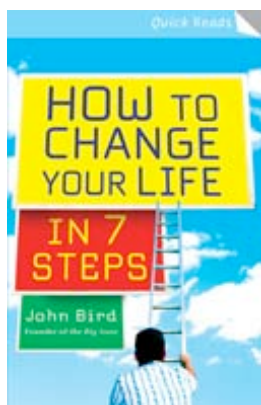


Swept away



Quick Reads

Get hooked on books.



How to change your life in 7 steps




John Bird



The
Vital
Link



Contents

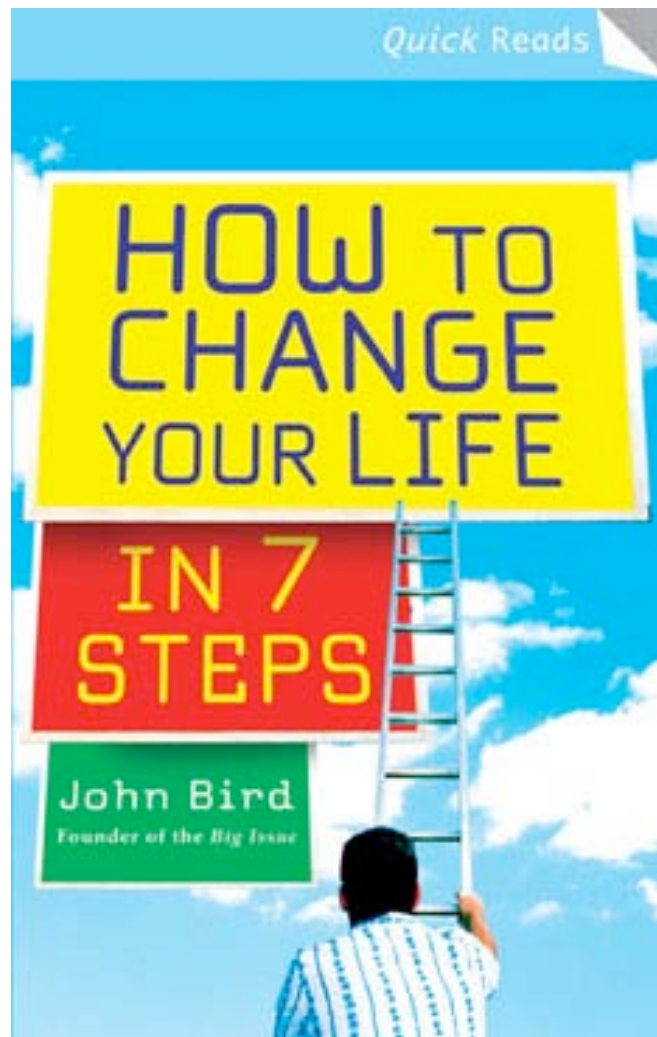
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**The
Vital
Link**

www.vitallink.org.uk



Blurb

Want to improve your life, but don't know where to start? *The Big Issue* founder, John Bird, explains his seven simple rules that could change your life.

Synopsis

Many people, from all walks of life, have asked John Bird what drove him so hard to make such a success of his life. In this book he identifies seven strategies that he uses to achieve success. Starting with the three per cent idea of only setting goals that are realistic and achievable and ending with being your own leader, he uses anecdotes about life and some of the people he has met to illustrate them.

Readability

12/14 Level 1

John Bird

John Bird is the founder and editor of *The Big Issue*, a news and current affairs magazine launched in 1991. It is written by professional journalists and sold on the streets by homeless vendors looking to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Vendors buy the magazine at a wholesale rate and sell it, keeping the profit for themselves. They are self-employed and encouraged to be responsible for handling their earnings.

John was born into a London Irish family in a slum-ridden part of Notting Hill just after World War II. Homeless at five, in an orphanage between the ages of seven and ten, he began to fail over and over again in every area of his life. From the age of ten onwards he was shoplifting, house-breaking and generally stealing whatever he could lay his hands on. Vandalism and arson were amongst the crimes he committed.

In his late twenties, and after several prison sentences, John became involved in politics. He also fathered three children, became a printer, and successfully ran his own small business. At the age of 45, his many life experiences enabled him to start production of *The Big Issue*.

He has spent the last 14 years in charge of the development of *The Big Issue* www.bigissue.com, which is now an international movement providing opportunities for people facing homelessness to help themselves. It forges partnerships with social entrepreneurs to launch businesses for social change in cities, worldwide. Setting up street papers to help socially excluded people is central to this. People from all walks of life, from government ministers

to prison inmates, are always asking him about what drove him so hard to make such a success of his life.

John Bird was awarded the MBE for 'services to homeless people' by Her Majesty the Queen in June 1995. He is a Fellow of John Moore's University, Liverpool, a Visiting Professor at Lincoln University and a Doctor of Letters at the Oxford Brookes University. In 2003 he was chosen by the Queen as one of the Most Important Pioneers in Her Majesty's Reign. In 2004 he received from the United Nations a Scroll of Excellence for his international work in poverty, presented by the President of Kenya, at the Habitat Celebration in Nairobi. In the same year he also won a public vote by BBC London as London's Living Legend, beating people such as Terence Conran, Barbara Windsor and Linford Christie.

His autobiography, *Some Luck*, is published by Penguin Books Ltd.

Activity 1

Getting started

Purpose	➔ To consider the appeal of self-help books and how they can be approached.
Resources	Copies of <i>How to Change your Life in 7 Steps</i> Copies of information about John Bird from this folder Pens and paper
Activity	<p>This title appears to be in the genre of motivational 'self-help' books, which evoke very different responses in different people. When initially deciding whether books will be a good read and/or helpful, it is useful to skim for clues, e.g. in contents pages and the introduction.</p> <p>Ask readers to look at the title and blurb of the book. If they know/knew nothing about the background of the author, would this type of book usually appeal to them? Ask them to explain the reasons for their views.</p> <p>Read the information on John Bird given in this folder. Does knowledge of the author's own ability to change his life for the better increase the book's appeal? Why is this?</p> <p>Look at the chapter titles together. What is the tone of the titles? Which chapter appeals most to individuals? Now read the introduction. Will simply reading through the book be sufficient to change a life in the author's view?</p>
Reflection	<p>The chapter headings, introduction and first chapter all give an impression of energy and a very positive approach to life, together with a real understanding of the difficulty of feeling overwhelmed by the distance that may have to be travelled before achieving a goal.</p> <p><i>continued ➔</i></p>

Reflection <i>continued</i>	Ask readers to read the first chapter individually, and then invite them to think about what they might like to change in their life, setting a goal of their own. This might be related to their learning, family or work, and need not be shared. Readers can then decide on their three per cent step towards their goal, which they may be able to share. Why do they think John Bird chose three per cent rather than five per cent or even one per cent? How easy or difficult was it to plan in this way? What else do they need to do to make the three per cent achievable, e.g. support?
Development	Readers might like to compare and contrast the introductions and structure of this book with those of Richard Branson's <i>Screw It, Let's Do It</i> in the Quick Reads series.

Activity 2

Taking steps

Purpose	→ To explore practical ways of using motivational literature.
Resources	<p>Copies of <i>How to change your life in 7 steps</i></p> <p>Computer access</p> <p>Internet access to sites such as</p> <p>http://folkloreandmyth.netfirms.com/fables_proverbs.html</p> <p>http://www.special-dictionary.com/proverbs/source/e/english_proverb/</p> <p>or dictionaries of proverbs or fables</p>
Activity	<p>Ask readers which of the chapters they have read in the book they enjoyed most, or found most relevant and useful to them. How would they go about maintaining their motivation to follow specific advice given in the text, e.g. reread a passage every day? Go back to it every so often to check whether they are still on track/what to do next? Share their intention with others and ask for feedback?</p> <p>Practical 'do-it-yourself' manuals use graphics, images, tables, etc. to support text, so that instructions can be followed quickly and simply. Invite readers individually to create a graphic or pictorial summary of one of the steps they would like, in particular, to follow and which they could display as an additional support tool to the text. It might come from one of the personal case studies John Bird uses, or from the summary points, or from the title of the step, or from readers' previous experiences (positive and negative).</p>
Reflection	<p>Each of the seven steps is summarised at the end of the chapter in bullet points giving the main points of advice. There is a universal source of other simple advice too, in the form of proverbs and fables.</p> <p>Ask readers individually or in pairs to select different chapters of the book. Using the headings contained in it, and the summary at the end, ask them to research and record some fables or proverbs that summarise (or contradict) the points John Bird makes.</p> <p><i>continued</i> →</p>

Reflection <i>continued</i>	<p>Share findings as a group. How effective would a list of these proverbs and fables be as a self-help book? What would be lost? Would anything be gained in use by such simplification?</p> <p>The strength of this book is in the way it speaks simply and directly to the reader, drawing on examples from modern, everyday life to support the approaches suggested. It concentrates on practical behaviours grounded in reality, supporting individual self-knowledge, development and growth while acknowledging the effect this will have on others.</p> <p>Proverbs tend to be used to illustrate a universal 'truth', rather than be understood as something that can be actively implemented by an individual.</p>
Development	<p>Readers may like to consider whether the sequence of the principles given in the book is important, or whether it can be read on a 'pick and mix' basis.</p> <p>A group could design a poster illustrating the seven steps.</p>

Activity 3

Learning to change

Purpose	➔ To draw on reader experience of returning to learning as a step towards life change.
Resources	Copies of <i>How to Change your Life in 7 Steps</i> Flipchart Paper, pens
Activity	<p>John Bird has said: 'I believe in learning every day. Most people stop learning when they leave school or college – and some even before that. That's ridiculous. I have made sure that I have taught myself new things virtually every day of my life, whether about art, literature, architecture, history or just through talking to people. Learning is a lifelong responsibility for all of us.'</p> <p>The book recommends seven steps to change your life. Formal learning (a college or training course) is a big step towards a different future. What personal barriers do adults feel they face in returning to learn? Record ideas from the group to the flipchart. Which chapters of the book do readers feel will provide most ideas on dealing with the barriers posed to learning?</p> <p>Ask readers to work together in pairs to draft an advice sheet for adults who would like to go back to education, but for whom that seems too big a goal. Ask them to draw on their own experiences and bear in mind John Bird's advice in the book; they should suggest a sequence of small steps adults could take, which might address some of the barriers identified earlier.</p> <p>Invite readers to share their ideas and recommendations. Has anyone identified seven steps towards success in learning?</p>

continued ➔

Reflection	<p>John Bird explains that fear of change is a factor that holds many people back, along with fear of failure. These are major issues for adults in accessing education and training. Changing personal attitudes and approaches can contribute as much to success as acquiring new skills, and all will have an effect on the learner's life and relationships.</p> <p>Thinking of themselves, or people they know, can readers provide any examples where attitude change made a real, practical difference to life?</p>
Development	<p>Drawing on the draft advice sheets, readers could write a short information handout for an adult guidance or careers service on seven steps towards successful adult learning.</p>

Further development

Other possible activities

Visit www.thebigissue.com for information on how John Bird's social enterprise business has developed and expanded, and how it supports people in a variety of ways.

Read *The Big Issue*. Discuss its content and style, and compare it with other weekly (or monthly) publications with which readers are familiar. Are readers surprised by it?

John Bird has written his autobiography, *Some Luck*, which readers might like to use to find out more about him.

More reading

March title	Author	ISBN
The Thief	Ruth Rendell	0091796865
Woman Walks into a Bar	Rowan Coleman	0099492288
Blackwater	Conn Iggulden	0091907039
Star Sullivan	Maeve Binchy	0752879545
Hell Island	Matthew Reilly	0330442325
The Book Boy	Joanna Trollope	0747582114
Don't make me Laugh	Patrick Augustus	1902934466
Someone Like Me	Tom Holt	1841494461
Screw It, Let's Do It	Richard Branson	0753510995
How to change your life in 7 steps	John Bird	0091907039
Chickenfeed	Minette Walters	0330440314
The Team	Mick Dennis with the Premier League	0552153729
May title	Author	ISBN
Danny Wallace and the Centre of the Universe	Danny Wallace	0091908949
Desert Claw	Damien Lewis	0099493535
Cleanskin	Val McDermid	0007216726
Name You Once Gave Me	Mike Phillips	0007216718
Grey Man	Andy McNab	0552154334
I Am a Dalek	Gareth Roberts/Dr Who	0563486481
Poison in the Blood	Tom Holland	0349119643
I Love Football	Hunter Davies	0755314700
Winner Takes All	John Francome	0755329481
The Dying Wish	Courtia Newland	0349119635
Secrets	Lynne Barrett-Lee	1905170300
The Corpse's Tale	Katherine John	1905170319

See www.quickreads.org.uk for information on these and future Quick Reads

See First Choice library booklist at www.firstchoicebooks.org.uk for mainstream books selected against criteria for their suitability for emergent readers

Audio version of the Quick Reads are available from W F Howes Ltd as part of their Clipper Emergent Reader programmes (www.wfhowes.co.uk/cerp/)

Other publications for emergent readers include those from Sandstone Press (www.sandstonepress.com) and New Island's Open Door series (www.newisland.ie)

Adult Core Curriculum References

Activity 1

Getting started

Rt/E3.1-.8
Rt/L1.1-.5

SLc/E3.1-.4
SLc/L1.1-.4

Activity 2

Taking steps

Rt/E3.1-.9
Rt/L1.1-.5

SLc/E3.1-.4
SLc/L1.1-.4

SLd/E3.1-.3
SLd/L1.1-.3

Activity 3

Learning to change

Rt/E3.6
Rt/L1.4

SLc/E3.1-.4
SLc/L1.1-.4

SLd/E3.1-.3
SLd/L1.1-.3

Wt/E3.1
Wt/L1.1