



There's always hope, no matter how dark life gets

The weekend-long Achieve event at The Passenger Shed offered to unlock the secrets of health, wealth and happiness through an array of inspirational talks, demos, workshops and exhibits from celebrities and experts. **Elise Britten** attended on Sunday, and here's what she learned...

Eating out of bins may just be the key to success

KICKING off the day, Eddie the Eagle got us off to a flying start with his incredible story about his journey from plasterer's son to ski jumping in the Winter Olympics.

The lengths Eddie went to achieve his goals with very limited means are breathtaking. In fact, at one point he even resorted to scraping girl guides' leftovers out of bins to sustain himself while training. While I hope I won't be rummaging through rubbish any time soon, Eddie certainly is a shining example of not giving up on your dreams.

"The best tool in my tool belt was resilience and tenacity," he said. "And I never ever gave up."

Looking at him now, after an extensive career – including a stint as a Finnish pop star – he is a picture of success, without even a whiff of bin juice.

» **Lesson:** Expect to roll your sleeves up for humbling work on your way to success.

Lee Johnson doesn't recruit based on just great football skills

OK, so football skills obviously come into the equation, but according to Bristol City manager Lee Johnson he would prefer to hire a great person who can be taught team cohesion, than a great footballer.

"No individual is bigger than the team," Johnson, *inset*, explained.

"Unless you've got the culture right, you've got nothing."

And the 37-year-old manager must be getting something right after leading Bristol City to the semi-finals of the 2017–18 EFL Cup, beating several Premier League clubs including Manchester United, along the way.

The young and very attractive (forgive my swooning) manager told me how it was tough to be taken seriously at first, competing with teams who have four or five

times your budget and more experienced managers.

"But as time goes on you earn your stripes and become more respected," he said.

» **Lesson:** Your character matters at least as much as your skills.

Some parents are going to hell and back fighting for basic rights

I WAS horrified to hear what some parents are going through to secure the basic right of a good education for their children.

Sue Walsh shared her emotional story of her dyslexic son Jack who was rejected by a total of 29 schools and then still had to fight for funding to attend the one school who could offer him the style of education he needed – St David's College in North Wales.

For years until he found the college Jack kept begging Sue: "Mum, keep me out of school. They don't know how to teach me."

Despite being effectively written off as 'unteachable', Jack went on to pass his GCSEs and A levels and achieve much more besides in St David's. With one in six children who are tested being diagnosed with dyslexia, Sue believes it shouldn't be a struggle to find a school for them. She makes a strong case for a shake-up of the educational setting and for more teachers being trained in how to teach children with different needs. Understandably Sue was getting teary sharing her story – and admittedly, so was I.

» **Lesson:** No child is unteachable.

Nigel Owens is just as fabulous in person

THEY say never to meet your heroes as you are bound to be disappointed – but Nigel Owens MBE is certainly an exception.

Listening to his harrowing story of bullying, depression, bulimia, a steroid addiction and a suicide attempt in person, you can't help but have even more respect for how he emerged from the ashes to become the renowned and much-loved rugby

referee he is today. Nigel struggled for a long time with accepting who he was.

"At 19, I had never met a person who was gay," he said. "I thought something was wrong with me."

He even asked a doctor if he could be chemically castrated.

After eventually accepting that he was gay, the concealed truth still had deep effects on Owens.

"Mental well-being and physical well-being go hand in hand."

"I still wasn't refereeing well as I was still worried about having to choose between my passion and being who I was," Nigel explained. "No-one should have to make that choice."

Coming out publicly around the age of 32 freed Nigel to be the best referee he could be.

He showed great affection for the rugby world, when I asked him a question about the effect of the culture of rugby.

"Value and respect are instilled in young people when they first start playing and they become better people," he explained, attributing part of his positive experience coming out to this.

But he also conceded he had already earned their respect as someone at the top of his field.

"Perhaps people have accepted me because of who I was."

Not everyone who has faced similar struggles to Nigel has had the same advantage.

» **Lesson:** Be true to yourself and accept others for who they are.

I really have no excuses

THE day concluded with the story of Jaco Van Gass, an Afghan-istan war veteran who lost his arm among other serious injuries in the line of duty.

Despite this turning his world upside down Jaco, through an incredible amount of hard work, ended up on the Walking with the Wounded expedition to the North Pole. He then almost made it to the peak of Everest.

"Success is not final. Failure is not final. It is the courage to continue that counts," he encouraged us.

» **Lesson:** No matter how dark life gets – there's always hope. (It's corny but true!)

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