



# What people are saying about **DARE TO BE YOU**



## **THE KIDS**

'I would recommend it to my friends if they were feeling like they needed a confidence boost, for sure!'

*Freddie aged 11*

'Dare to Be You has really helped me get rid of my own inner doubts and I am sure it will help you.'

*Oliver aged 13*

'This book is GREAT. It has really helped me to understand that it is OK to be different and will really help me when I go back to school.'

*Toppsta reader aged 8*

'I read it with my mum and she loved it too and said it helped her a lot. It is written by Matthew Syed who is a champion table tennis player, so it uses his own childhood and growing up as examples. Some of the examples of what has happened are REALLY funny like the tracksuit and his dad's car.'

*Toppsta reader aged 8*

'I thought it was good that it was written in chapters and some parts of it were really funny. This book has loads of interesting facts in it and lots of science. I am going to read it again and again and I am going to "Dare to Be Me!'

*Toppsta reader aged 11*

'I love this book so much! I read *You Are Awesome*, which was great, so I knew this one wouldn't disappoint me.'

*Toppsta reader aged 11*



## THE ADULTS

'We have read *Dare to Be You* with our youngest child, who has quite severe dyslexia. This causes him to often have low self-esteem, and this book, very much like *You Are Awesome*, allows him to see the very best in himself and to know and acknowledge that there is no such thing as normal. It's been incredibly empowering for him, and also a great tool for us as parents.'

*Giles Paley-Phillips*

'A very inspirational book packed with excellent quotations and references to REAL people that both children and adults can relate to. The comedy is spot on and had me laughing out loud at times.'

*Toppsta teacher reviewer*

'Thank you Matthew Syed for such an inspiring and honest book!'

*Toppsta teacher reviewer*

'Matthew Syed has done it again! I wish we had had books like this when I was younger.'

*Toppsta teacher reviewer*

'A really motivating, well-written book about embracing differences and being yourself. This is perfect for Key Stage 2 and I'll definitely be sharing it with my year 4 class.'

*Toppsta teacher reviewer*

## THE MEDIA

'Charming, informative and inspiring motivational book for children.'

*The Times*

'Matthew Syed's first book for children, *You Are Awesome*, was a massive hit. This is the sequel and we reckon it's just as good, if not better. With lively text, stylish illustrations and real-life examples, it sets out to encourage young readers to build their confidence and resilience and follow their own path in life.'

*The Independent*

'Hugely inspiring.'

*Press Association*



For Rita and Andy. The best of teachers.

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ILLUSTRATED BY  
*Toby Triumph & Ollie Mann*

wren  
& rook 



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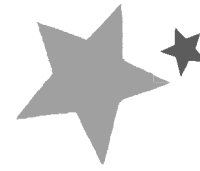
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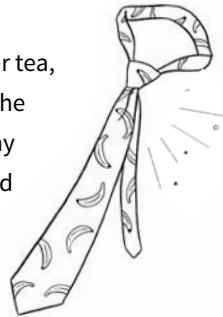


# INTRODUCTION



On the first night it was me, David, Tom, Stephen, Craig and Ash. And it was weird. All these new guys. In **MY** house.

It had all started when my dad applied for a new job. It was a big promotion. Working in the government department responsible for tea, coffee and bananas (yes, this is a thing). He bought a new suit for the interview and wore a tie with bananas on it that he had found in my grandad's wardrobe. I thought the tie was a bad idea, but it seemed to go down better than I expected and he came back from the interview with a brand-new job in banana management.



Which meant that the family had to move to London.

## **BUT. THIS WAS SERIOUSLY BAD TIMING FOR ME.**

I was coming to the end of secondary school and my table tennis was just starting to get pretty serious. I had made the national team for the first time and had a brilliant coach who was really pushing me hard. I just couldn't leave for London. Not then. My whole **LIFE** was in Reading. I stopped eating bananas in protest, but it did no good. My dad decided to rent the house to students and a date was set for the big move.

## **DISASTER.**

That was until I managed to get Peter Charters (my table tennis coach) to convince my mum to convince my dad (I know, stick with me ...) to let me stay at home in Reading. With Peter checking in on me now and



again to make sure that I wasn't just living off Haribos and only having a shower every third Tuesday.



So, that is how I came to be living with David, Tom, Stephen, Craig and Ash. In my own house. Now, you are probably wondering by now whether there is a point to any of this. And I promise that there is. I am getting to it. Right now.

You see, this new arrangement with me living with five students was a big change. I didn't have my mum around anymore to cook my dinner and my dad wasn't around to talk to after I'd lost a big match. I even missed my brother (don't tell him that though). And I had to get used to this totally new set up while five total strangers moved into my house.

That first night, **Kid Doubt** was there. Enjoying every minute. Delighted to see how nervous I was. Wishing I would say stupid things when I introduced myself to these guys.



Now I should probably check here that you know **Kid Doubt?** You must do? You've read *Dare to Be You*, right? Great. You are awesome. (No, wait ... that's the other book). **SKIP THIS IF YOU HAVE READ DARE TO BE YOU. WHAAAAAT?** You haven't read it yet? I'll get over it (probably) but I'll just need to give you a little spoiler about what is in it. You see, I introduce you to **Kid Doubt** in *Dare to Be You*. He (or she, everyone has their own **Kid Doubt**) is that voice in your head that holds you back. The one who creates the nagging doubts in your mind that you are not quite good enough. **Kid Doubt** can make you feel insecure. Make you do things you are not proud of. And most importantly, stop you doing some of the things that you would really like to do. *Dare to Be You* is about ignoring **Kid Doubt** and silencing that voice in your head.



Anyway, back to it. Me, David, Tom, Stephen, Craig and Ash. Oh, and **Kid Doubt**.

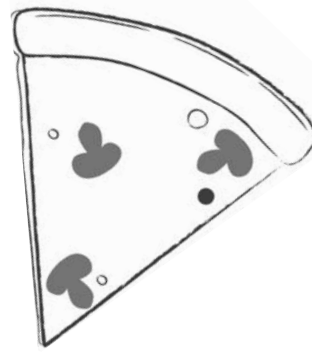
Now, it might sound like we must have had some kind of seven-bedroom luxury mansion. But nothing could be further from the truth. My dad, keen on a money-making scheme, was all for packing our three-and-a-half bedroom house as full of as many paying students as he possibly could. I was surprised when he didn't rent out the family bathroom.

Tom had the lounge. Craig had the dining room. Not ideal as they didn't really have a proper door between them. Me, Stephen and Ash had the three bedrooms. And David had the half-sized bedroom, which was so small that the Syed family had previously decided it wasn't big enough for our pet hamster.

But this experience taught me so many things. I realized that I could change a lightbulb and even warm a sausage roll in the microwave. And even though my mum wasn't in the same house with me, she was always on the other end of the phone and I could call her day or night if I had a problem. The change didn't seem so huge after all. But even more than that, I realized how very different people are. None of the five guys were anything like me. **AT ALL**.

### **AND NONE OF THEM HAD THE SLIGHTEST INTEREST IN TABLE TENNIS.**

Craig was interested in philosophy and talking about the big questions of life, like 'how can I be sure that I am thinking?' David was constantly irritated with Craig at the start. He couldn't understand the point of these questions. To be honest, David was just irritated generally. I think he was struggling to sleep standing up. (There wasn't really room for a proper bed in that half-sized bedroom.)



Tom didn't seem to understand the idea of sharing. He ate four of my frozen pizzas before I realized that he was doing it. Ash spent 19 full minutes cleaning his teeth in the morning. Locked in the family bathroom, flossing away while the rest of us queued up downstairs outside the single toilet. I couldn't understand how he could be so selfish.

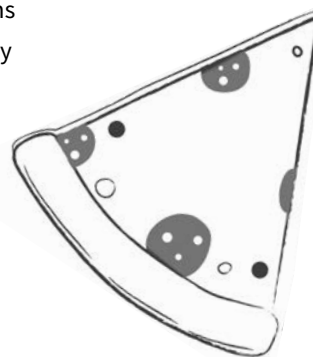
And still no one was interested in table tennis. At all.


But here is the thing. I grew to love living in that house with my new housemates. They were all different to anything I had ever known and they showed me how useful it can be to see things from a different perspective. (It turned out that Ash needed the full 19 minutes because he had some false teeth after a bad hockey accident.) I realised that not everyone was obsessed with hitting a small white ball across a net. And I understood that people had different strengths and different weaknesses.

In the end we arranged a rota for all the boring cleaning and cooking stuff. Everyone did their bit. We had brilliantly interesting chats in the evenings about all kinds of topics and I learned so much about the world from those guys. And (I think) they liked me too.

Right. I think we are ready to get to work. Ready to find the confidence we need to follow our own path. But before we begin it is worth remembering:

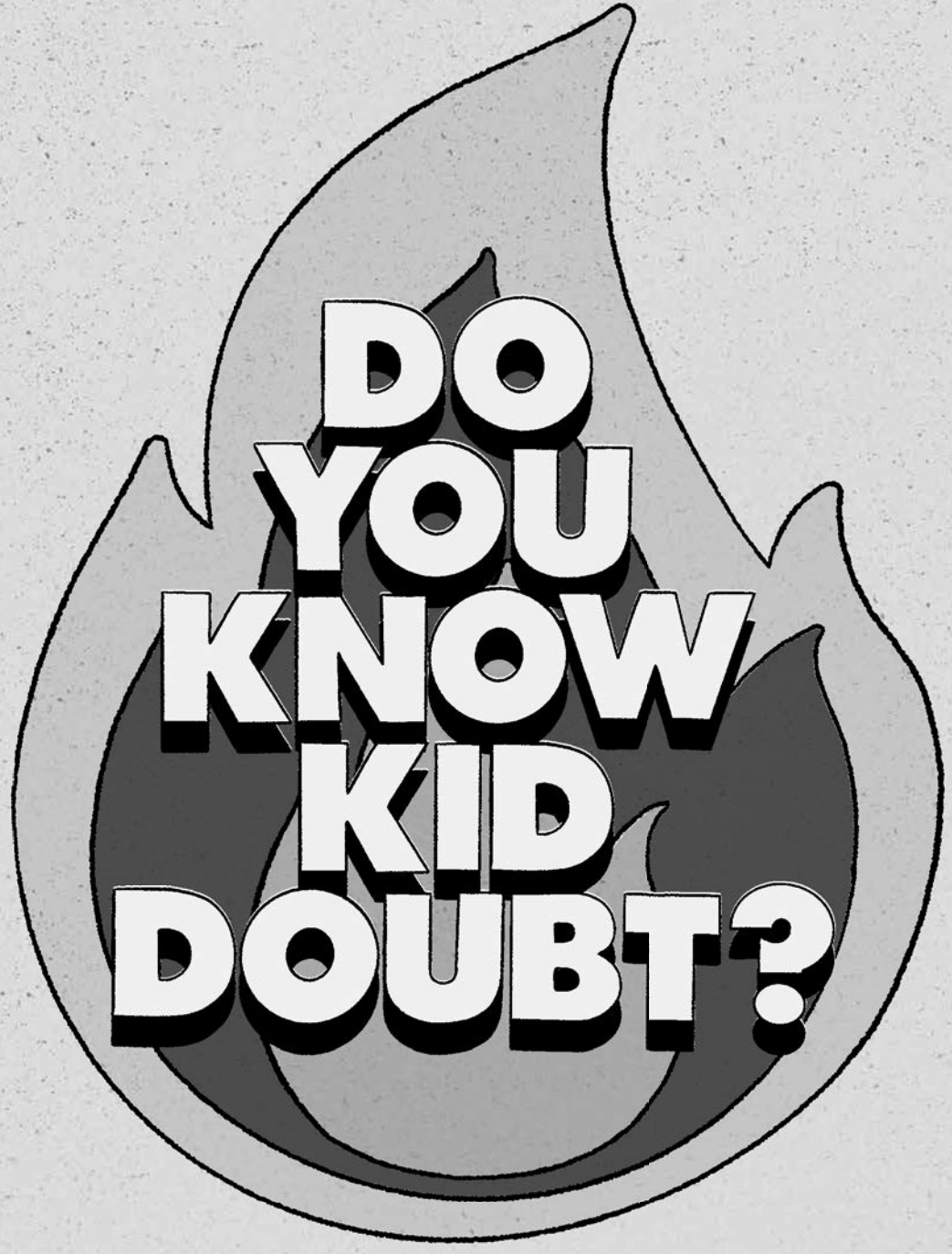
- 1 We are all different. Very different. And we can learn so much from people who think differently to us.
- 2 You have a lot to offer. We need to silence **Kid Doubt**, be brave and do the things that are right for us. Even if that means your path is a little bit different to someone else's.
- 3 If you have a question related to banana management, my dad is definitely your man.





*I've learned that*  
the **MASTERY** of  
**SELF-DOUBT**  
*is the* **KEY TO**  
**SUCCESS.**

*Will Smith*  
AWESOME ACTOR, PRODUCER AND RAPPER



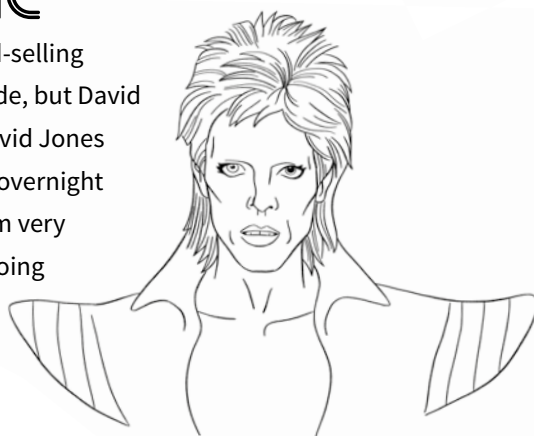
**DO  
YOU  
KNOW  
KID  
DOUBT?**

## DEFYING KID DOUBT

One of the worst things our **Kid Doubt** can do is make us feel like we're the only ones feeling insecure. But you are not alone. Even superstars have had their struggles with **Kid Doubt** – and won!

### DAVID BOWIE

He might have been a million-record-selling musician with adoring fans worldwide, but David Bowie started out as a boy called David Jones from Brixton, London. He wasn't an overnight success, and in fact, he suffered from very low self-esteem. But Bowie wasn't going to let his **Kid Doubt** get in his way. He reinvented himself as Ziggy Stardust and followed his own path to become a global superstar.



### SERENA WILLIAMS

She might have won 23 grand slams and four Olympic gold medals, but that doesn't mean that tennis ace Serena Williams doesn't struggle with doubt. She's looked up to by millions of people around the world, but as a child Serena wasn't confident in herself. She spent her childhood wanting to be just like her big sister Venus, even ordering the same food as Venus in restaurants. It took Serena a long time to feel comfortable being herself, but once she did, there was no stopping her.



### TOM HANKS

His career spans 40 years, and he's done it all: won two Oscars, become a Hollywood A-lister and voiced everyone's favourite cowboy, Sheriff Woody. But even to this day, the veteran actor Tom Hanks questions his own abilities. His **Kid Doubt** makes him worry that he's a fraud who's no good at acting and he's going to lose everything he's worked so hard to achieve. But Tom knows that he can't let his fears win. He says that sometimes you just have to fake your confidence until it returns.



### ZOË SUGG

With millions of followers online telling her on a daily basis how wonderful she is, you'd think Zoë Sugg would have the confidence of a superstar. But all the supportive likes and comments in the world can't stop **Kid Doubt** creeping in. There are times when Zoella (that's her YouTube name) second-guesses herself and doubts the decisions she's making in her life. And while she's not always sure how to silence her **Kid Doubt**, she knows that talking about it always helps. Remember, no matter what our life looks like on social media, it doesn't always tell the real story. Everyone has days when they question themselves.





# KID DOUBT FIBS

Now we know that even superstars have had to face off **Kid Doubt**, try researching some of your own personal heroes to find out what insecurities they have had to face. Write down the best example here to always remind yourself that you're not alone.

**MATTHEW'S HERO:** *My dad (shhhh! Don't tell him. It will just go to his head)*

## FIBS KID DOUBT HAS TOLD THEM:

*My dad moved to England from Pakistan when he was just 22. His Kid Doubt told him all kinds of things when he arrived. That he might not make any new friends in this new country. That he might not fit in ... and he proved Kid Doubt wrong!*

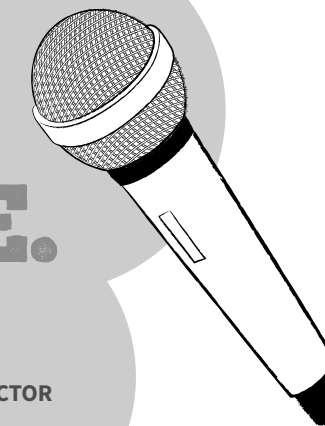
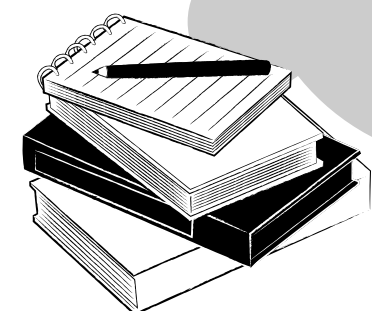
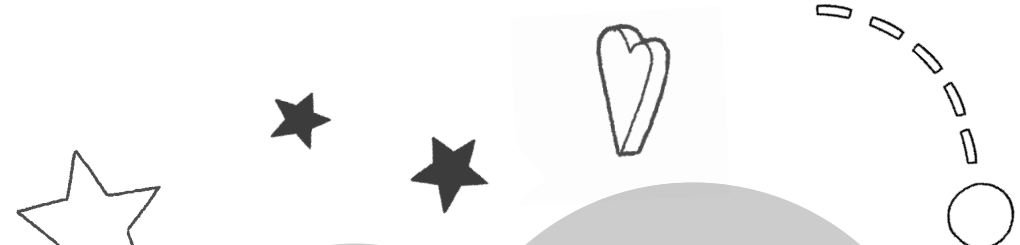
## MY HERO IS:

.....

## FIBS KID DOUBT HAS TOLD THEM:

.....

.....



*We often... don't feel inherently*  
**GOOD ENOUGH** *or*  
**SMART ENOUGH** *or*  
**WORTHY ENOUGH.**

*You are worthy because you are*  
**BORN**  
*and because you*  
**ARE HERE.**

*Oprah Winfrey*  
INSPIRING ENTREPRENEUR, CEO, PRESENTER AND ACTOR

# MEET YOUR KID DOUBT

Now we know about other people's **Kid Doubt**, it's time to look in the mirror and confront yours. What are some of the unhelpful things that your **Kid Doubt** tells you that you know in your heart not to be true? Write these in the speech bubbles below.

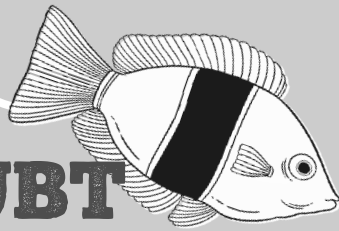


A collection of speech bubbles and icons on a dark grey background. There are five empty speech bubbles of various shapes. One bubble contains the text "You'll never be cool enough." and another contains "They don't really like you." There are also several question marks and icons: a sad face with a zigzag mouth, a smiley face with a bandage over its mouth, and a smiley face with sunglasses.

Next, show your **Kid Doubt** that you don't have time for their lies and negativity by writing down some confidence-boosting comebacks.

A collection of speech bubbles and icons on a light grey background with a decorative border of small circles. There are five empty speech bubbles of various shapes. One bubble contains the text "My friends do like me, and they like me for who I am!" and another contains "Who defines 'cool', anyway?!" There are also several asterisks and icons: a smiley face with sunglasses, a smiley face with a bandage over its mouth, and a heart.

# WHEN KID DOUBT COMES CALLING!

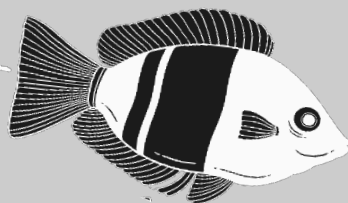
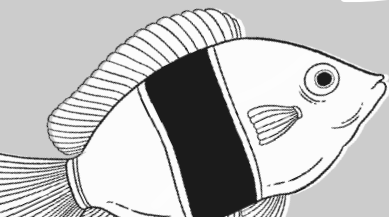


My best friend Emma had a swimming-pool party for her birthday. Massive problem. Everyone else could swim really well and I ... well, I couldn't. You know how a fish thrashes around wildly if it is taken out of the water? Well, that's exactly how I looked when I was **IN** the water. **Kid Doubt** was telling me that everyone would laugh. So I didn't go. Emma was so disappointed. And I didn't get a piece of the *Star Wars* cake we had both been looking forward to.

## SO, WHAT COULD I DO DIFFERENTLY?

Well, I could find out some more details beforehand and plan ahead. If there's a shallow end of the pool, I could hang out there, be honest with my friends and tell them I'm not a strong swimmer yet. If that isn't an option, I could sit at the side of the pool and cheer everyone on. At least I'd get the cake afterwards and it's better than sitting at home. Note to self: practise swimming so I look less like a fish out of water **IN** the water.

Think of the times that **Kid Doubt** got in your way and what you could have done differently. Write these down in the boxes opposite, and hold on to these thoughts for the next time **Kid Doubt** comes calling!



## WHEN KID DOUBT CAME CALLING:

.....  
.....

## ~~IF THIS HAPPENED AGAIN, I'D...~~

.....  
.....

## WHEN KID DOUBT CAME CALLING:

.....  
.....

## ~~IF THIS HAPPENED AGAIN, I'D...~~

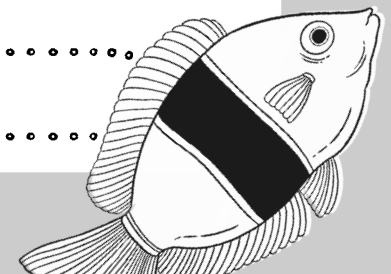
.....  
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## WHEN KID DOUBT CAME CALLING:

.....  
.....

## ~~IF THIS HAPPENED AGAIN, I'D...~~

.....  
.....



# ACHIEVEMENT ALBUM

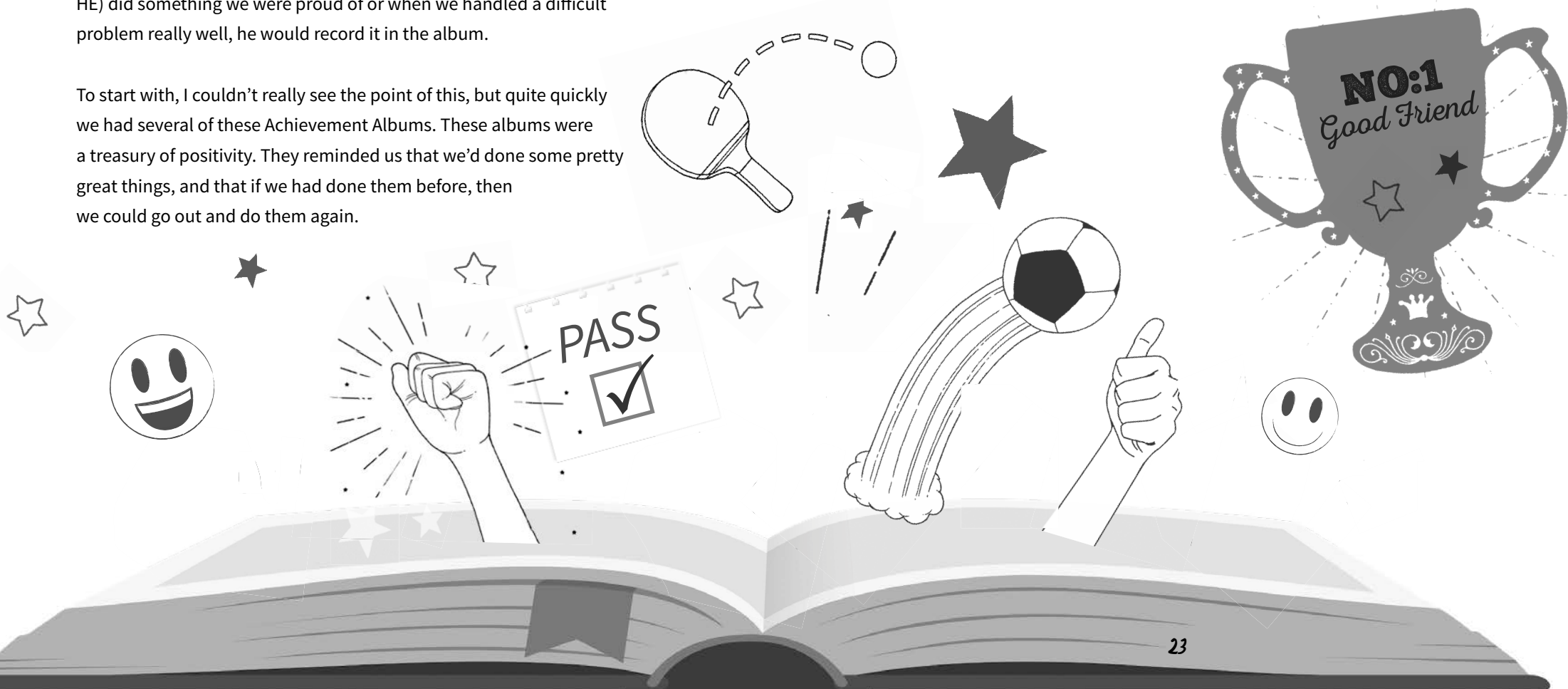
My brother had a brilliant idea. (It only happened this one time, so let's not give him TOO much credit.) While we were playing table tennis, he started something called the **Achievement Albums**.

He started a book that catalogued our (well, mostly HIS to be honest – I only got the occasional mention) successes. When we (again, mainly HE) did something we were proud of or when we handled a difficult problem really well, he would record it in the album.

To start with, I couldn't really see the point of this, but quite quickly we had several of these Achievement Albums. These albums were a treasury of positivity. They reminded us that we'd done some pretty great things, and that if we had done them before, then we could go out and do them again.

## HOW ABOUT MAKING AN ACHIEVEMENT ALBUM OF YOUR OWN?

Every time you do something you're really proud of, no matter how big or small – whether listening to a friend with a problem or doing well in a test – record it in your album. You can include a photo if you like. The next time **Kid Doubt** comes knocking and you're struggling to remember some of the great things you have done, open up the album. You'll be amazed by how full it is and all the awesome things that are in there.

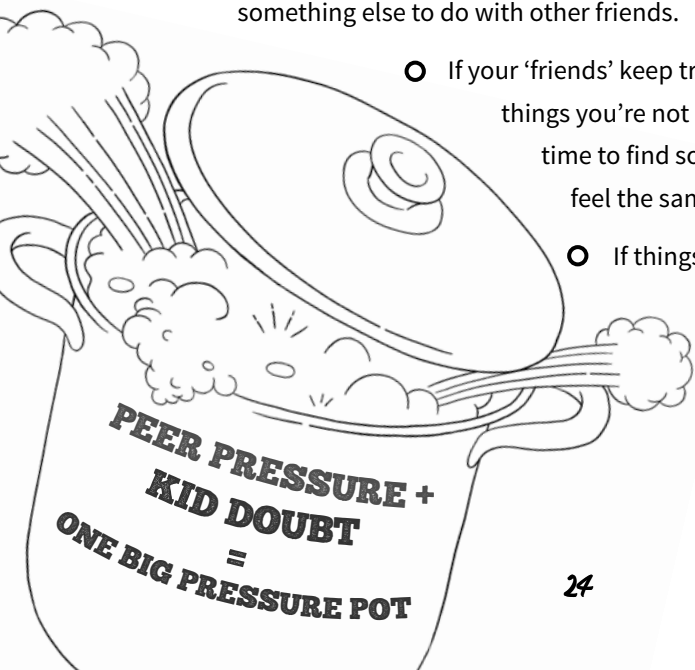


# UNDER PRESSURE

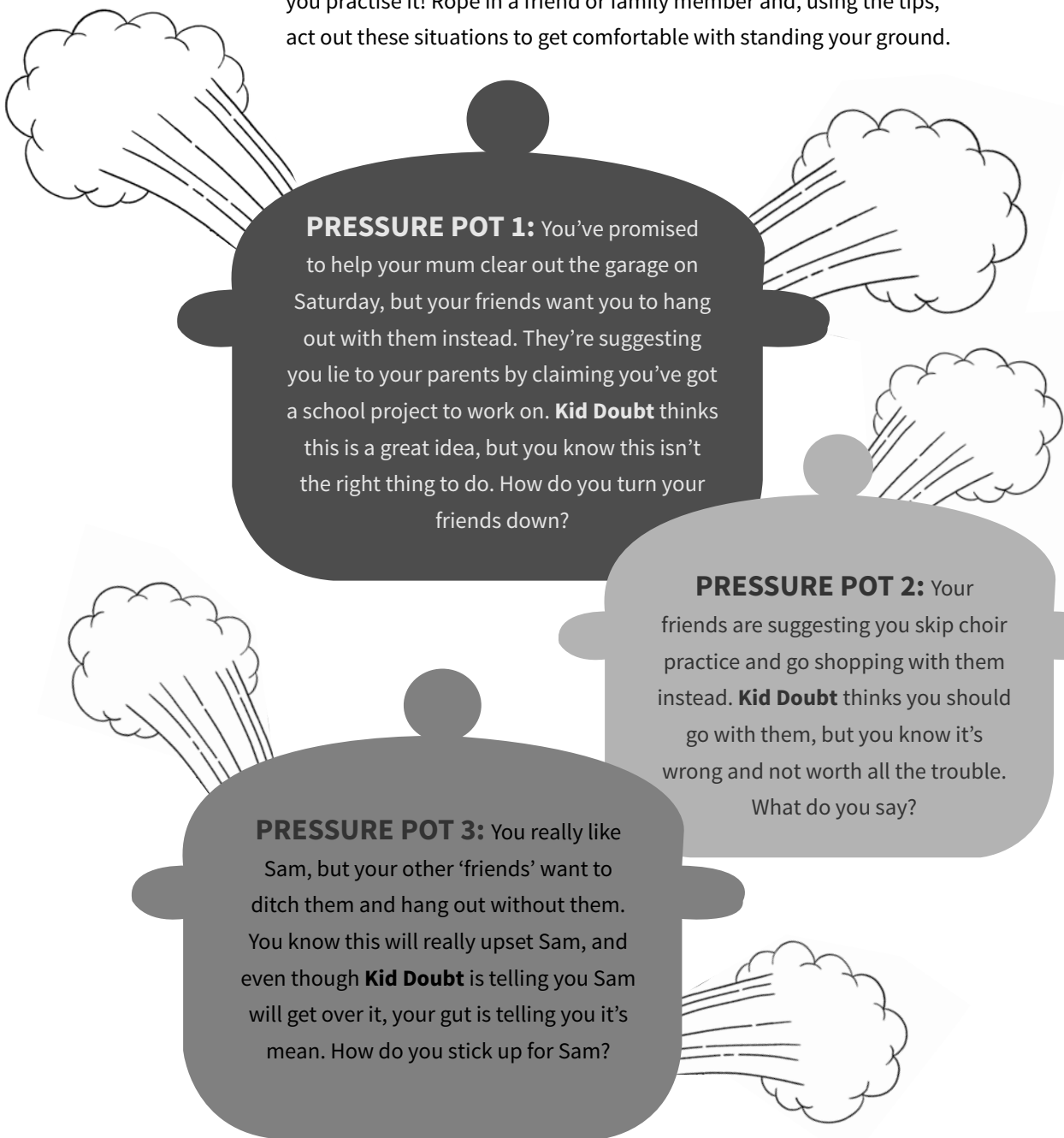
I know, I know. It's all well and good me sitting here telling you not to listen to **Kid Doubt**, but he's a pretty convincing guy. And he is SUCH a hanger-on. Always turning up when other people are trying to convince you to do something that you're unsure about.

Here are some useful tips to help you stand your ground and keep **Kid Doubt** quiet:

- Go with your gut. If something doesn't feel right for you, even if your friends are okay with it, don't join in.
- Don't be afraid to say 'no', even to your friends. Good friends will respect your decision.
- Support other friends if they're being encouraged to do something that they're not happy about.
- If all else fails, walk away from the situation and find something else to do with other friends.
- If your 'friends' keep trying to make you do things you're not happy with, it could be time to find some new friends who feel the same way as you do.
- If things are getting dangerous, never hesitate to go and get help from an adult.



The good news is that it gets easier to stand up for yourself the more you practise it! Rope in a friend or family member and, using the tips, act out these situations to get comfortable with standing your ground.



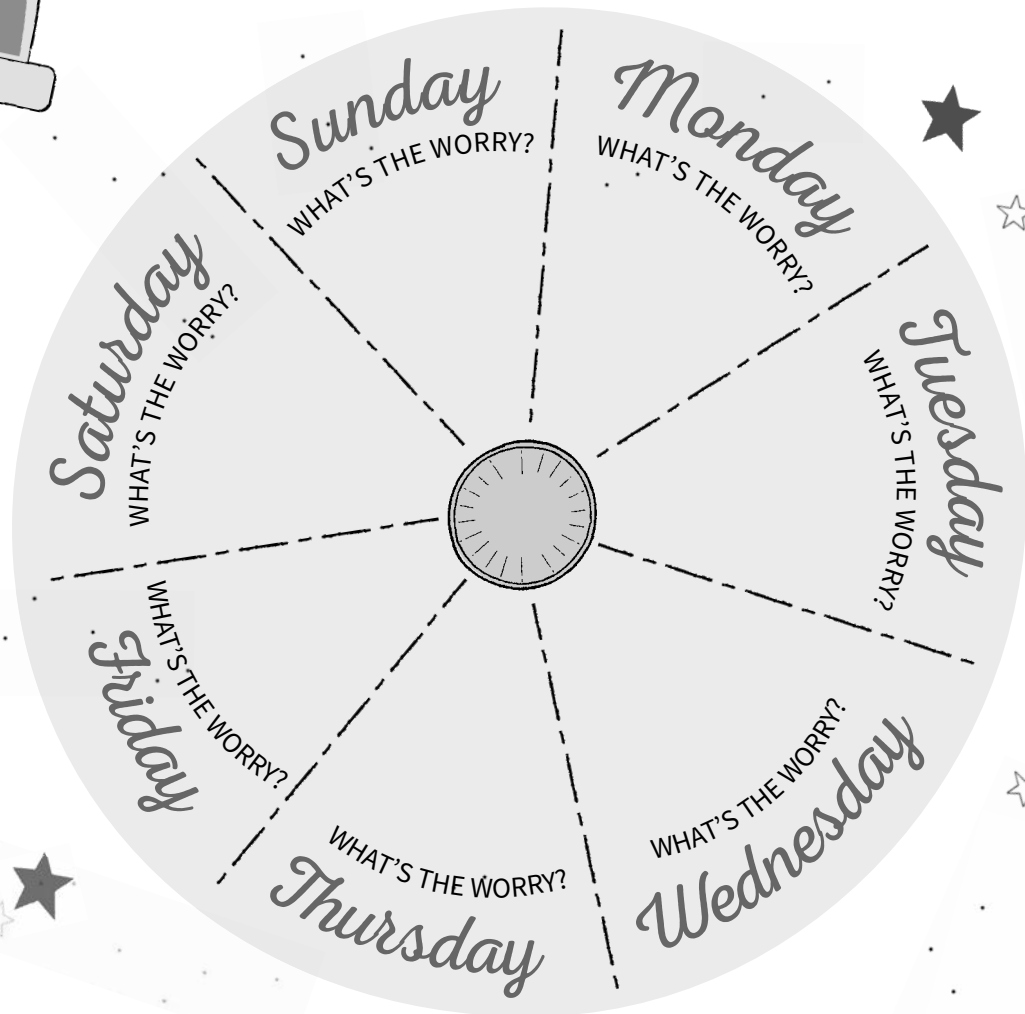
**PRESSURE POT 1:** You've promised to help your mum clear out the garage on Saturday, but your friends want you to hang out with them instead. They're suggesting you lie to your parents by claiming you've got a school project to work on. **Kid Doubt** thinks this is a great idea, but you know this isn't the right thing to do. How do you turn your friends down?

**PRESSURE POT 2:** Your friends are suggesting you skip choir practice and go shopping with them instead. **Kid Doubt** thinks you should go with them, but you know it's wrong and not worth all the trouble. What do you say?

**PRESSURE POT 3:** You really like Sam, but your other 'friends' want to ditch them and hang out without them. You know this will really upset Sam, and even though **Kid Doubt** is telling you Sam will get over it, your gut is telling you it's mean. How do you stick up for Sam?

# THE WORRY CLOCK

Did you know that some researchers think that people spend nearly two hours worrying **EVERY SINGLE DAY**? Just imagine all the things you could be doing with your time instead! Try a little experiment: for the next week, write down one thing that **Kid Doubt** has said to you in the 'Worry Clock' below. (Note that it doesn't have to be every day.)



Now, I bet you can think of something better to do with your time than worry. It's time to turn those minutes spent worrying into something fun, or something you've always wanted to try. Draw or write down some ideas at the bottom of the hourglass, then note down your favourite at the end.



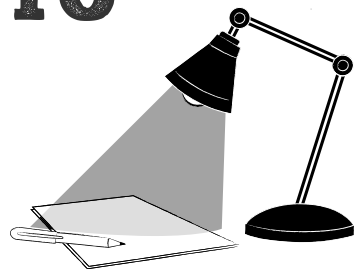
Next week, instead of worrying, I'm going to ...

.....  
.....



# THE MANIFESTO MAKER

In *Dare to Be You* (a mega book apparently, J.K. Rowling can't stop calling me up to tell me she wishes she had written it. Oh wait! I think I dreamt that), I talk about the plan I came up with when I knew that I needed to face down **Kid Doubt** and get good at daring to be **ME**. It was like a manifesto (aka a plan) for being, well, me.



## MANIFESTO: A written statement declaring your **BELIEFS, AIMS** or **GOALS**

At times, when things got confusing and I wasn't sure what to do, I would go back to the plan and it would remind me of the things that were important to **ME**. It's been a huge help and I use it **ALL** the time.

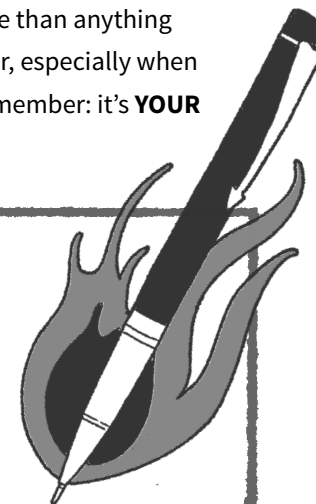
It made me think that **YOU** might find it helpful to have a plan (aka a manifesto) of your own. Let's work on it together through this journal, step by step, until, before you know it, you've got your own tailor-made manifesto at the end of the book.



For the first point in your manifesto, think back over all the activities you've done in this chapter and decide which bit helped you the most. What advice or activity did you relate to more than anything else, something that you'd always like to remember, especially when things are hard? It can be more than one thing. Remember: it's **YOUR** manifesto, so make it flexible to suit you.

## MANIFESTO MAKER

*Things I've learnt to help me  
beat Kid Doubt:*



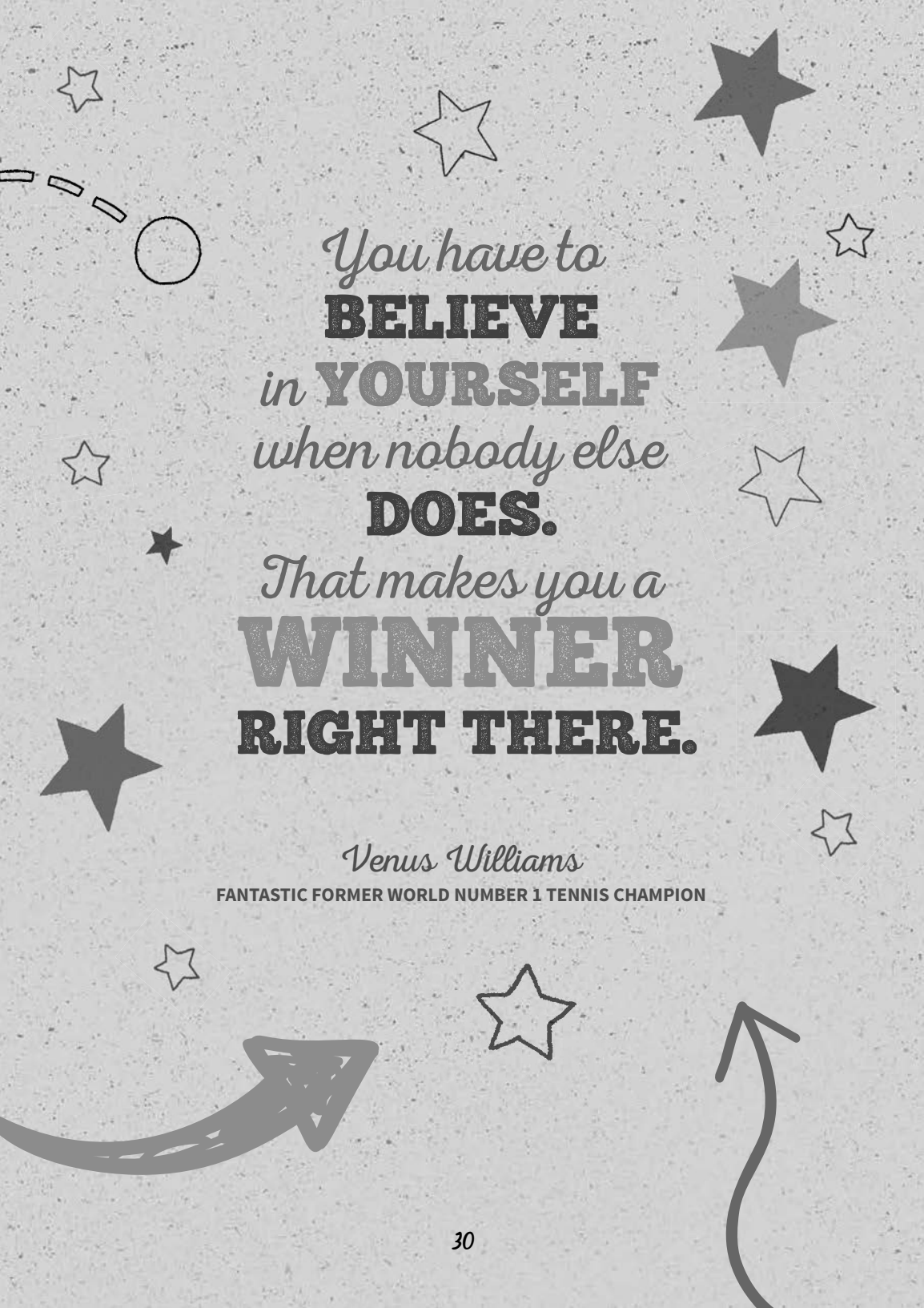
.....

.....

.....

.....

**Amazing! You've just written the first point in your manifesto.**

The background is a light gray with a subtle pattern of stars and arrows. There are several solid black stars of various sizes and several outline stars. Two large, thick, hand-drawn style arrows are also present: one on the left pointing right and one on the right pointing up.

*You have to*  
**BELIEVE**  
*in* **YOURSELF**  
*when nobody else*  
**DOES.**  
*That makes you a*  
**WINNER**  
**RIGHT THERE.**

*Venus Williams*

FANTASTIC FORMER WORLD NUMBER 1 TENNIS CHAMPION