



**This simple worksheet provides 4 sections to work through based on James Shone's message of the 'U.F.O.' Gaining an understanding of this message can lead to a more fulfilled, confident and happier approach to life.**

## **Section 1: Background**

*For teacher use or to be shared with the class*

### **James Shone's message of The U.F.O**

James Shone was a teacher for many years and now leads the charity 'I Can and I Am'. In 2012 he lost his sight and he now visits hundreds of schools a year presenting to pupils, staff and parents and always includes this vital message that he has named his 'U.F.O'. In summary, James's message is as follows:

#### **Up**

James' Christian faith is important to him. It's in times of crisis that he would say we must Look Up, indeed Psalm 121 encourages us, 'to lift our eyes.' While recovering from a series of operations in the High Dependency Unit in hospital, James would occasionally see a curtain put around the bed of a fellow patient who had just died. It was at these moments that he was aware that he, along with all his fellow bed companions, was very ill indeed. He was left with a choice, either to trust that God is in control or to sink into hopeless despair. James chose to trust.

#### **FORWARD**

It's all too easy after a time of suffering to look back at all that has been lost. In James' case he can now no longer see, drive, play any moving ball sport, run or watch his children play. It's easy to look back and to allow the sense of loss to overwhelm us. However, it is crucial, James believes, to look forward with a sense of hope that new opportunities and possibilities will arise.

#### **Out**

The last book James read when he could still see was Victor Frankl's masterpiece "Man's Search for Meaning." In this the Austrian Jew talks about surviving his time at Auschwitz. He cites his reason for remaining buoyant was sharing his weekly bread bun with other prisoners. This starving man shared something that he was desperate to consume but hormones were released which made him feel more fully alive. James often wakes from dreams such as playing cricket with his children and he has a stark choice, to give up or to get up. Remembering the lesson of Victor Frankl, James will often force himself to think of others, however small the action might be. It might involve sending an encouraging text message, emptying the dishwasher or buying his children a lollipop and putting it under their pillow. As he does this his sense of self worth returns. The key is never to sink into the hollow of self-pity.

**The opposite of the above is 'D.B.I' - DOWN, BACK & IN  
(a Dangerously Bleak Individual ...!)**

## Section 2: Vlog from James Shone

Spend a few minutes watching the following video clip on Youtube where James Shone will tell his story of 'The UFO' in his own words and use it to explain how this mantra has helped him to deal with his own personal set backs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3Q6r4VFeVI&t=5s>

## Section 3: Class Discussion

Begin by summarising the key points from James's video to the class to ensure that everyone is clear on the terminology:

- Looking up: Faith, and its wider meaning within all religions
- Looking out: How helping others can improve our sense of wellbeing. Stress the huge number of scenarios this could apply to. Give examples such as: helping parents or siblings at home (even in a very small way), helping out a fellow pupil at school, helping a stranger, helping in a wider context such as charity fund raising or recycling.
- Looking forward: how only looking back and reflecting on what's already happened can be a negative experience. Looking forward with a positive mindset is also essential for our mental wellbeing.

As a class or in small groups, you can now introduce discussion topics along the following lines:

- Why do you think adopting U.F.O in your life might help?
- If you were to focus on just one aspect of U.F.O what would that be and why?

## Section 4: Class Activity

James describes 'U.F.O' as his 'mantra'. Ask the class for suggestions for a definition of the term 'mantra', then share the following: "A personal mantra is an affirmation to motivate and inspire you to be your best self. ... Its purpose is to provide motivation and encouragement to you when you need to focus your mind to achieve a goal. Mantras have been utilised around the world for thousands of years."

Ask the pupils to spend some time individually thinking about what their mantra might be. Then take a sheet of paper each, draw a large balloon on it and write in or illustrate the inside of the balloon to represent their own mantras. The individual balloons can be cut out and displayed together as 'our class mantras'.