

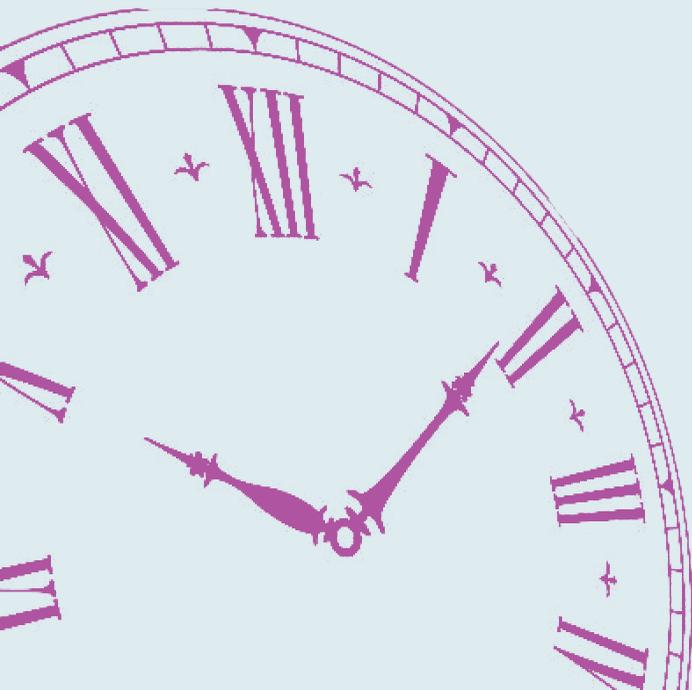


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Stephen's Story

**A 19 YEAR OLD'S LIFE LESSONS ON
MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME**

Stephen Sutton
and Stefan Wissenbach



The MagicFuture® Heroes Series
'Remarkable lessons from remarkable people'

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Preface

On January 24th 2014, I attended an awards ceremony at the O2 arena in London with over 4,000 other people. As is often the case at these events, several speakers were lined up for our entertainment and edification, but one stood out immediately as he walked onto the stage. Stephen, a 19 year old, walked out in front of this enormous crowd of executives and business people, and told us his story. We saw the picture of him dressed as a 'granny' at the party he attended after his first surgery. We felt his sincerity when he said "I don't feel sorry for myself, and none of you should feel sorry for me either." Our hearts sank when he told us the doctors had pronounced his cancer incurable, and we somehow managed to shift our concept of life to his as he redefined it for us:

"I don't see the point in measuring life in terms of time anymore.
I'd rather measure life in terms of making a difference."

We were rapt. You could have heard a pin drop in that room. He ended his speech with one of the most profoundly moving moments I've experienced:

"I have loads of motivation, but little time left to use it.
Well, you can't give me your time to make me live longer,
but I can try to give you some of my motivation to enjoy your life, and make a difference."

By the end of that speech, I knew Stephen's goals and my vision were powerfully aligned. Just like that, I became part of his community of supporters – and he became part of mine.

My mission is to help millions to improve their levels of personal engagement so they take control, achieve more and love life. At magicfuture.com anyone can set and achieve a goal for free using the motivational aids to help them on their way. The night I met Stephen, I knew that I could help him achieve his goals. We both wanted the same thing: For people to make the most of the time they have to achieve the most they can.

The first step in our partnership is this free eBook, which I hope you'll enjoy and find valuable.



Stefan Wissenbach
Founder
www.magicfuture.com



Introduction: Meet Stephen Sutton

At age 15, I was feeling pretty content with my life. I went to high school, ran cross-country – even set my school’s 400 meter record, which still stands – played football, cricket, rugby and basketball, and drummed in a local band. Academically, I was doing well, studying hard and hoping to become a doctor. Just a normal teenager.

You know what’s going to happen next, right? Disaster strikes. Cue the kettle drums.

After six months of crippling symptoms that were misdiagnosed one after the other, I was finally diagnosed with cancer. I underwent surgery that left me with a 21-centimeter scar down my stomach. That’s all right though – chicks dig scars. Funny story there actually. The week after that first operation to remove the first tumors from my bowel, the hospital allowed me to go home for the weekend. My doctor let me go with the instructions to “take it easy, stay home, don’t do much.”

But, there was this fancy dress party that I really wanted to go to. I was thin after months of painful symptoms, weak and unable to walk from my recent surgery, so I figured I’d dress up as a granny. I have a fantastic picture of me wearing a grey wig and dress, sitting in my wheelchair at one of the party tables. I thought I was pretty convincing! By the end of the night, I was being pushed at the head of the conga line in my wheel chair. I had a great time.

This is how I was going to tackle my illness: I was going to go out there and defy the odds. I was first diagnosed at the beginning of my 11th year in school, and the doctor told me “You’re going to have all this treatment; you’re still recovering from surgery; you should take a year out from school and concentrate on your health and come back to your studies later.”

I said “No.”

Like I said, I knew what I wanted to do; I wanted to become a doctor, and cancer wasn’t going to get in the way of that. By the end of the school year, I received 5 A—Stars, 4 As and 2 Distinctions. If you’re not familiar with the British school system, those are top marks. Pretty good for a kid going through cancer treatment (probably pretty good for a kid who isn’t too). Yes, I was going to beat this thing and achieve all my goals without skipping a beat.

Six months of chemotherapy later, I was in remission and cancer-free.

And that’s when I relapsed. Doctors found a lump behind my knee. I underwent more surgery followed by 30 sessions of radiotherapy. They thought I was in remission again, cancer-free, but soon after, it returned again. I underwent more chemotherapy, which made me feel more sick and tired.

Once again, it would have been easy to discontinue my studies. But I kept at it in year 12: on top of an A* in A-Level Mathematics (taken a year early), I got A’s in AS, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Psychology (which I self taught). The school year was challenging, but it was worth it to me in the end. Hard work is temporary, but the pride from achievements can last forever. Besides, life would be boring if it wasn’t challenging!

And then we received a new set of scan results.

Despite all the treatment, my tumors had continued to grow. We were facing the decision of chopping

off my left leg, but before we had a chance to do that, we discovered the cancer had spread elsewhere.

First, they found cancer in my pelvis. Then, they went on to find cancer in my groin and then in the back of my calf. With each new discovery, I underwent more surgeries and chemotherapy sessions – and the next step was to amputate my left leg and part of my pelvis. However, now the doctors think the cancer has spread to my chest wall, which renders an amputation pretty pointless, so I've started another (my fourth) chemotherapy regime.

Briefly put, that's my not-so-brief medical history.

Unfortunately, it's gotten to the point where my disease has been described as "incurable" by doctors. I do not know how long I have left to live – I haven't asked.

People always talk about the 'fight' against cancer... to me the most important part of the 'fight' is learning to live WITH cancer. In my case, I used my fears and potential excuses as a reason to excel; as a result I have managed to live a normal life as possible despite of, and perhaps in spite, of my cancer.

I don't see the point in measuring life in terms of time anymore. I'd much rather measure it by what I've actually achieved. I'd rather measure life in terms of making a difference, which, I think, is a much more valid and pragmatic measure. So I'm trying to achieve as much as possible in the near future – and I'm here to encourage you to have a similar outlook.

Chapter 1: Nothing Can Really Hold You Back

My *Stephen's Story* Facebook page reads:

"Follow the adventures of a 19 year old with incurable cancer.
This is not a sob story. This is Stephen's Story."

Each one of us has reasons in our own lives why we "can't do" what we want to do.

Actually, let me rephrase that.

Each of us has reasons in our own lives that we use as *excuses* for why we "can't do" what we want to do.

Many times those reasons just make it more difficult to achieve your goals, but not impossible. Sometimes, however, those reasons really are unassailable. When that is the case, what I've found is that these limitations actually present opportunities to do so much more than you dreamt of in the first place.

I actually see my first cancer diagnosis as a good thing.

It was a huge kick up the backside. That diagnosis taught me to take nothing for granted and gave me a lot of motivation for life. Does it put limitations on me? Yes, in a way. My goal was always to spend my life helping people, and although my original plan to attend medical school has changed in the last few years, my core purpose hasn't.

Unfortunately, my most recent diagnosis means I might not have much time left. So I'm stuck in this position where I have loads of motivation, but little time left to use it. I see people like you with all the time in the world to make a difference, both to yourself and to others, but you may be struggling with the motivation to do so. Well, you can't give me your time to make me live longer, but what I can try to do is give you a bit of my motivation to achieve something, to help others, to enjoy life, and make a difference.

If you want to jump out of a plane, go do it.
If you want to organize a flash mob, go do it.

Because really, none of us have as much time as we'd like.

At the age of 15, I wanted to become a doctor. At age 19, my goal is to empower hundreds of people – everyone I can – to make the most of their lives, their gifts, and yes, even their limitations.

Insight: Don't be the victim of what you can't change. Instead, find ways use your circumstances to reach even greater heights.

Question: What are your "reasons" for not pursuing your dreams, ambitions and goals? Are they really holding you back? If so, what opportunities could they open up?

Chapter 2: The Power of Attitude

“The chemotherapy finished going through a lot later than expected. It’s hit me quite hard this time but it’s not toooo bad I guess (i.e. It’s been worse). There will be times in the journey where, physically, I may not feel too great, but realistically I’ll just have to get on with it. Mentally and emotionally I am happy, which is the main thing.”
 – February 5th, 2014 Facebook Post on Stephen’s Story

It’s really easy to get bogged down in all the things that are going wrong instead of focusing on what is going right. But, ultimately, we choose our perspectives. “Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be” – I didn’t make that up, Abraham Lincoln did. And it’s true.

When you choose to see situations in the best possible light, a few things start to happen. First, you’ll feel better. Positive thinking is proactive; it gives you control in situations over which you have less control than you’d like. Feeling in control means you have the power to create good out of any situation.

Sometimes I’ll get the question “what is it like to have cancer?” It’s difficult, because when these people ask, they’re putting themselves in the position of the patient, with all the treatment and the emotional toll, and they think it must be terrible. It is, don’t get me wrong. To a certain extent, I consider the treatment, pain, and emotional toll as the burden on me. Those are my problems, and I can deal with them. The worst part of cancer is the stress it puts on the people I love: my parents and my friends. There have been times I’ve felt like a bad son, or a bad friend, because what’s happening to me is causing them so much pain and worry. It’s an irrational burden, but it’s what I’ve felt. However, I’ve found that when I am positive, it lessens the burden on my friends and family. They pick up on my upbeat attitude and feel good themselves, which in turn makes me feel even better.

It may sound like this positive feedback-loop starts with me, and sometimes it does. But I know that I’m only as strong as the people around me. Since I’m doing all right, they must be really good.

I also think cancer is a bit like playing a sport. I don’t go into a football match thinking I’m going to lose, so why would I go into a battle against cancer that way? Why would you go through life every day with that attitude? I’ve always found that, even if I have to fake it sometimes, a positive attitude leads to better outcomes.

On January 30th, 2013, I was invited for an on-air interview on *BBC Midlands Today* with host Nick Owen, and he asked me a question I get rather a lot:

Nick Owen: “You are incredibly positive and bright. Do you ever say, why me?”

Me: “Yes, you do for a while. That’s natural. But the best way to handle it is, instead of saying ‘why me?’ say ‘Try Me.’ That way, you can tackle the illness head on.”

I’ve been through a lot these past few years. But, more significantly, I’ve learned a lot. I’m still here; I’m still smiling. I don’t feel sorry for myself, and none of you should feel sorry for me either.

I may be a young person with cancer, but the cancer doesn’t define me. How I react to it defines me. I think that can be extrapolated throughout life.

Insight: Bad things do, unfortunately, sometimes happen – whether it's cancer or another illness – but it's how we react to them that counts, and we should react in the best way possible. No matter what happens, you control your perspective, and that empowers you to do just about anything.

Question: The last time you hit an obstacle, did you react to it in the best way possible? What more could you have done if you had?

Chapter 3: The Art of the Possible

"Stephen is the most incredibly inspiring young man and supporter of the charity.
We can't thank him enough."

- *Kate Collins, Director of Fundraising for the Teenage Cancer Trust*

On January 7th, 2013, I made a Facebook page called *Stephen's Story*. On the page, I made a list of 46 things I wanted to achieve in the near future. It began as a straightforward bucket list of things I wanted to do and experiences I wanted to have, and while I had a rough plan for some of them, for others I had no idea where to start.

What I hadn't known last year was how powerful and influential my community of friends and supporters would be. It's this community that has made most of these goals possible. If I hadn't shared my list of goals, I'm sure I never would have been able to achieve so many of them, and certainly not in the extraordinary ways they happened.

Here is my list as it appeared on my Facebook Page one year later, in February, 2014.

1. **Raise £10,000 for teenage cancer trust – DONE!**
2. **Skydive for charity – DONE.**
3. Bungee jump for charity (at some place like Macua Tower, Verzasca Dam, Victoria Falls, etc).
4. **Organize a charity party – DONE.**
5. Charity waxing and head shave.
6. **Write a book. – DONE.**
7. Release a "tumour humour" joke book containing jokes, funny stories and anecdotes from cancer that can help people look at the brighter side of life.
8. **Organize a charity football match – DONE.**
9. Do a charity hitchhike visiting every Teenage Cancer Trust unit across the country.
10. **Write, record and release a charity single with my old band.**
11. **Organize a charity gig. – DONE.**
12. **Go busking! – DONE.**
13. **Persuade local schools to have a 'get wiggy with it' non-uniform day - DONE.**
14. **Charity quizzes at local pubs - DONE.**
15. **Organize a charity ball - DONE.**
16. **Host a charity 'Come Dine With STE' dinner party for friends - DONE.**

17. **Organize and be part of a flash mob - DONE.**
18. **Organize a gigantic game of musical chairs/pass the parcel/etc - DONE.**
19. Go to a carnival in Brazil.
20. **Go to Wembley to see a football match - DONE.**
21. **Go to Twickenham to see a rugby match - DONE**
22. **Fly somewhere first class – DONE.**
23. **Get a tattoo - DONE.**
24. **Drum in front of a huge crowd - DONE.**
25. **Do some public speaking in front of a huge crowd of people – DONE.**
26. Go visit a famous waterfall.
27. **Throw a massive party for all my friends – DONE.**
28. **Go on a 'lads holiday' - DONE.**
29. Go to Australia.
30. **Hug an animal that is bigger than me – DONE.**
31. **Ride a Segway - DONE.**
32. Go to a Skrillex concert.
33. **Go see a darts competition - DONE.**
34. Get my name into the Guinness World Book of Records somehow.
35. **Go to CERN in Switzerland - DONE.**
36. **Meet Jimmy Carr - DONE.**
37. **Go to another music festival – DONE.**
38. **Find someone with more surgical scars than me (>47cm worth) – DONE.**
39. **Star as an extra in a film or music video – DONE.**
40. Learn to juggle.

41. Get Tim Minchin to write a song for me.
- 42. Inspire someone else to become a doctor or fundraiser - DONE.**
- 43. Have my portrait drawn - DONE.**
- 44. Crowd surf in a rubber dingy at a gig – DONE.**
45. Try breathing in xenon or sulphur dioxide and talking (has the opposite effect of helium).
46. Visit Machu Picchu in Peru.

Items listed in bold are things I've done, or goals currently in progress. As you can see, I've managed to do a lot in one year.

Number 24 was "Drum in front of a huge crowd." I didn't have a specific idea of how I was going to achieve this when I wrote it down, but thanks to my network of friends and supporters, I was offered the opportunity to join a group of performers who got to walk out onto the turf of Wembley Stadium and perform as part of the opening ceremony for the 2013 UEFA Champions League Football Final (Bayern Munich versus Borussia Dortmund). We practiced for four weeks leading up to the event, but of course, nothing is ever easy.

Two days before I was to perform, I woke up with tremendous pain in my left leg and couldn't put any pressure on it. I could only take stairs one step at a time, like a two-year-old. But armed with painkillers, I managed to ditch my crutches and make it onto the field on game day as an honorary Pandemonium Drummer, smeared in red and white face paint, for the percussive performance of a lifetime. The crowd was larger than I could have ever imagined: 90,000 people, with a television audience of 200-million.

The scale of things I've done since starting the *Stephen's Story* Facebook page has been unimaginable, but drumming in Wembley Stadium was definitely one of the many highlights.

Just recently, I got to cross #30 off of my list: "Hug an animal bigger than me," thanks to Elliott Webb from BBC Hereford and Worcester and West Midlands Safari Park. I now have a photo of me wrapped in the giant trunk of an elephant twice as tall as I am. I expected to hug the elephant, but the elephant wound up hugging me back. In fact, at one point the tip of her trunk ended up feeling my bum!

I've also managed to attempt to set the world record for the Longest Group Drum Roll, which took us 30 hours and was knackered. We provisionally broke the record and have sent off all the necessary evidence. Unfortunately, despite the hard work, we didn't get the record, but we're left with an incredible sense of achievement for putting in a real worthy attempt. I've hosted a charity dinner party called "Come Dine with Ste," which went down pretty well. I organized a flash mob on April Fool's Day: Me and a group of friends walked into a shopping center and started laughing for five solid minutes. At one point, security tried to move us, so we laughed at them. It was brilliant. I've jumped out of a plane at 15,000 feet (twice now, actually), crowd surfed in a rubber dingy, and I now proudly sport a tattoo of a troll doll, positioned under my arm so its hair is my armpit hair. It's a reminder to myself to never take things too seriously.

As far as public speaking in front of a huge crowd, #25 on my list, I started with my high school and eventually found myself speaking at Downing Street. At the end of January 2014, I spoke to a crowd of 4,500 people at the O2 Arena, one of the largest conference venues in Europe. I've given versions of

my speech in numerous television interviews and at cancer events, reaching thousands of people. I've done radio interviews, spoken at schools, colleges, businesses and many other places. The messages and lessons I teach are pretty universal and I find different audiences take different things from my story.

As I ticked more and more items off of my list, my focus began to change and some of my goals shifted as a result. A year ago, I wanted to live life to the fullest by experiencing amazing things. But now, I'm not so much concerned with ticking the remaining boxes as using my time to have as much positive impact as possible on other people. Which leads me to the first item on my list: Raising £10,000 for Teenage Cancer Trust.

Teenage Cancer Trust's philosophy is that a teenager shouldn't stop being a teenager because they've got cancer. They provide specialist wards where teenagers can spend time with people their own age. These wards have the creature-comforts we value most, like wifi and Xboxes, but most importantly they allow teens to make "cancer friends." My cancer friends and I have formed an invaluable support network to help each other through illness and through life.

My fundraising goal for Teenage Cancer Trust started at £10,000, and if you read the rest of my list, you'll see an outline of my plan to make that happen with various charity events. When I started, I thought £10,000 was a pretty big goal. But I soon discovered that when you put a goal out there to your community, it takes on a life and energy of its own.

While I was organizing my charity pub quizzes, dinners and events, other people began fundraising for me – so I could go spend money on stuff I enjoy, or tick more experiences off my list. When this happened, I asked to give that money to charity instead. And I'm so happy with that. Helping other people feels better than any other way I could spend that money.

As of today, I've raised more than £565,000 for Teenage Cancer Trust as of January 21st, 2014.

In recognition of my work, I have won the Kids Count Most Inspirational Young Person award in 2013 and many other awards as well. I'm flattered and they are graciously received, but I'll be honest: I'm not too bothered about awards. I don't do what I do for recognition. I've just found that the best way to help yourself is to help others.

Insight: Sharing your goals with your community is a powerful way to make them happen. It's because of my community, the larger support network of Facebook and Twitter followers, friends and family, the media, and non-profit contacts that I've been able to help more people than I ever thought I could.

Question: What is your "bucket list" of experiences and accomplishments? How can you begin to tick items off that list – and how can you get your community (friends, family, Twitter followers etc) involved?

Chapter 4: Do It Now

When I look back at my bucket list, I'm very proud of my achievements and I've made so many wonderful memories, but I can't help thinking that it's a shame I had to rely on tragedy to remind me to have a good time. It shouldn't be like that. If you want to go out there and achieve stuff, you should do that. Life is for living.

One of the quotes I frequently use in my speeches is this – I think it really drives home the point:

“Imagine there is a bank account that credits your account each morning with £86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening, the bank deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every penny, of course!”

Think about it for a moment. What would you do? You'd take the money out and store it somehow, right? You'd give it to someone else. You'd use it to buy something that would last until tomorrow (a fancy sports car, down payment on a house, a painting, a pony). The quote continues:

“Each of us has such a bank. Its name is TIME.
Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds.
Every night, any of this time you have failed to invest to a good purpose, it writes off as lost.
These seconds carry over no balance.
The bank of TIME allows no over draft.
Each day it opens a new account for you.
If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours.”

Each of us is given 86,400 seconds with which to do whatever we want, and we're not getting that time back. That's why I think it's important to use the time we've got as positively and productively as possible.

Insight: Don't wait until you have a crisis to set your goals and do the things you want to do. You have time to make incredible things happen. Use it now. Start by making a list of goals, and then create a plan around them to make each of them happen. Take time each day to work towards them.

Question: How can you invest your time today to give you the best possible outcome?

Conclusion

Stephen's Story, my story, isn't about a teenager with cancer. It's about using my time, however long or short that may be, to have the maximum positive impact. I might not be here forever, none of us will. Life's about making every second count.

I'm making the most of my time, raising money to improve teen cancer facilities and inspiring others to be more positive. If I can transfer my motivation to people who have more time available than I do, so they accomplish more as a result, then I have succeeded.

That is my story.

Stephen Sutton

March 2014

Visit <http://www.stephensstory.co.uk>

Final thoughts from Stefan Wissenbach Founder, magicfuture.com

Listening to Stephen's story reminds me of this quote by George Bernard Shaw:

"People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them."

– *George Bernard Shaw*

Stephen Sutton is clearly a young man who does not allow his circumstances to overwhelm him. He seizes life by the horns with an infectious positive attitude. He realizes the importance of a plan and makes every second he has count. Stephen's wisdom is incredible, especially at 19 years of age, and he has lessons for you and I.

Whilst working on this book and our documentary film together, Stephen and I commented on the fact that everyone is terminally ill, though most do not think of it that way. Many people live their lives day to day as if their time will never run out, putting off their dreams and goals until some unnamed future date, instead of pursuing them passionately now.

Too many people are living lives of quiet desperation and unfulfilled potential.

Stephen is a very talented, bright and unique individual, but even in his case, it took tragic circumstances to motivate him to make the best use of the time he has.

As a reader of this short eBook, I want you to consider the importance of having a plan, living life on purpose and fulfilling your potential. As Stephen says "The more you fulfill your potential, the happier you become."

MagicFuture® was created to help people like you. It's a platform that enables you to design your desired future, set a goal, and share that goal for free.

If you want to take control, achieve more and love life – action is the key. And, as Stephen so poignantly reminds us, we should "make every second count".

To your 'Magic Future'!



Stefan Wissenbach
Founder
www.magicfuture.com



Stephen Sutton, a 19 year old diagnosed with terminal cancer, uses every moment of his time to make the most positive impact possible. In just one year, he raised more than £565,000 for Teenage Cancer Trust, went skydiving and busking, got a crazy tattoo and performed live at Wembley Stadium in front of 90,000 people.

Most importantly, Stephen Sutton has used his situation and story to reach out to thousands of people with his message to live life with purpose and positivity.

As Stephen says: "This is not a sob story. This is Stephen's Story."

MagicFuture® is proud to help share Stephen's Story with an even wider audience as part of The MagicFuture® Heroes Series. The mission of MagicFuture® is to help millions to improve their levels of personal engagement so they take control, achieve more and love life.

Let Stephen's Story inspire you to take control of your life and show you how to make the most of the time you have.

For more information on Magic Future® and to set your first goal for free, visit www.magicfuture.com.