

Last chance to see the world

Thirteen-year-old Asa Singleton sits in his bedroom and smiles as he looks through his holiday photos – photos that tell the moving story of a mother and father's love for their boy, and of a breathtaking race against time. For Asa will be blind by the end of the year – and so his parents, Paul and Debbie, sold their business to give him the greatest gift they could: to let their son see the world. 'We wanted him to have the experience of a lifetime before he loses his sight,' says Paul. 'And we did it all just in time.'

Asa was just a few months old when doctors diagnosed that he had been born with the incurable condition NF2, which begins to cause damage to the nervous system from an early age, often leading to deafness and blindness. 'We'd always planned a dad-and-son world trip when he was 16 – but I knew it would be too late by then,' says Paul, 46. 'So Debbie and I made the decision that we should go as soon as it was possible.'

'It was all a bit nerve-racking because of the unpredictability of Asa's condition,' says Paul. 'At home, his sight wasn't such

a problem because he knew where everything was. Away from home, we knew it would be more difficult. And he was a little frightened about going to so many strange places. But as soon as we arrived at our first destination, Paris, and saw the Eiffel Tower, we forgot our fears. It was so exciting, being at the beginning of an amazing, life-changing journey.' From France, they travelled to Germany, Italy, Cyprus and then Egypt.

'A guide took us to the top of a Pyramid, and the view was breathtaking. We could see the desert going on forever. It was a sight neither of us

will ever forget,' says Paul. 'In Japan we went to Mount Fuji and stayed in a traditional Japanese hotel. It was fascinating, although Asa wasn't too impressed with the sushi that we had for dinner. We travelled on the underground system in Tokyo, which was quite scary for Asa with his poor sight, but he was determined to try it.'

In Hawaii, dad and son went whale watching; and in Thailand, Asa bottle-fed a tiger cub. But his favourite part of the journey was seeing the island where the *James Bond* film *The Man with the Golden Gun* was filmed. 'Asa's a huge *Bond* fan, so there was no way we could go to Thailand without seeing James Bond Island.'

What astonished Paul most on the trip was his son's fearlessness, despite being hardly able to see. 'All his life, he's deliberately taken on tough physical challenges,' says Paul. 'But I was terrified when he said he wanted to go skydiving over the Great Barrier Reef when we got to Australia. I jumped first, and kept looking behind me until I saw his parachute open. I needn't have worried, though. He was absolutely fine, and he loved every second of it. He was so proud of himself.'

Asa also enjoyed the quiet moments of the trip. 'Our longest stop was New



Zealand, where we celebrated Christmas. We hired a camper van and spent a month sleeping under the stars in Auckland,' says Paul. 'There was something about the solitude and beauty of the place that he really connected with. He also went swimming with dolphins there.'

Next stop was the USA. Paul and Asa stayed a few days at a ranch near the Grand Canyon and went on to visit Las Vegas, Dallas, New Orleans, and take a boat trip down the Mississippi River. Then it was over to Florida to meet up with mum Debbie and Asa's sister Dominique, 17, for a holiday together. Finally they all headed off to Toronto in Canada to catch the flight home.

When Asa had his next hospital checks, the news wasn't good. His eyesight has deteriorated rapidly, and Asa is now registered blind. Paul says: 'If we'd waited any longer, it would have been too late and he would have missed out on the experience of a lifetime.'

- 1 Why did Asa's parents arrange a round-the-world trip for him?
 - A They wanted him to see the world before he lost his eyesight.
 - B They had sold their business and wanted to spend the money on their son.
 - C They wanted to share the experience of a lifetime with him.
 - D They thought the journey might improve his medical condition.



- 2 People suffering from NF2
 - A are born with damaged nervous systems.
 - B are usually deaf from birth.
 - C develop the condition when they are only a few months old.
 - D often lose their sight and hearing.
- 3 Why were Asa's parents more worried about his sight problems during the trip than before it?
 - A Asa himself felt frightened during the trip.
 - B They knew his eyesight was getting worse all the time.
 - C His sight problems mattered less in familiar surroundings.
 - D Asa's reactions were difficult to predict.
- 4 Seeing the Eiffel Tower was particularly exciting because
 - A it made them forget their worries.
 - B they knew it was the start of an incredible trip.
 - C they knew it would change their lives.
 - D they knew they would be going to Germany next.
- 5 One thing that Asa did was not very keen on was
 - A the huge size of the desert.
 - B the traditional hotel near Mount Fuji.
 - C some of the food in Japan.
 - D the journey to Tokyo.
- 6 How did Asa and his father react to parachuting in Australia?
 - A Asa loved it, but Paul was worried about his son.
 - B Paul enjoyed it, but Asa found the physical challenge too tough.
 - C They were both completely fearless.
 - D They were both terrified at first, but enjoyed it in the end.
- 7 Asa really enjoyed his time in New Zealand because
 - A it was a great place to spend Christmas.
 - B he could look at the stars at night.
 - C he saw some interesting wildlife there.
 - D he loved being in such attractive and peaceful surroundings.
- 8 What did Asa do in Florida?
 - A He caught the flight home to England.
 - B He went on a boat.
 - C He spent some time with the rest of his family.
 - D He spent a few days on a ranch.

2 Read the text again carefully, then choose from the sentences A–H the one which fits each gap (1–7). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

A That's why it doesn't make the drug companies very happy!

B Instead, it's part of a deadly serious form of medical treatment.

C The first two were introduced to a children's hospital in London almost ten years ago.

D Next we do the lion laugh, a yogic practice that involves sticking out your tongue.

E For this reason, most people are reluctant to laugh freely when they are surrounded by strangers.

F But the couple found that their style of humour failed to amuse the Scots.

G In order to achieve this, we play silly games and sing nursery rhymes, breaking down inhibitions.

H It stimulates the body's defences, reduces pain and helps recovery from illness.



Laughter therapy

Whenever you see a group of people rolling about with laughter, you want to know one thing: what's the joke? If Julie Whitehead is responsible for it, the answer is that there simply is no joke. (1) _____ Whitehead is at the forefront of moves to make laughter an integral part of the National Health Service in Britain.

Whitehead's movement, Laughter Yoga, was started in Mumbai by a man called Dr Kataria, and has spread to groups around Europe. Several groups and charities, involving comedians, coaches and clowns, are working with health service doctors who realise that joy and happiness have a serious role in the treatment of patients.

Professor Duncan Geddes, a consultant in chest medicine at the Royal Brompton Hospital, says: 'Laughter is an important medicine. It is an expression of happiness, and happiness is good for all of us in three main ways. (2) _____ Laughter therapy is developing fast and new research is looking into the ways that laughter happens, how it stimulates the brain and how it makes us all healthier and happier.'

Whitehead says, 'Laughter has wonderful health benefits and, unlike most drugs, there are no side-effects. It's also free. (3) _____' She adds: 'New research at Indiana State University compared groups of people who watched either comedy films or a boring tourist film, and found the group who laughed had their immune system boosted by 40 per cent.'

Whitehead's laughter sessions last around an hour and a quarter. We start by clapping hands, and saying 'ho, ho ho, ha, ha ha', while maintaining eye contact with each other. (4) _____ Other exercises involve laughing higher and higher. This can all feel excruciatingly embarrassing, but the idea is that soon it should turn into real laughter.

When Dr Kataria first developed the concept of Laughter Yoga, he tried using jokes. Not everyone, however, laughs at the same gags, so instead the club used simulated laughter exercises. They have the same physical benefits for breathing and circulation. There is also a psychological side, as Whitehead explains: 'We encourage childlike openness. (5) _____ It builds confidence and helps you look people in the eye,' she claims.

Meanwhile, 'clown doctors' are being introduced into British hospitals to make sick children laugh themselves back to health. (6) _____ I toured the hospital with them in the early days, and was amazed at their warmth and depth of emotional generosity. It takes a lot to bring joy to a building filled with sick children. The project has proved a lasting success and now a team of nine clowns works in a growing number of hospitals, entertaining about 27,000 children and their families every year.

But it's not all 'hee-hee, ha-ha' for pioneers of healthy humour. When Roland Schutzbach and his partner, Christine Fleur de Lys, both from Switzerland, tried to cheer up the Scottish town of Aberdeen, the locals failed to see the gag. Last month, the pair took to the streets dressed in bright red-and-orange wigs, enormous spectacles, huge ties and angel wings at the start of a three-year mission to look for the 'laughter cities' of Europe. (7) _____ 'Aberdeen is a difficult case,' Schutzbach admits. 'People did not laugh with us. They did not even look at us.'





Part 1

Questions 1–10

Read the text below about Repair Cafés, which are places where people can get everyday items fixed, and complete the summary that follows.

Use **UP TO TWO WORDS** from the text to complete each gap.

An example (0) has been completed for you.

Repair Cafés

Every year, households around the world throw away a huge quantity of electrical goods, nearly half of which is put out as rubbish. Yet simple repairs could prevent many of those items – as well as bits of furniture – from being discarded. The trouble is, most householders lack the confidence to fix things, and don't think twice about getting rid of goods and buying new ones. But people in many parts of the world can now find what's known as a Repair Café, where, over a cup of tea or coffee, they can pick up the knowledge to help themselves in the future.

The concept of the Repair Café was launched in Amsterdam in late 2009, and there are now more than 1400 Repair Cafés around the world, in countries as far apart as Australia, Egypt, Canada and India. They are all staffed by volunteer experts and are free, so visitors can bring their broken items, or just pop in and browse the selection of do-it-yourself publications to find out how to fix something. These days, there are even programmes on the television which aim to counteract the 'throwaway culture' we are living in, inspiring viewers to repair and restore much-loved but damaged belongings instead of throwing them away. Workshops are also being held where people can go to get help to tackle repair jobs themselves.

According to one Repair Café member of staff, most things can be fixed but you might need to be somewhat imaginative. Electrical items are often regarded as tricky to repair, as people are frightened of taking them apart. This fear is largely because they are unaware of how electrical things function. A recent survey of UK adults found that 43% are nervous about wiring a plug, while 21% are not confident changing a lightbulb. One of the issues with doing repairs at home, as an individual, is that there may not be anyone around to provide guidance or support. The alternative is to go to a Repair Café, which in effect is a social event, where it becomes a shared activity.

Many people feel annoyed when something they have spent a lot of money on stops working. At Repair Cafés, the aim is to try to redirect that sense of annoyance in a positive way. People are pleased when they realise they don't have to buy a brand-new replacement, and they recognise that there is an environmental as well as financial benefit to mending rather than throwing away. Another staff member explained: 'It's amazing how it changes people and their relationship with their stuff. They go home with a sense of achievement, and even send in photos of what they have managed to fix themselves!'



Summary

Almost 50% of the electrical goods that are thrown away by (0) *households* end up in the rubbish.

Many people throw away things that are broken because they don't have

(1) in their ability to repair them. There is, however, an alternative to simply going to the shops to buy a replacement. Repair Cafés are places where people can gain (2) that they will be able to use later on. And, as the name suggests, they can have a hot drink at the same time!

Repair Cafés are open to the general public, and (3), who are unpaid, run every one of them. People who visit can either bring in something that they would like to learn how to repair, or they can simply (4) a range of books and magazines on the subject.

As well as visiting Repair Cafés, people can learn how to repair their favourite objects by turning up at (5) All have the same purpose, which is to encourage people to consider fixing something rather than throwing it away.

People sometimes have to be a little (6) in order to work out how to repair an object, but the majority of items are fixable. Being (7) of the way in which electrical goods work is the main reason why many people are too scared to attempt to fix them. Some people don't even feel able to replace a (8) and often say they are irritated when something they own develops a fault. Volunteers hope that they can (9) this emotion, by making people feel a sense of pride at being able to repair something themselves. Not only are they saving money, but there are (10) gains too.

[10]



2  Listen again and for questions 1–7 choose the best answer, A, B or C.

- 1 What did Mrs Schofield learn at school?
 - A She learnt to read but not to write.
 - B She learnt to make a certain article of clothing.
 - C She learnt nothing.
- 2 What problems did Mrs Schofield have when she was shopping?
 - A She could only buy cornflakes.
 - B She couldn't read the labels on packages.
 - C She only bought things with pictures on them.
- 3 What impressed her about what the man in the shop said?
 - A He achieved success through his own efforts.
 - B He had been poor but he became rich.
 - C He came to her village and stayed there.
- 4 What was the experience of going to college like for her?
 - A She didn't like the amount of homework she was given.
 - B She lacked motivation.
 - C It was one of the hardest things she's ever done.
- 5 Mrs Schofield's plan was to write to
 - A her relations in a number of different countries.
 - B one relation in the USA.
 - C relations with whom she was still in contact.
- 6 How was she able to find out about local news?
 - A She used to ask her neighbours.
 - B She had the local paper read to her by somebody else.
 - C She used to try to read the local paper.
- 7 What does she want to do now?
 - A She wants to gain the confidence to do anything.
 - B She wants to go on a long journey.
 - C She wants to carry on learning.

Multiple choice 1.1–1.3

You will hear three different extracts. For questions **1–6**, choose the answer (**A**, **B** or **C**) which fits best according to what you hear. There are two questions for each extract.

Extract 1

You hear two university students talking about applying for jobs.

- 1 How does the man feel about applying for jobs?
A confident he will get the job he wants
B pleased that his CV looks impressive
C surprised to have received so many replies
- 2 The woman has delayed applying for jobs because
A she may do further study.
B she might take time off to travel.
C she could work in the family business.

Extract 2

You hear two business colleagues discussing a conference they have just attended.

- 3 According to the woman, one of the best things about the conference was
A the range of backgrounds of the speakers
B the chance to ask questions after each presentation
C the large number of people who attended
- 4 Before the conference began, the man had felt
A determined to hear one particular presentation.
B regretful that some presentations had been cancelled.
C concerned that the programme was too ambitious.

Extract 3

You hear part of a radio discussion in which two people are talking about plans to expand the size of their city.

- 5 What aspect of the plans does the man criticize?
A the cost of new public transport initiatives
B the types of new housing to be built
C the provision of recreational facilities
- 6 Both speakers agree that the planned expansion
A will give the city a stronger sense of identity.
B will be good for the country as a whole.
C will improve the international profile of the city.

Sentence completion **1.4**

You will hear a student giving a presentation about how photography has changed over time. For questions 1–8, complete the sentences with a word or short phrase.

How photography has changed

In the 1850s, 'wet collodion' photography showed (1) for the first time.

'Pictorialist' photographers manipulated images, for example by giving them (2)

In the 1920s, photographs of California's (3) became world famous.

At the same time, photography was used to reject (4) in Europe.

Between the two World Wars, the work of 'humanist' photographers appeared in (5)

In the 1960s, photographers wanted people to have a strong (6) when they saw their photos.

The (7) of photographs changed dramatically around the year 2000.

Nowadays, (8) is nearly always accompanied by photography of some kind.

Multiple choice 1.5

You will hear an interview with a woman called Olivia Hadfield who has been researching how colours can be used to communicate different messages. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which fits best according to what you hear.

- 1 Olivia says that she first got involved with researching colour
 - A because she hoped to further her career in marketing.
 - B because she desired a change of lifestyle.
 - C to oppose something she thought was unfair.
 - D because she felt that businesses underrated the influence of colour.
- 2 What point does Olivia make about colours and brands?
 - A Many people form a subconscious connection between them.
 - B Not all products can be successfully branded by a single colour.
 - C Some nationalities are more susceptible to colour branding than others.
 - D Corporations are happy to market many brands with the same colour.
- 3 What does Olivia say about our associations with certain colours?
 - A Red has the widest range of associations.
 - B People have neutral associations with black.
 - C Our associations with blue are most rational.
 - D White has the most positive associations.
- 4 Olivia thinks that the link between colour and taste is
 - A very well understood.
 - B difficult to explain.
 - C stronger for foods than drinks.
 - D largely based on instinct.
- 5 When Olivia talks about house colours in her city she is
 - A surprised by changing trends.
 - B worried about visual pollution.
 - C cautious about being unconventional.
 - D disappointed by the lack of variety.
- 6 What aspect of colour would Olivia like to study in future?
 - A how climate affects the colours we see
 - B how human sight has evolved over time
 - C how colour is partly a cultural construct
 - D how non-human and human sight differs



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