

How To...

SORT YOUR SH!T OUT

Ever felt anxious, depressed, alone, jealous or just felt like you aren't good enough? If you answered "yes" to any of these, then it's likely you have some shit going on and it may be starting to control your life. Author **GARY WALDON** might be just what you need. In this special edited extract from his new book *Sort Your Sh!t Out* he gives some advice on living your best life...

"ALL WE WANT TO DO IS TO SORT IT OUT SO WE CAN BE 'NORMAL' AND GET ON WITH LIVING THE BEST LIFE WE CAN."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Waldon is a transformational change specialist who has helped many organisations improve their productivity and profitability. He has a diverse background which includes being a topless waiter, a lecturer, and advisor to CEOs. Starting his working life as a high school teacher, Gary has had over 41 different jobs throughout his life and also earned two Masters degrees in business and finance along with his teaching qualifications. Throughout his life Gary has always felt like he didn't belong and that he was never good enough. After years of learning to sort his shit out he decided to capture the lessons learnt along the way to help others, resulting in his debut book.



Most of us have probably heard the phrase “Sort your shit out” at one time or another. It may have been from a well-intended family member or friend

offering up some tough love, or maybe an angry boss threatening your future employment. Most likely though, it’s been from yourself as you beat yourself up for not meeting your own expectations or achieving what you think you should be. Regardless of the source, the term suggests not all is where it should be in our lives. Below are some words from my book to help you on your way to sorting your shit out.

YOU’RE WEIRD, GET OVER IT

Whether you’re a Buddhist monk, a yoga guru, a motivational speaker or just an average Joe, we’re all striving to reach a state where everything is as we want it to be, where our minds aren’t running rampant in our heads and our inner critic is silenced. Most of the time, we’re ok with our shit. It’s not doing much harm, just sitting in the background, not trying to control too much. Our shit makes up much of who we are — it impacts our personality, behaviours and mental state.

However, sometimes our shit can start to get the better of us. We can feel like it’s taking control to the point where we can’t seem to focus on anything else. These are times when we need to wrestle back control from our shit and kick its ass back into the corner where it belongs. Because we frequently get caught up in our own heads, we mistakenly think that we’re the only ones who don’t seem to have our shit together.

Sure, there may be people who appear to be more messed up than we are, but there are the others who are apparently living an enviable life. Then there’s little old you and me, with all this shit running around in our heads, and all

we want to do is sort it out so we can be ‘normal’ and get on with living the best life we can. Let’s burst that balloon! There’s no such thing as normal and we need to stop trying to fit in.

EVERYBODY HAS THEIR SHIT

Regardless of whether you’re male or female, super-hot/smart/ wealthy or not, a criminal or the CEO of your own company, we all have our own shit. You may pretend it’s not there. You may try and maintain the facade to hide it, but despite your best efforts it always seems to find a way to reveal itself. In a recent interview with the *New York Times*, actor Brad Pitt opened up about the shit he faced following the breakdown of his marriage to Angelina Jolie.

“I grew up with that be capable, be strong, don’t show weakness thing,” he told reporter Kyle Buchanan. “I’m grateful that there was such an emphasis on being capable and doing things on your own with humility, but what’s lacking about that is taking inventory of yourself. It’s almost a denial of this other part of you that is weak and goes through self-doubts, even though those are human things we all experience. Certainly, it’s my belief that you can’t really know yourself until you identify and accept those things.”

Our shit can be found within our opinions and tainted thoughts, feelings and emotions, attitudes and behaviours. We may blame others, get depressed, shut down emotionally or put up a loud facade to avoid truly owning our shit. If someone tries to convince you that they have all their shit together or if you think they’ve got it together, because their life seems so perfect from the outside, one of two things is happening. Firstly, at that exact period of time the gods are smiling on them and life is good and their shit has faded into the background for a while. Or they’re bullshitting you. They’re putting up their ‘it’s all great’ facade and you’re buying into it.

“THERE’S NO SUCH THING AS NORMAL AND WE NEED TO STOP TRYING TO FIT IN.”

Many self-help books seem to encourage focus on the fairy tale and forget that as life happens it brings its inevitable ups and downs. The Disney approach to life is realistic, sustainable or effective. There ain’t no quick fixes, there’s no single formula that’ll make the future all rosy forever after, nor someone who, by merely associating with them, will fill our emptiness. The place we really need to be looking is within ourselves.

WHAT’S YOUR SUPERHERO BACKSTORY?

The way we understand and connect with a superhero is often through their backstory. Spider-Man was orphaned and as a result of being bitten by a radioactive spider, gained

superpowers. Batman’s alter ego Bruce Wayne lost his parents as a child and became a vigilante. Superman’s parents forced him to leave his planet to save his race. Thor was banished from Asgard after having his godly powers stripped and Wonder Woman’s mum wouldn’t let her train with the other warriors, thereby alienating her with her over-protectiveness.

It seems that for any superhero, to be truly relatable to us mere mortals, there has to be a backstory that involves personal loss, tragedy, unfulfilled potential and a belief that they can make the world a better place and were meant for bigger things. A true superhero must have their own bad shit and good shit to enable them to realise their potential.

Fortunately, these days, superheroes are much more multifaceted and realistic, with both a dark side and a good side that they

THE SHIT

There are four key ideas to sorting your shit out which will help you live your best life...

1. KNOW YOUR SHIT Most of us know we have shit but don’t actually know where it comes from, what it is, why it’s there or what to do about it. This section is about digging into your mind, getting your hands dirty and identifying where your shit really comes from. What we think is causing our discomfort and unhappiness may actually only be a symptom of what’s really happening for us.

2. OWN YOUR SHIT Name it and own it so you can tame it. Accepting and taking responsibility for our shit can be a double-edged sword. For some of us, we’re the masters of deflection and will blame everyone else for our unhappiness rather than own our shit and deal with it.

3. DEAL WITH YOUR SHIT Knowing our shit and our relationship with it is not much use in the long term if we don’t do something about it and deal with it.

4. MAINTAINING YOUR SHIT FIT Once you have dealt with your current shit, you haven’t finished. Just like going to gym and getting fit, you need to keep working on it to stay in shape. As we know, shit happens and it is a part of life, so it will continue to happen. Given that we’ll all have our ups and downs as we go through life, this section focusses on the things we can do to maintain a healthy balance while life happens.

continue to try and balance, a lot like us mere mortals. This was certainly true in the case of Black Panther, Iron Man and the rest of the super crew. The stuff that happened to them created its own shit.

There are two types of things we experience every day of our lives. There's the stuff that happens in the real world and then there's our interpretation or perception of what happened. Our take or view of the facts may be an immediate response or come after hours, days or even years of contemplation and mulling over. Sometimes we'll interpret this stuff correctly, however more often than not we'll misinterpret events because of our perspective, or in this case, our shit.

Put simply, stuff happens outside our heads and shit is the filter that comes from inside us. Most times this stuff from the outside world is neither good nor bad. It's just stuff. Just like with us humans, there is no completely good or bad being, just varying degrees of shade in between. Most of us believe we're good, but that doesn't stop us from doing bad things here and there because it either suits us or for whatever reason. Just like our superheroes we are neither completely good nor bad, we fluctuate somewhere in between.

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU TELL YOURSELF – IT'S PROBABLY FAKE NEWS

Our brains and minds work together to act like our own internal executive assistant (EA). They react to the stuff that requires immediate attention and then prioritise the rest of the stuff so they can get to it in order of importance. Some stuff they don't even bother looking at and will let them go straight to the shredder, where we'll forget about whatever it was because it had no significance for us.

Our minds read the messages as they come in and sort out what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and which part of our bodies or brain needs dealing with. They also may get a bit power hungry from time to time and make decisions or judgements on our behalf. It may

be helpful to give our minds a name so we can distinguish where our shit is coming from and are able to assess whether it's fake news or not. I name mine Bob.

Like all bosses, we like to think we're in control, but in reality, like any good EA, Bob is actually in control, and always the ever-diligent EA he controls most of the things I do and think each day. Sure, he screws up like the rest of us and sometimes tells me lies and manipulates me to get his own way. But if I ever do catch him out on one of his deceptions, he always reassures me he was only doing it to protect me and was looking out for me.

A great way to distinguish between the brain and the mind and how they interact is to think of our brain as a car and our mind is the driver. The car has all these cool features that let it function as it's meant to, but without a driver it's not going to do very much. Even a self-driving car won't operate without a driver in place. It would just sit there idling, doing nothing except running until it ran out of fuel. It's only when the driver (Bob) gets behind the wheel that the car starts to do stuff.

As drivers we should always drive to the conditions, but often our ego or some other deadline, makes us keep going. This is when bad stuff can happen. Most times it's not the car (brain) that causes the crash, but rather the driver who didn't respond to the situation properly and lost control. In other words, it's the driver or our minds that create most of the shit for us and not our anatomical brain, or car. ■



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