

Shrink rap

Inside the head of
RICHARD BRANSON

Sir Richard Branson first tried his hand at business in 1966, aged 16, starting a student magazine. His chain of record stores, Virgin Records, opened in 1970 and the name was then used for all his future ventures, from Virgin Records to Virgin Atlantic. He has been married to Joan since 1989.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Don't let the world judge you because of your struggles with dyslexia. And remember, if you judge yourself by your ability to fit in, you will never stand out.

Who would play you in the film of your life?

I love Eddie Redmayne's work. We've enjoyed a few games of tennis, so he would know how to play me on the court.

What's the worst pain you've known?

Being hurled over the handlebars while cycling in the dark downhill on Virgin Gorda last year. My shoulder, knee and cheek took the brunt of the impact, and the helmet saved me. The bike disappeared off the cliff and was completely destroyed. I couldn't believe I was alive, let alone not paralysed. I was very lucky.

What's the best cure for a broken heart?

Friendship. Surround yourself with people who care about you and can take your mind off things. I know from personal experience – my heart was broken when my first great love ran off with another man, but then I met my wife Joan.

What has been your most embarrassing moment?

When I jumped off the top floor of the Palms Casino hotel in Las Vegas in 2007 as a promotional stunt. It was very windy and I was blown into the side of the building. I was like a rag doll hanging there in front of guests. I couldn't sit down for a month.

Have you ever had a nickname?

My school friends from the age of seven to about ten called me 'Letsgo' because I was always saying 'let's go' to get everyone on to the next thing. This has morphed into Doctor Yes at Virgin.

What is the worst job you've done?

Trying to breed budgies as a business aged 11 during the summer holidays. They multiplied



'I make a lot of mistakes and they are often followed by a four-letter word'

LAST FILM YOU SAW?

Sharkwater. It's one of my favourite documentaries because it has kick-started efforts to protect sharks worldwide.

LAST BOOK YOU READ?

The Book Of Joy by Archbishop Tutu and the Dalai Lama – two beautiful human beings sharing their wisdom.

LAST TV SHOW YOU WATCHED?

House Of Cards, while training in the gym. Kevin Spacey is such a powerful actor but Robin Wright more than holds her own against him.

faster than I could sell them and my mother had to let them fly away.

What is your most unappealing habit?

Swearing. I make a lot of mistakes and they're often followed by a swift four-letter word.

What do you believe in?

Keeping healthy. I like to start my day with some exercise – be it a run, cycle, game of tennis or a kite-surf.

What is your biggest regret?

I want to get to the end of my life proud of what I have achieved, not regretting the things that didn't go to plan.

What one skill should every man possess?

The ability to listen – because it makes you

smarter. Nobody ever learned anything from listening to themselves.

Which law would you change?

I'd end the war on drugs. Decriminalising drugs would take power away from the underworld and mean that drug addiction could be treated as a health issue.

When was the last time you cried?

In January, when my fourth grandchild, Bluey Rafe Richard Branson, was born to my son Sam and his wife Bellie. I cried tears of joy.

What is your guilty pleasure?

Chocolate Digestives.

If you could go back in time, where would you go?

I'd go sailing with Sir Francis Drake. I'm sure it would be one hell of an adventure.

How would you like to die?

I'd like to go out on the trip of a lifetime. Obviously, I'd love to be surrounded by my loved ones while I'm doing it.

Interview by Rob McGibbon

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