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A MAGAZINE FOR THE GET-UP-AND-GO GENERATION

# TRAVELLER

SEPTEMBER 2017

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scoop!

On the trail of the world's best gelato\*



\*Before it melts

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# “Money has never been my driver...”

Inspired by his own personal battles, Jan Willem Poot decided to sell his sporting holiday business to use physical activity to help troubled youngsters

**BETWEEN THE AGES** of 12 and 27, Jan Willem Poot struggled with a range of addiction problems and spent almost eight and a half years in and out of treatment programmes. The Dutch national finally found lasting help at a Scottish clinic and was inspired to start a business organising sports and outdoor activities for young people. Then, in 2010, he founded Yes We Can Youth Clinics, alongside a team of 20 healthcare professionals. The organisation now employs 175 full-time specialists and has helped over 2,000 young people.

## Give something back

“Thirteen years ago, my life changed dramatically. I had been searching for the answers to my own personal problems and I finally found a clinic in the UK that was able to help me. This clinic had the right combination of specialists and people who had been through similar experiences. On the last day of treatment, one of the things they said to me was: ‘If you want to hold on to everything you have today, you also have to be able to give it away each and every day’. I didn’t understand what this meant at first, but I soon realised that life is about helping others, and sharing what you’ve learned and the challenges you’ve overcome.”

## Your path isn’t set in stone

“I had difficulties in my childhood and I had no idea how to be a normal teenager. That experience shaped me and it made me want to build an organisation that gave sunshine and laughter and kindness

to young adults. So, I organised sports holidays for them and it was phenomenally successful, with 10,000 clients every year. It was incredibly hard work – I’d often go to bed at 4am and get up three hours later – but it was rewarding, for a while...”

## Do the right thing

“The sports holiday company sometimes became frustrating, because we would often have children come to us from institutions where they just weren’t getting the treatment they needed. There were many stories about drug abuse, sexual abuse and fear inside these treatment centres, and I could relate to that because of my own experience 15 years earlier. I decided to sell up and try to help – perhaps I could be there for these young people? A lot of people tried to dissuade me, because the company I had was so successful, but I had made up my mind already. Money has never been my driver.”

## Think on your feet

“In 2010, I opened a number of clinics, that use sport and physical activity as a key part of the therapy process. We’ve seen tremendous growth and this has brought its own challenges – there was a time when we needed to hire 50 people in four months. I’ve been lucky in that people heard about what we were doing and approached us to get involved, but sometimes, you don’t have the luxury of reflection. You need to make quick decisions and move on.”

## Say you’re sorry

“The flipside of quick decisions is that you don’t always make the right ones. And, if you make a wrong decision, it often has an impact on other people. So, whenever this happens, I take responsibility for it and do whatever I can to make it right.”

## Provide a caring environment

“We treat teenagers and young adults who come to us with so many different problems. Some 25% may have attempted suicide, while 50% will have addiction issues. When they first join us they will have ‘heavy’ behaviours and it can be difficult for everyone involved. We encourage staff to take time out to talk to each other several times a day, to help them deal with the pressures. It’s not utopia, but we do our best.”

## Tell it how it is

“Sometimes, the best option is not to make yourself appear more than you are and to let people take you as they find you.”

## VITAL STATISTICS

**NAME** Jan Willem Poot

**NATIONALITY** Dutch

**AGE** 41

**LANGUAGES** Dutch, English, French and German

**CAREER**

2009-present: founder and CEO,

Yes We Can Clinics; 2005-2011:

founder and CEO, Junior Travels & JT Travels



