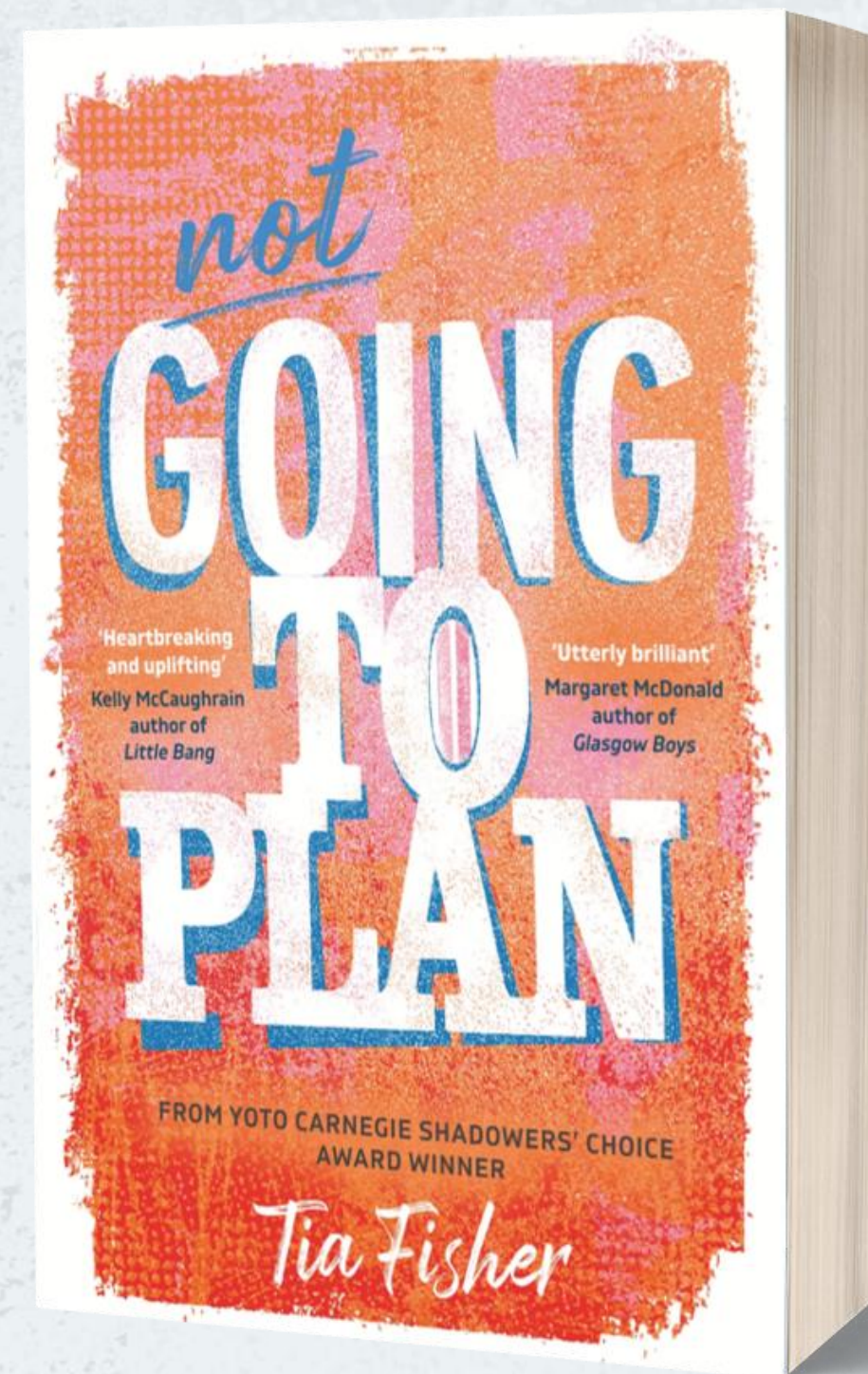


TEACHING RESOURCES - KS 4, 5

Themed resources
for PSHE, RSHE,
English and drama lessons



by Tia Fisher



Guidance

These resources are suggestions: please feel free to adapt them to suit your students. You could use the discussion questions in several ways: for example, you might like to

- Talk in small groups, with one person writing.
- Role play answering them in pairs, with one of you asking a question and the other answering as an expert reader
- Keep a personal reading journal to record some of your responses

The page numbers are based on the Hot Key Books paperback edition of the book, first published in the UK in 2025.

Please be aware that the book and these resources contain themes which some students may find triggering: abortion, coercive control, consent, bullying, homophobia.

Before reading

Before reading, look at the front and back covers.

Front cover:

- What do you think the author might have meant by the title, 'Not Going to Plan' ?
- Can you predict anything about the book from the design the publisher has used?
Think about shapes and colours.

Back cover:

- Read the back blurb. What catches your attention and makes you want to read the book?
- What genre would you say this?
- There is a content warning. How does that make you feel about reading this book?
What do you think about trigger warnings in general?

Verse #1

Have you read any other 'verse novels' (stories written in narrative verse)? Are there other verse novels in your school library? What are the differences between verse novels and prose novels? What are the difference between verse novels and poetry? Do you prefer one over the other – and if so, why?

Fans of verse novels say they engage readers more quickly and allow readers to use their imaginations. Would you agree? Are there other advantages of using more concise language and lots of white space?

Would you recommend a verse novel to a friend? Why or why not?

Shaped poems

This kind of shaped poem is also called a 'concrete' poem. (See more on the next slide). How does the shape of the poem influence how you read it?

Activity: Choose a piece of your own writing and rewrite it as a single concrete poem. It could be a scene from a story or poem you've already written or write something new. Think about the *essence* of what you want to say. There are lots of ways you can do this – have a look at the examples from the book on the next slide, or these examples here: <https://becomeawritertoday.com/concrete-poem-examples>

p213

So why on earth
wouldn't I want
to lug a baby
around for months,
get stretch-marked
and sick, with
everyone asking
me all the time
who the father is -
and no, Rakel,
it's none of your
business - and
I'd almost certainly
lose my place
at college, wouldn't
go to art school
and I'd be
branded a slut
forever; I'd lose
any trust that I have
restored with my mum
(who, by the way,
was faced with
the same dilemma and
chose to keep me even
though I messed up
her life) - and, oh my God,
what if my mother wanted
to adopt my baby, could you
imagine it, a brother or sister
who is actually my own child,
that is horrific, and what if I loved it
and couldn't give it up, and what if I didn't love it
and then I was just a monster? So yes, I've considered
adoption and you can take your advice and shove it right up -

Formatting # 1

Not Going to Plan uses fonts, shapes, layout and colour to add to the meaning of the verse. For examples, see pages 48, 50, 51, 64 and 72.

The cupboard door swings slowly open.

Marnie?

A boy on a scooter

trying to avoid

a boy on a bicycle

giving a lift to a

girl glued to her phone

Formatting #1

Do you think the formatting adds to the enjoyment of the book? Why do you think this?

Can you identify more examples of the way the author has shaped the text? In your opinion are some more effective than others? Why do think so?

See the poem opposite (from page 184). Why do you think the author left so much white space?

MARNIE

But Zed would say, it won't go away
just because you're
pretending it's not there.

Just do it, Marnie!
says Zed's voice in my head.
Just open your eyes
&
look.



Formatting #2

Activity 1: Choose an unformatted stanza from the book and design some formatting for it, digitally or by hand.

Activity 2: Write your own short poem about what ‘freedom’ means to you. Use formatting and layout to add extra meaning to your words.

Tips:

Think about the impact you want to have on the reader.

Use as few words as possible.

The white space is also a communication tool.

Illustrations

What do we learn on page 375 about the chapter number illustrations in *Not Going to Plan*? How does that change your perception of them?

Not Going to Plan is one of several recently-published verse novels for older teenage readers with illustrations. Have you read any others?

What do you think illustrations add to a text? How is the experience of reading a graphic novel different from an illustrated novel or a novel with no pictures at all?



Poverty

The two-days-before-payday
free food-bank fare?

Fine.

Cake is cake.

p.45

Although Marnie's mother has a job, she still needs to use a food bank. What kind of financial pressures might she have?

Find other examples of evidence in the text which indicate that Marnie and her mother are living in poverty.

Do you think this had any impact on Marnie's decision to have an abortion? Why do you think this?

Exam pressure # 1

ZED

Lately, Ms Rahman's been giving us
the same pep talk on revision
every morning,
on *repeat, repeat, repeat,*
repeat, repeat, repeat,
repeat, repeat, repeat . . . |

Reading from the wellness script,
she parrots empty words
about not getting stressed,
about keeping it in perspective,
about taking lots of breaks –

but behind the words lies
her utter panic
at our likelihood of success.

Read to the end of p47.

On p22, Ms Rahman talks to her class about exam stress. What does exam stress feel like? Have you ever experienced symptoms of exam stress?

[Watch the video](#) (BBC Bitesize, 02:06mins).

Which of the the revision tips in the video have you tried? Which are helpful? What is 'mindfulness'?

Exam pressure #2

How do we learn that Marnie and Zed's mothers have high expectations of their children's school performance?

What evidence is there that Downham High and its teachers are also under pressure to get good GCSE results?

Do you think children are put under too much pressure to do well in exams these days? Do you think it was different for previous generations?

Do you think it's fair that schools are judged on their pupils' performances? What effect could this have on pupils and teachers?

Exam pressure #3

Activity 1: Create drawings or posters or mottos or poems with your ideas for strategies to cope with exam pressure. Perhaps you could display these on a wall, to help others?

Activity 2: Marnie interviews her friends and makes a video of their responses to her questions. In groups or as a class, make a 'vox pop' video, asking students what they think about exam pressure and how they cope, revision techniques etc. Perhaps this could be shown in assembly and be a future school resource?

Exam pressure #4

Focus on pages 150 to 158.

Discuss what career / exam options are available after Year 11. What does 'vocational' mean? Can you give examples of vocational careers? Are vocational jobs regarded and rewarded as highly as non-vocational roles? Do you think Marnie's mum is right to insist that Marnie gets good GCSEs in the core subjects?

Focus on pages 236 to 240.

Zed under-performs in the physics exam because of his emotional state. Is it fair to judge ability on one exam? Are there any positive effects of exam pressure?

Masculinity #1

To which of these characters in *Not Going to Plan* would you apply any of the so-called masculine attributes of 'brave', 'confident', 'strong' and 'protective'? Can you find quotes to support this?

Marnie	Zed
Rakel	Luca
Harry	Jessica
Marnie's Mum	Zed's Mother
Naomi	Mr Challoner

Masculinity # 2

Success is everything

Chads

Get rich quick

'Alpha' males

Incels

Toxic masculinity

Manosphere

'Beta' males

Misogyny

Homophobia

Bullying

Look at the terms above, often used in relation to contemporary masculinity. Do you know what they all refer to? Why do you think it might be difficult to be a man these days?

Now make a list of the *positive* qualities in a man you admire (anyone who identifies as a man). This could be a famous person or someone you know. For example, could they be described as *kind? Strong? Dependable? Empathetic?*

Masculinity # 3

Look at the shape poems in Not Going to Plan as examples of what you can build with words.

Use some of the positive and negative terms used previously to write a shape poem with the title: 'A leader of men'. It can be ironic, literal, humorous, serious, a list, rhymed / unrhymed – whatever you like!

Masculinity # 4

In 1957 American poet Charles Bukowski wrote a tongue-in-cheek list poem called 'Friendly advice to a lot of young men'.

Individually, or in groups which identify as the same gender, compose a list poem of your own, with advice to others about misconceptions about your gender. Give it the title: 'All the things you never asked'. It can be as satirical or serious as you choose!

Consent # 1

What is meant by 'continuous consent'?

Looking back over the events at the party which led to this moment, do you think that Marnie really gave Harry her consent to sex? Why / why not?

What could Marnie or Harry have said or done differently to make sure having sex right now was what they both wanted?

Actually I'm feeling a bit sick.

I try breathing slowly

in

out

but there isn't enough air.

I love this track, Harry says, coming back.

Do you like it?

Uh-huh, I mumble,

though actually, not much.

He stops my mouth with kisses.

I am being slow-danced backwards

towards a bed humped high

with tangled tops.

Harry does a *Strictly* swoop and

scoops out an arm.

The clothes cascade to the carpet.

In a badly balanced back-bend dip,

I tip and trip and hit the mattress.

He throws himself on top

and somehow we are both

lying on his bed.

I close my eyes and wish

the walls would stop

waltzing.

Consent #2

I've changed my mind.
I've made a mistake.
I need him to stop.

But the rhythm of
his breath is hot against my ear and
how can I say I've changed my mind
now?

But I have to, I have to, I have to -

STOP!

P120 How do you think
Harry felt when Marnie
shouted *STOP!* ?

What if Harry hadn't
stopped when Marnie
asked him to? What
should Marnie have
done? What could be the
consequences of this?

Why do you think Harry
on p134?

MARNIE

Spanish is tough.

Like the flirting and the friendship
never happened,
Harry Borman's blanking me,
acting as if I'm invisible.

He doesn't say a word till home time,
when he leans across
the desk and whispers,
SLUT!
so quietly
only I can hear.

Consent # 3

I fumble awkwardly for my purse, and hold it out to Harry. There's a condom in the pocket.

He laughs. Gets up and switches off the light.

Did you find it? I ask.

Don't worry, babe, says his voice in the sudden dark, I got this covered.

..... I lie back and let Harry take control.

On p118, Marnie gives Harry a condom before they start to have sex and she believes he uses it.

Later she finds the unused condom and discovers she is pregnant.

Do you think Harry intentionally tricks her into thinking he was wearing a condom?

What could be the other short and long-term consequences of 'stealthing' (non-consensual condom removal during sexual intercourse) ?

Consent # 4

Mum's face darkens.
*I hear that story a lot, she says,
about boys refusing to wear condoms.*
She takes my cup
and carefully puts it
on the table.

*But if you **thought** he was using one –
if that's the sex you
consented to –
Marnie,
did you know that's a crime?
It's called stealthing,
and it's actually,
technically,
rape.*

RAPE?
I nearly choke.

On pages 297/8 Marnie learns that 'stealthing' is considered a form of rape in law. Why do you think this is such a serious crime? What impact does it have on Marnie?

How would you rank these situations in terms of seriousness?

1. *A 37-year-old woman desperate for a baby puts a hole in the condom without her long-term partner's consent.*
2. *A man takes the condom off during casual sex with another man and passes on an infection.*
3. *A women discovers she was 'stealthed' on a casual encounter and struggles with her mental health as a consequence.*

Coercion and misogyny #1

Above him,
a familiar
cigar-smoking,
muscle-bound,
woman-hating,
millionaire hustler
stares straight-mouthed
from a poster on the wall.

I look into the eyes
of this false god,
this horrifying hero
of a thousand stupid
boy-dreams,
and suddenly I'm sober
& everything is wrong.

On p120, a glimpse of a poster on Harry's wall gives Marnie an insight into Harry's beliefs about man and women. It's a real turn-off for her.

Who do you think the man on the poster is meant to be? What do you know about him? What effect does seeing this poster have on Marnie?

How do you think what Harry has been reading and watching online has influenced his behaviour?

How much do you think Harry is also a victim? Why do you think this?

To what extent does being 'brainwashed' by propaganda should make people less guilty of offences or wrong-thinking?

Coercion and misogyny #2

Yeah, Harry hates using condoms.

By eleven o'clock
Jessica's sitting at my kitchen table
in front of a pack of custard creams.

*He made me go on the pill,
even though it makes me fat.*

He said I had to diet.
She stirs three sugars into her tea.

*He said it was my fault
he fooled around with other girls.*

*He said I was too clingy:
he felt trapped.*
He said I was lucky to have him at all.

She looks up and catches my expression.

*But he always came back, you know?
He'd bring me presents and everything,
to say he was sorry.*

On p351-353 Jessica confesses to Marnie that her relationship with Harry had a very unequal power dynamic.

Can you think of other 'red flags' for coercive control in a relationship? What advice would you give to a friend in Jessica's position?

*“love
shouldn't
make you
feel like crap”*

I offer her
a brand-new
arsenal of words
to use as weapons:
*disrespected, gaslit, coerced, pressured,
blackmailed, belittled, forced -
and best of all,
empowered.*

Coercion and misogyny #3

Jessica finishes with a blow below the belt:
*D'you know what else? You're a crap shag.
I faked it. Every. Single. Time!*
The circling crowd whoops & yells.

p333

MARNIE

Harry Borman stamps by,
mate-less and castrated.
He glares at me.
I smile sweetly.

ZED

Harry Borman plans to

pursue his petrol-head dreams
at the tech in the next town.
I doubt our paths will cross again.
No one wants him here.

p368

How do you think Harry is feeling by the end of the book ?

What do you think being in the new school is going to be like for Harry?

Do you think he can change?

What would need to happen to make him change?

Abortion #1

I learn that

abortion is so divisive,
so wrapped up in faith & morality,
it splits countries down the middle.

In America, state after state
is turning off the lights
on women's rights.

There are protests & counterprotests
all over the world.

Even in this country, abortion
is tantamount to **taboo**.
No one likes to talk about it.

Everybody shouts
about having sex all the time,
but abortion, it would appear,
is secret & shameful.

No wonder Marnie wants
to keep this quiet.

Zed discovers three things in his online research into abortion (page 216):

- People disagree passionately about whether it should be allowed
- In the USA, women are losing access to abortions
- Women who have abortions are made to feel ashamed.

Your task: Invent a character who has been affected by one of more of these topics. Write a short story or a character description (500 > 1000 words). Make tyour character as real as you can, not a steroptype. What happened to them? What opinions do they hold? What do they want to happen? What are they afraid of? etc.

Abortion #2

On p289, Zed cites some of the different beliefs about when a foetus becomes a person.

My research revealed
a staggering breadth of opinion
about when a foetus
becomes a person.

Not all secular sources agree,
& interestingly, neither do religions –
not even among themselves. p289

Do you think this judgement which should be a matter for the individual, or for groups, such as religions or nations, or should we try to reach a consensus across the world?

Do you know the time limits on abortion in the UK? Do you agree with them? If not, what would you find acceptable?

What is meant by the 'decriminalisation of abortion'? Why do some organisations – for example, Marie Stopes International – think that abortion should no longer be written into criminal law?

Identity #1

In different ways, both Rakel and Zed feel there is too much pressure on them to 'grow up'.

Task:

- Can you find places in the text where they express this?
- How does the way they feel contrast with Marnie, Jessica and Luca?
- Talk in small groups.
 - What kind of pressure is put on young people to 'grow up' these days? How do you feel about this?
 - Do you think we are too keen to 'label' each other?

Protest #1

ZED

Marnie's afraid of facing protesters.

MARNIE

There's a protection zone,
like a circle they can't go inside -
but my mum told me
the picketers camp
around the edge.

Without a car, you'd have to
tunnel your way in
to avoid them.

I've seen it on TV,
the angry crowds yelling, the tears,
the upsetting images waved
in women's faces.

ZED

She doesn't need
that hating,
not when
she hates herself
so much
already.

MARNIE

I don't need
that hating,
not when
I hate myself
so much
already.

In 2024, the UK government enforced an 'exclusion zone' within 150m of an abortion clinic. Within that zone, it is illegal for anyone to do anything that intentionally or recklessly influences someone's decision to use abortion services, obstructs them, or causes harassment or distress to someone using or working at these premises.

A man has been found guilty of breaching this law because he prayed silently outside an abortion clinic and refused to move. He said he was praying for his unborn son, who was aborted there 20 years ago.

Do you think people have a right to express their views in peaceful protest, even if others are upset? How important is free speech? In pairs, take the part of the prosecution and the defence in the trial of the praying man, and prepare a short speech for the jury.

Protest # 2



On page 141, Naomi is printing a protest placard. Research examples of protest slogans and images which you feel are effective. What makes them impactful or persuasive?

Choose a protest topic you are passionate about, and decide what aspect is most important to you; the way in which you want to influence people, change minds.

Design the protest sign you would carry at a demonstration for this cause.

Protest # 3



On pages 310 - 314, Marnie films her friends talking about what they want to have freedom from and uses it for her art project.

As a group, make a 'vox pop' film encouraging other students (who have photo permission) to talk about an awareness topic of your choice – perhaps Anti-Bullying week, or Refugee Week.

Perhaps this film could be uploaded to your school's social media / website / or played in assembly?

Drama # 1

Hot seating

Hot-seating is a great technique to encourage empathy and create a deeper engagement with the characters. Students can work in small or larger groups and may also be hot-seated in pairs. [Instructions on hot-seating.](#)

In the hotseat:

Marnie

Harry

Zed

Questioners:

Harry, Mum, Rakel

Marnie, Jessica, Zed

Luca, Harry, Marnie

Extension follow-up writing activity: Imagine you are Marnie. After the events of the book are over, you want to write to Harry and explain the effect his behaviour had on you and Jessica. You want to convince him to change. What would you say?

Drama # 2

Decision Alley

Decision (or Conscience) Alley is a great tool for getting students to think about the issues involved in a situation, to develop empathy, consider multiple viewpoints, use persuasive language and reflect on character motivations. Here is a useful resource on working with the decision alley technique.

One student is chosen to be the decision-maker and the rest of the students form two groups representing the opposing sides of an argument. The teams work together to create persuasive arguments, which they call out as the decision-maker walks between the opposing sides. After the walk, the 'character' must make their choice.

Drama # 2 cont'd

Decision Alley

These are some possible decision-making moments in Not Going to Plan:

- Zed – should he go to Harry's party?
- Marnie – should she tell her mother that she's pregnant?
- Zed – should he tell everyone he's not the father?
- Marnie – should she have the baby adopted instead of having an abortion?
- Marnie – should she reveal the stealing and her abortion?
- Jessica – should she tell everyone how Harry treats her?
- Marnie – should she do A levels or specialise by doing an art diploma?

Drama # 3

What if . . .

Another male at school had approached Harry and challenged his views? Do you think it would have changed anything?

Who do you think could have done this? Consider different people (e.g. a family member, a teacher, Zed, Luca, Omar?)

Choose a character (or invent one) and in pairs, act out the scene.

After reading discussion #1

1. One of the themes of *Not Going to Plan* is making mistakes. How do Marnie and Zed's approaches to making mistakes differ, and do they change over the course of the book?
2. Marnie and Harry are over the legal age of consent in this country (sixteen years old). Why do you think we have an age of consent? How does it help young people, and is it set at the right age?
3. On p305, Marnie says, 'We're damned if we do/damned if we don't.' Do you agree with Marnie and Rakel that there is a stigma attached to both girls who want to have sex *and* to girls who don't?
4. On p288 and 289, Zed lists some of the differing opinions about when life begins. Why do you think there is such a wide range of opinions about abortion? How well do you think those views are represented in *Not Going to Plan*?

After reading discussion #2

5. To what degree do you think Marnie and Harry were each responsible for Marnie's unplanned pregnancy? Is there anyone else you think also bears responsibility?
6. Had you heard of 'stealthing' before reading the book? Why do you think the law was changed so that lying about using a condom is classed as rape?
7. What do you think of Marnie's decision not to tell Harry about her pregnancy?
8. Why do you think the author created such different single-parent backgrounds for Marnie and Zed? What effect do you think this might have on their outlooks?
9. Do you have sympathy for the character of Jessica Bates? Why/ why not?

After reading discussion #3

10. On p312, Luca expresses regret that he didn't do more to protect others against the homophobia in his school. Do you think we all have a responsibility towards anybody who is bullied or excluded because of who they are; for example, for their looks, their sexuality, their gender, etc?
11. Do you think Marnie's reasons for not wanting to tell her mother about her pregnancy and subsequent abortion were justifiable? How would you have felt about this if you were Marnie's mother?
12. Zed resists the idea of being labelled as anything. Why do you think we like to give others – and even ourselves – identity labels?
13. The book is written in narrative verse. How do you think reading a book in verse is different to reading a story told in conventional prose? What do the illustrations and shape poems add to your appreciation of the text? Do you think the structure of the two interweaving voices would have been as effective in prose?

After reading discussion #4

14. What was the result of Marnie relying solely on AI sources of information about her suspected pregnancy? What else could she have done?
15. Do you think the young people in *Not Going to Plan* could have avoided some of their negative experiences if they had had better Relationships Sex and Health Education? What has been good about the RSHE you have had in your school and what could be better?
16. What should parents'/carers' roles be in supporting, talking to or educating their children about things like relationships, contraception, abortion, sexuality, etc?
17. If you had a friend who needed advice but didn't want to talk to a parent or teacher about their situation, where would you suggest they get help?
18. Did you learn anything from reading *Not Going to Plan*?