

All week Arts

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JK'S CHAMBER OF SECRETS

Harry Potter's creator faces up to her troubled past in a revealing TV documentary – **PAGE 13**



EPOCH OF INCREDULITY

Jeremy Gordin reflects on the extraordinary year that we're about to put to bed – **PAGE 8**



Fairy Godmother sprinkles happiness

By ROBYN COHEN

Donna McCallum, MD of Fairy Godmother Inc, is on a mission to inspire people to make their dreams come true, "providing support for them to do that in a fun, magical way".

She works with individuals as well as companies, but the bulk of her work is through workshops. McCallum and her team also facilitate Fairy Godmother Antics – events which are staged in streets and public spaces.

Earlier this year, "free hugs" were dispensed in St George's Mall. With fairy wings taped to her back, McCallum hugged pedestrians in the mall – and they hugged back, as evidenced in video clips showing a bunch of very happy people.

Other Fairy Godmother Antics have included mass jumping sessions on huge jumping castles (for adults). The next FG Antic will be in the middle of next month.

McCallum believes everyone has the means to make dreams come true. She says we need to conquer "seven primary types of irrational fear" that are barriers to success.

She maintains there is only one rational fear: "If someone has a gun at your head and you think you are about to die, that is rational fear." What about if you are told that you have three months to live? "No – that doesn't qualify." Or what if someone is dangling off the edge of a cliff and about to fall?



HUGGER: Donna McCallum helps people realise dreams

"In – unless, they are hanging onto the mountain as part of a sport activity with gear strapped to them," she says. The short answer is we fear fear itself and if we can tackle that we have a good shot at finding success.

McCallum is anything but an airhead. She talks about business acumen and personal development in one breath. By the end of the interview, I am signing up for her next workshop. I want a piece of the FG magic, or at least to find out how she manages to discipline herself to a limited quota of e-mail downloads a day.

E-mail her and one receives an automated computer reply: "I am committed to creating huge amounts of magic in the world and being more effective, and thus I only check my e-mails once a day at 3pm."

Respondents are provided with the number of her assistant in case it is urgent and McCallum's cell number if the matter cannot wait. We can all learn from that. How many of us cannot resist the ping of incoming mail? It distracts us from the task at hand, which may slow our path to success.

Success is a relative concept. McCallum admits she has learnt more from her failed ventures than from her successes. "I am a definitely an opportunist. I have been lucky but I take the leap of faith."

At 32, this "serial entrepreneur", as she calls herself, has done well and managed to have fun, too.

Fairy Godmother Inc is her fifth venture. Her first foray into business was as a second-year business science student at the University of Cape Town.

She was one of the founders of a media company that targeted the student and youth market. The magazine SL (Student Life) was one of its products. After three years, when the company was sold, McCallum took her share and went on a trip around the world.

She returned to SA, then packed up and headed for Silicon Valley in San Francisco, becoming involved in a start-up. That went bust in the dot.com crash, so McCallum started another business in SA, called Marmalade Software. "It was a disaster," she chuckles.

At her workshops, she asks people to imagine the worst thing that can happen in a project or business. Often the reality is not that bad. The flip side: what is the best thing that can happen? Put structures in place and risk need not be a scary place.

After Marmalade Software, McCallum went back to what she knew best – marketing and media. She started a company specialising in customer relationship management.

"It was taking what I learnt from San Francisco and applying it to everything I'd done in media."

That was a success, and gave her the money to travel. On a 16-hour night bus journey between Cordoba and Mendoza in Argentina she had an epiphany – she wanted to help others change their lives. Fairy Godmother Inc was born two years ago.

She concedes that most 29-year-olds can't chuck in their jobs and travel the world. "But everyone is looking for happiness and fulfilment." Nuggets of happiness may be found in the bleakest scenarios, she says.

There is no quick fix in her workshops: "No smoke, no mirrors – we do exercises and techniques, like making a collage picture of what you want to achieve."

"It is sound practical advice that will set you on the path to a dream life."

"It is a question of how you sprinkle happiness and fulfilment on your life – how you find joy wherever you can."

Many of us forget our dreams, she says. We are so busy paying the bond and school fees that we forget about the things we wanted to do. By creating an image of our needs and wants we can get everything on one page – and get a snapshot of life.

She acknowledges that self-actualisation workshops are nothing new. But the thrust of many courses is on the analytical and logical, she says, while her approach is a more holistic one, which incorporates creativity and fun. She believes that creativity is the greatest catalyst of all and key to everything.

For more information about McCallum's workshops – the next is on January 12 – see www.fairygodmotherinc.com or phone 084 207 0202.