

MP3 01

1

I've never been so surprised in my life! My sister took me out shopping for things for the baby's nursery, and when we got back to her house, the place was packed with our friends and relatives. They'd put up decorations, and there were masses of gifts. I have to say, with me not working during my pregnancy, all the baby clothes, nappies and gift cards are going to come in very useful. I'm embarrassed to say that I burst into tears a couple of times during the party, but it's just because I was so surprised and so happy!

2

I really thought that hiring a professional to plan the whole event was a great idea, but I have to admit I was totally mistaken. You see, we decided to hire a friend of a friend, who was just starting out, and, well ... Let's just say that it wasn't perfect. We didn't get the venue we wanted because she'd waited too long to make the booking, the food at the reception was awful, the cars we'd hired never turned up ... and on and on. Still, we did manage to get married, and we had a fairly enjoyable time, even though there were so many problems.

3

I've never felt so proud in my entire life, I have to say! I'm the first in our family to get a degree, so that made it feel pretty unique. And then, during the ceremony, I was thinking back and realised how hard I'd worked, not just at my studies but also in my part-time job – and that made my achievement even more meaningful. Of course having my family there made it really special, and so did sharing the ceremony with all the friends I'd made during my three years there. The party afterwards was outstanding as well. All in all, it was an amazing day!

4

I'll admit I never dreamed we'd make it this far. I mean to say, fifty years of marriage is definitely something to celebrate, and ours has been a very happy one for the most part. Our grandkids organised the celebration, and it was truly an evening to remember. Everything was designed to look like the year we got married – even the music took us right back to our first days together! It made us very nostalgic – but in a good way. I had heard that our eldest grandson and his family weren't going to make it since they live in Australia, so you can imagine how surprised and thrilled I was when they walked into the room just after the celebration started. Yes, it was a wonderful evening ... really unforgettable!

MP3 02

1

My schoolmates and I decided to organise a theme day to make the school more fun by having students dress up in strange or funny costumes. I volunteered to set this event up on Facebook, and I thought it would be the easiest thing in the world. I couldn't have been more wrong! After three frustrating hours, my brother finally took pity on me and gave me a hand. I couldn't believe it took him only five minutes! Anyway, we've done two theme days so far. Other schools saw the pictures we posted, and now they want to organise similar events!

2

Tango has been my boyfriend's passion for years, and he's taught me to love it. One day, our group from the dance studio came up with the idea for an event called 'Dancing under the Stars'. We wanted anyone who loves tango to meet in one of the parks in our city and dance with us. We advertised it on social media, but couldn't help worrying that people wouldn't notice it or they'd think it's a strange idea. To my surprise, about a hundred people showed up, and it was a huge success. Now we want to do it every year.

3

Last week, one of my friends who shares my passion for reading and languages sent me a Facebook invitation to an international book swap. The idea was for people to exchange their old English or French books. My shelves are full of them, so I agreed to go. Unfortunately, my friend came down with the flu. I felt rather uneasy about going by myself to an event where I wouldn't know anyone. But once I got there, a French girl asked me for help. We started talking, and I soon relaxed. I went home with a bag full of new books and I'm hoping that they'll organize it again soon. I follow them on the social media now.

4

Have you ever heard of flash mobs? It's when a group of people suddenly gather in a public place at a set time, do some unusual activity, and then disappear as fast as they appeared. They might dance, hop down the street on one leg, or sing a popular song. My best friend loves organising such events and has asked me again and again to take part in one, saying they're tons of fun. However, to be honest, I can't see the fun in it. What's the point of doing strange things with complete strangers for five minutes?

MP3 03

Hi, everyone. This is Devin Lawson, and you're listening to my weekly podcast, 'What Devin Thinks.' I've been thinking about sports and competition lately, and about how important winning and losing are to the majority of people who take part in or follow sports. I'm not a particularly athletic sort of person or much of a sports fan, I admit – but I really enjoy certain physical activities like climbing and skateboarding, and I've even started learning how to do parkour. Now if you think about it, none of these are really competitive sports in the true sense of the word, but instead they focus on individual achievement. There are normally no teams or scorekeepers, and nobody wins or loses. Instead, these are activities where the only competition is against yourself, and the only way you win is if you manage to do something you couldn't do before. I know that a lot of professional athletes claim that the only competitor they really think about is themselves and that the fight is always to get better than they were before. Well, maybe they are being sincere, but it must be difficult to maintain that attitude when the public is judging them by their wins and losses. The truth is, I'm not sure if that kind of competitiveness is a good thing or not. I just want to say that I don't think that we should only judge success and failure by how high someone's exam marks are or how many times their team wins a football match or a basketball game. Instead, I believe that we should learn to appreciate the attempt to always improve at whatever our chosen pursuit is. I believe that success should only be measured by how much we want to get better, and that we should see failure as one step towards success. Thanks for listening, as let me know what you think.