

Out of the corner of the room:  
Developing endless possibilities.

Professor Karen J Pine

Do Something Different is changing people's lives for the better.

It is all based on research from UH

We all like to be prepared but here's a story about when I was caught unprepared  
– for a live radio interview and phone-in.....

[Radio interview story here]

I was forced out of my comfort zone – had to be more flexible and 'wing it'  
- but it turned out for the better.

Sometimes the unplanned things we do, the ones that don't come naturally to us,  
bring the most positive results.....

**DSD helps people bring more of those  
moments into their lives.**



Alexander Fleming accidentally discovered penicillin after returning from holiday to find he'd forgotten to wash out his Petri dish.



Simon Campbell and Dave Roberts were researching a blood pressure drug for Pfizer and found it had unexpected side-effects in men. They had accidentally invented Viagra. Which brings me to my husband....



Ben Fletcher and his PhD student Jill Hanson also had an accidental discovery... which eventually led to the idea of Do Something Different.....they accidentally discovered a link between people's BMI and their behavioural flexibility.

## Behavioural Flexibility:

- a lack of rigidity
- open to the new
- a wide behavioural repertoire
- acting with intention not automatically



## Body Mass Index (BMI)

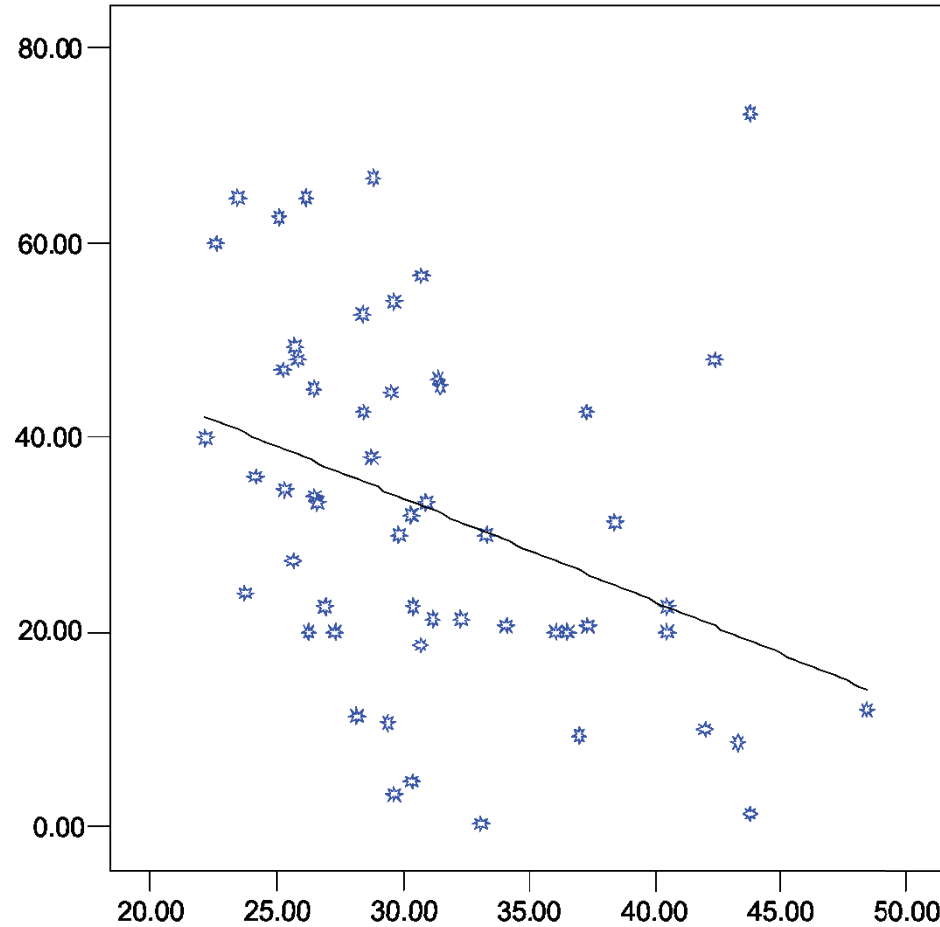
-  $\text{Weight} / \text{height}^2$

# Behavioural flexibility and BMI are *negatively correlated*\*

*\*from data with over 1,000 participants*



Behavioural flexibility scores



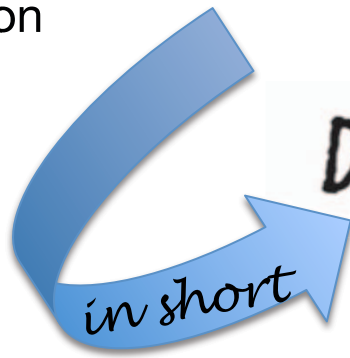
$r = -0.362$   
 $p < 0.01$

BMI



# How to increase a person's behavioural flexibility?

- Expand the repertoire of behaviours
- Disrupt normal routines
- Introduce the 'new'
- Interrupt habit 'chains'
- Switch off autopilot and act with intention



Do something different

- Get up half an hour earlier than normal
- Read a different magazine or newspaper
- Go without the TV for 24 hours
- Eat something you've never tasted before
- Walk a different way back from work/school/a friend's house
- Rearrange some furniture in your home
- Draw a self portrait (in any style you like)
- Mend something that's broken
- Make conversation with the person who works at your local shop

**Behave in the opposite way to your personality**



## **Why will this help?**

Do Something Different - get something different

The findings are surprisingly positive

People look forward to 'doing something different' within the first few days – they break down more and more habits.

Easy because they enjoy the process

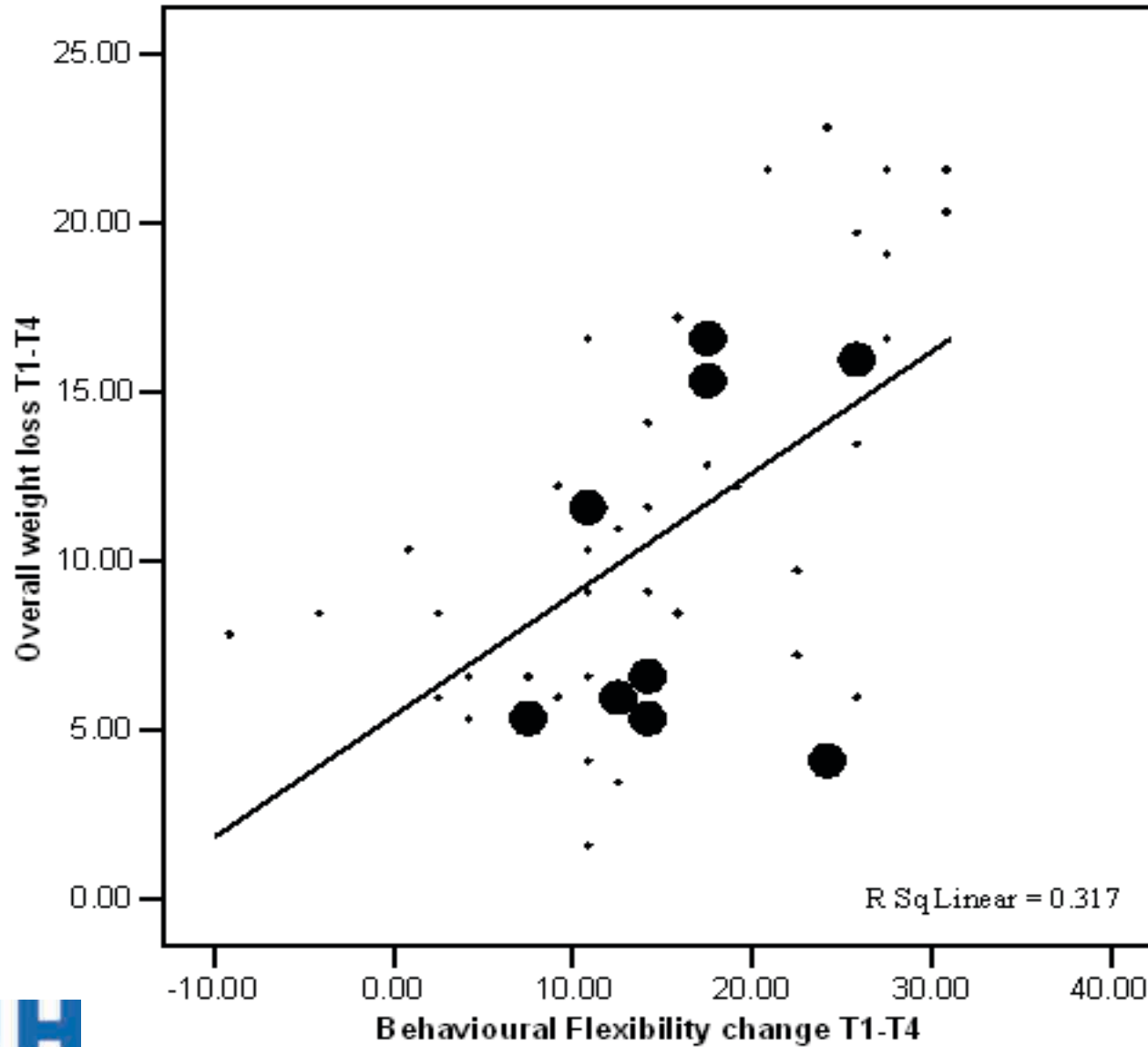
After a few weeks they start to tackle the habits they want to break -but it doesn't feel anything like the issue it would have done when they started.

After a while they begin to do things differently themselves without any prompting.

The mechanism by which it works?

**DSD EXPANDS BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY**

# Change in behavioural flexibility and weight loss



**After 28 days of Doing Something Different every day: all 55 participants lost weight.**

DOSE RELATED – the more people increased their behavioural flexibility the more weight they lost.

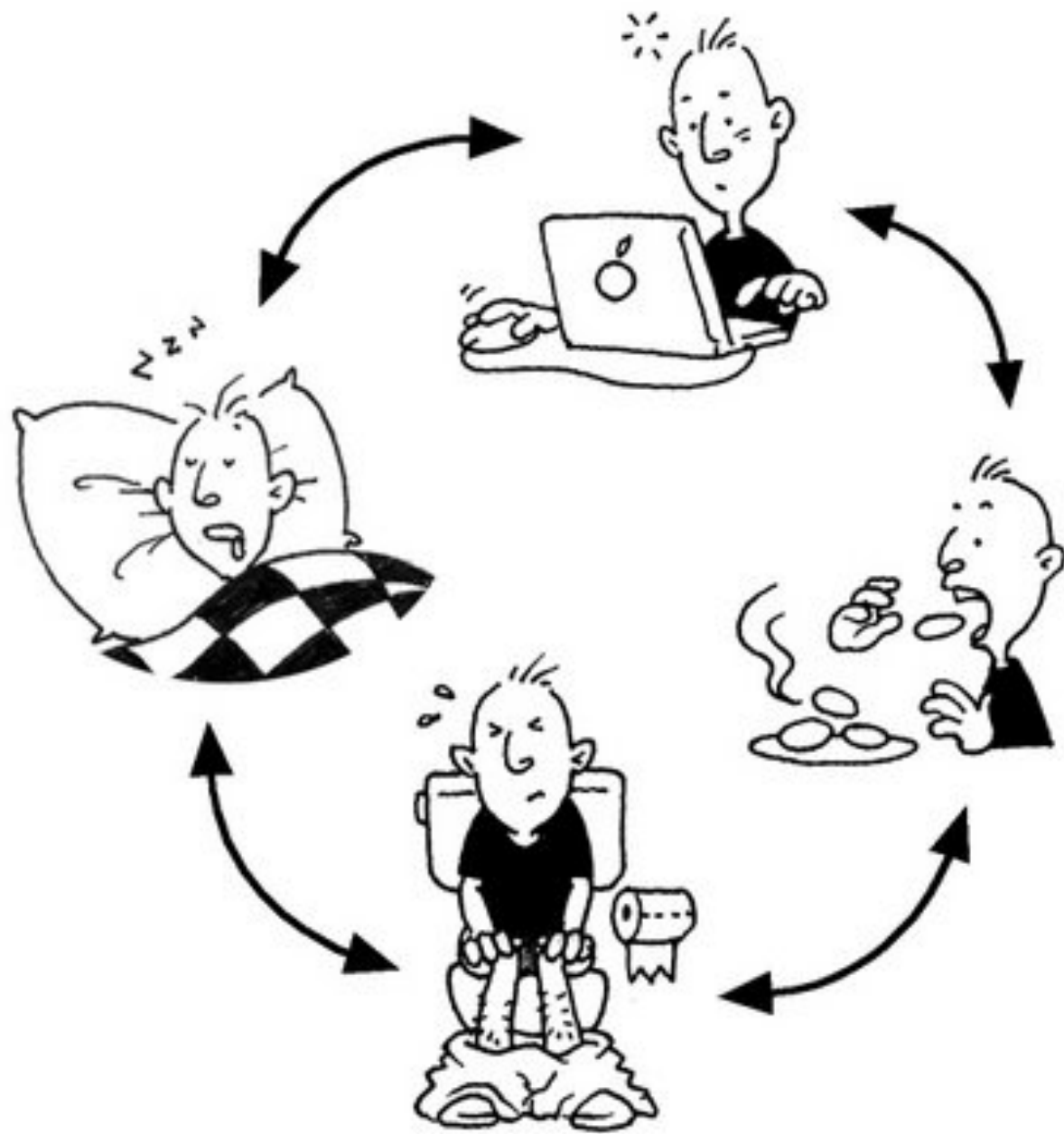
ALSO – another unexpected finding – their anxiety and depression scores went down. DSD made them less anxious and less depressed too- changing habits seemed to be critical to a range of wellbeing factors.

WE WENT ON TO APPLY THIS TO OTHER AREAS  
E.G. smoking, stress, family functioning, relationships.

# WHY BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY IS IMPORTANT

- Having a narrow personality 'imprisons' people
- Adaptive (adapt to changing environment)
- Increases behavioural repertoire (the person has more behaviours with which to face the world and can cope with a broader range of situations/environments/people)





## **HABITS DRIVE MUCH OF OUR DAILY LIFE.**

There is a lack of correspondence between our subjective experience and what neuroscientists knows is actually going on inside our heads.

*We think* we are choosing how to act but we spend a large proportion of our daily lives on auto-pilot.

The human brain relegates a lot of higher-level decision-making to the unconscious. Your brain makes a decision before you do.

*Libet (1985)*



# Tea .....Telly ..... Biscuits

The story of how Amy classically conditioned herself to binge on chocolate hobnobs – and how she broke the biscuit habit by cutting out the tea and the telly for a while, and by doing something different instead!

Many human actions exist within a chain of habits.

One event sets off another.

This is true of eating, smoking, anger, all kinds of behaviours

Governments may 'tell' people to change. There is plenty of health information out there. This is based on the 'Information deficit hypothesis': if you give people information they will act in their own best interests. Most don't.

Because if the chain of habits that supports unwanted behaviour isn't broken, the person fails.

The environment cues bad habits and this keeps them in place.

It's important to Do Something Different to break the chain.

Our programmes do this, for smoking, family functioning, stress, weight and a range of other behaviours.

**THE MYTH OF WILLPOWER**



Willpower didn't help Amy – because every time she sat on the sofa and watched TV with a cup of tea, she fancied a biscuit (who wouldn't!). Yet she felt a failure when she broke yet another diet and was fat & unhappy. When she phoned a friend, did some gardening, sorted out her photos instead of watching TV she found she didn't want a biscuit. And these new behaviours led to new things happening in her life.

Baumeister's research shows that the use of willpower results in ego-depletion, it is a limited resource.

Like a muscle, we can exercise it for a short while but it quickly tires.

Do Something Different makes change easier.

It weakens the chain of habits that support unwanted behaviour.

Without the need for willpower.

Doing something differently enriches lives, shakes up attitudes and shapes desired behaviour in a fun way.

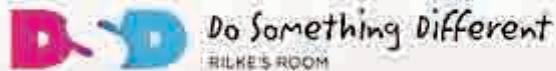
DSD can set off a whole chain of new positive events.

# Tom's story

How doing something different after work helped Tom's stress and – unexpectedly – improved his relationship with his autistic son. That helped Tom and Maureen's marriage and harmony was restored. Just by doing something slightly different.

We call this the Law of Unintended Consequences. People constantly tell us of how small changes produced big differences in their lives that they could never have anticipated.

If you do something different then good things might happen as a consequence. If you do nothing...the present will become permanent.



BEHAVIOUR  
CHANGE

WHAT YOU  
SAY

PRODUCTS &  
SERVICES

OUR PEOPLE



## WHAT YOU SAY

Click on one of our participants to read about their experience with Do Something Different.



### ALAN (41)

Alan, 41, weighed 17.5 stone before starting his six-week course, and he has already lost about 10lb.

"I wanted to do something different with my life and I thought it would be a challenge"

"The course showed me how to retrain my brain so I didn't sit and comfort eat. Instead of going for the biscuits it made me do something else."

"The course has really helped me. I thought I was never going to change, but I have"

"I realised there were other people out there just like me. It made me feel better, and my confidence has grown tremendously. It has been fantastic."

## FULL CASE STUDIES

### AMY

Amy (18) Amy took part in a 'family challenge' programme with Nicki who is Amy's boyfriend's ex-wife. Amy looks after her boyfriend and Nicki's children as if they are her own. At the time, Amy was battling with a low self-esteem which was not help...

[READ MORE](#)

### CASSIE

Cassie (18) During the first two sessions of the 'Get Unstuck From your rut' programme, Cassie wouldn't speak a word. She literally hid behind her mum who had started the programme with her. At college, Cassie was experiencing severe bullying which...

[READ MORE](#)

“For if we think of this existence of the individual as a larger or smaller room, it appears evident that most people learn to know only a corner of their room, a place by the window, a strip of floor on which they walk up and down. Thus they have a certain security.”

*Rainer Maria Rilke*  
1875-1926

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 –1926) was a Bohemian-Austrian poet considered by many to be one of the most significant poets in the German language.

His poem 'The Fear of the Inexplicable' asks why, if your world was one room, would you only inhabit one corner of that room?

In that same vein we ask why would someone only use a fraction of their potential? There is so much for us to explore, so much for us to develop and enjoy, that's the message behind DSD and the work of Rilke has been a huge inspiration to Ben and I.

OUR NEW BOOK IS CALLED

**FLEX: how to use the other 9/10s of your personality**

Getting what you want from life doesn't have to involve willpower, denial or deprivation.

**With Do Something Different change can be FUN too.**

That's what motivates people to keep on making changes.....

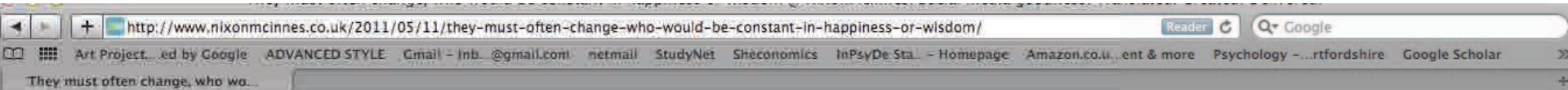
Every programme we run we find a decrease in anxiety and depression.

Piano Stairs

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IXh2n0aPyw>



# Some screen shots from Nixon McInnes, a company who did something different for 6 wks!



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## NixonMcInnes

knowledge

what we do

nice people

great work

blog

# social media goodness

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## They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom

NixonMcInnessers will be Doing Something Different (DSD) every day over the next 6 weeks and we're inviting everyone to take part.

DSD is a behavioural change programme designed by Professors Ben Fletcher and Karen Pine which directly tackles behaviours rather than thinking:

It encourages people to start by doing a small, fun, effortless, different action every day. It cultivates new ways of behaving without the need for willpower. It tackles people's natural resistance to change. It chips

## Recent comments

Ross on [The mobile internet: Not so mobile when we need it most](#)

Edward on [The mobile internet: Not so mobile when we need it most](#)

Tibz on [Google+, the biggest challenge](#)

beth on [Poking insights: watching all that youtube may not be killing us](#)

Tim Aldiss on [Social Media, non-profits and the future](#)

Ed on [Tom Nixon announces exit from NixonMcInnes](#)

Jim Granter on [Critical social theory and the end of work – Ed Granter](#)



Paul got creative for last Friday's 'Creative Tap Day' DSD with this lovely portrait of the NixonMcInnes gang! Can you guess who's who?

🕒 May 31, 2011 6:01 am ✎ Notes 🗨 Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction



### Our Do Something Different for the Weekend is: Cook Something from Scratch Day!

This weekend make yourself something completely from scratch - bread, soup, biscuits, pancakes or humus perhaps?

🕒 May 27, 2011 11:13 am ✎ Notes 🗨 2 Comments And 3 Reactions



### Our Do Something Different for Friday: Creativity Tap Day!

Write a haiku or short poem, start your autobiography, pick up a musical instrument or draw a simple self-portrait. Don't judge, just release the creative energy that's in us all.

🕒 May 26, 2011 12:23 pm ✎ 0 Notes 🗨 5 Comments And 7 Reactions

The staff all had a DSD every day –for example one was to get creative and express themselves in a different medium.

And their weekend DSD was Cook Something From Scratch, to make sure they didn't fall back on take-away habits.....

So they cooked and posted photos of what they'd made – “this DSD task was both fun and delicious’



*ese looked more appetising after they were cooked! Making home-made chili burgers for the weekend's 'Cook: sk was both fun and delicious!*

May 31, 2011 10:39 am

 Notes

 Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction



Our DSD today - get a piece of fruit and savour it. Eat it slowly. Try not to look perky.

🕒 Jun 1, 2011 7:05 am · ✍️ 2 Notes · 💬 1 Comment And 2 Reactions

👤 rossbreadmore said: I ate an apple quite slowly on the walk to work - I really thought about it and although it was quite a shitty apple it took on a life of its own.

👤 rossbreadmore liked this

🏢 nixonmcinnes posted this

👍 Like 🔄

DISQUS

## NixonMcInnes Doing Something Different

The whole office at [NixonMcInnes](#) will be **Doing Something Different** every day for 6 weeks to see how that changes our behaviour and our feelings. More info [here](#).

We started on 11 May and will end on 21 June 2011. You can join in at any point!

So have a go at one and [tell us](#) how you got along.

SEARCH POSTS

Eating a piece of fruit very slowly was a DSD designed to stop people from eating at their desks without even thinking about what they were doing.

Everyday things like eating, even the clothes we wear, can become habitual and done mindlessly.

(Love Ross's comment)



Mmmmm ... Matt shared his Spring Rolls today for our DSD! They were yummy!

 Jun 3, 2011 7:46 am  Notes  Add Your Comment And 1 Reaction



### Our Do Something Different for Friday: Have Some of Mine Day!

Share some food with someone today. Take something to work which you can share with others. Or sit in the park and share with the birds.

 Jun 2, 2011 12:38 pm  Notes  Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction



### Our Do Something Different for Thursday: Sink or Swim

Been putting off making a decision on something? Do it today. Remember it's better to act than do nothing. Don't let worrying about the consequences get in the way.

Tell us how you got along.



We wore something different in the office today (link to Flickr) →



May 18, 2011 9:35 am



Notes



Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction



Here is something that I certainly wouldn't normally wear:



As well as wearing different clothes yesterday, we wore different expressions



May 19, 2011 4:58 am



Notes



Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction



Love today's DSD. Prompted me to phone my mum first thing and ask what my nan's favourite music was. She would have been 93 today, so I'm going to spend the day listening to that.

Max St John on yesterday's 'New Ears' task

May 25, 2011 6:07 am Notes Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction



**Paul:** DSD New Set of Ears Day – Listen to someone else's music – preferably someone from another generation or culture. Borrow a CD from them, swap iPods, listen to their playlist – expose yourself to some completely new sounds.  
22 hours ago · Reply · Like · More

**Rossmaniac:** does anyone have any recommendations? I've never really listened to drum n bass or much reggae.  
expand +  
22 hours ago

**Edward in reply to Rossmaniac:** grab the 4 files from the first post on this thread, imho what jungle/drum and bass is all about <http://dnbforum.com/>...  
22 hours ago from Cabbie  
Liked by Rossmaniac

**Louise Ash:** This is the Elgar concerto I went to see yesterday (but not played by Jaqueline Du Pre because she is a dead cello legend). Elgar is also a dead legend - very English - he wrote Land of Hope and Glory, if you didn't already know, but don't let that put you off. I think this is beautiful... moved me to tears yesterday (blush). I heart cello. expand +  
22 hours ago

**Paul:** Being from a different generation to the rest of you... all on Spotify expand +  
22 hours ago

**Wintrom:** Here's a Carter USM album if anyone would like to borrow @Lou's ears for the day: <http://open.spotify.com/album/59bb1b2WMNCnQSVtyeB4jq>  
22 hours ago  
Liked by Lou

**Cazi:** You could be my set of ears and listen to some MJ! (-) )  
22 hours ago from Desktop

**Lou in reply to Rossmaniac:** My absolute fav best old school D&B tune ever: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esKqM\\_K2UWA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esKqM_K2UWA)  
21 hours ago from Air Desktop

**Edward in reply to Lou:** horrible to think that that is classed as 'old school' now, 1998 was a long time ago is.  
21 hours ago from Cabbie

Comments from the team on yesterday's 'New Ears Task' - a very random collection of music tastes here!

May 25, 2011 6:04 am Notes Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction



I listened to classical music and opera for most of the day. I think it's true what they say - I felt inspired and had a really productive day!

*Caz Yetman on the 'New Set of Ears' task*



May 25, 2011 6:01 am



Notes



Add Your Comment And Add Your Reaction

People tell us they feel changed – as in the quote above.

And when we test them before and after a DSD intervention we find they have – for instance, they have usually increased their behavioural flexibility. And they have nearly always reduced their anxiety and depression.

?

?

Do Something Different increases behavioural flexibility.

Flexible people are healthier and happier.

PLUS the evidence to date suggests these changes aren't just transitory, they last.

Behavioural flexibility can become a way of life, doing something different is positively reinforcing. Life just gets better and better!



# Brain changes?

Draganski et al (2004) found structural grey matter (anatomical) brain changes in volunteers who engaged in a new activity.

Recently Scholtz et al (2009) also showed changes in white matter.

“Experience may shape brain structure....extensive rewiring is possible even in the adult brain.”

*Johansen-Berg (2007) Centre for Functional fMRI, University of Oxford.*

**We are encouraged by research that shows that the adult brain can change, perhaps DSD can people to lay down new brain pathways?....**

We are constantly evaluating and researching DSD. One current project is looking at the effects on older adults with mild cognitive impairment.

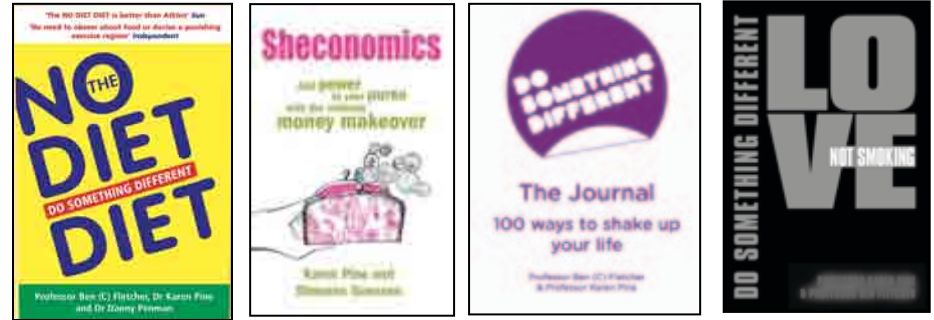
# Companies

Thousands of people are doing in-company DSD programmes



# Self-help books

Our books are currently published in 25 languages world-wide



Do Something Different

# Research

We have a number of on-going research projects and PhDs



# Communities

Our community programmes are now reaching 50,000 people – and growing





Do Something Different