



High-level flow:

- Welcome & framing
- Warm-ups
- Choose a person and moment to invent for
- Invent & explain an idea on provided sheet
- Share & celebrate

Workshop steps	Time per step	Total minutes completed
Intro	8 minutes	8
Office odd	5 minutes	13
Bonkers combo	5 minutes	18
Loose drawing warm up	3 minutes	21
Happiness discussion time	5 minutes	26
Think of a person	2 minutes	28
Think of a moment	3 minutes	31
Think of making better	5 minutes	36
What's an invention?	2 minutes	38
Brainstorming	15 minutes	53
Final drawing	25 minutes	78
Show tell	8 minutes	86
Wrap up and reporting	4 minutes	90

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## Purpose of the workshop

### Facilitator intent

Invite people of all ages to imagine small, playful inventions that create moments of happiness in everyday life.

### Tone & boundaries

- Keep the focus on small, everyday moments.
- Emphasise imagination over outcomes

### You might say something like:

- “This workshop is about imagining small things that could make everyday life feel a bit nicer.”

Some ideas gathered may later be brought to life by professional makers and shown in a public exhibition.

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## **Your role as facilitator**

### Facilitator intent

Create a space where people feel safe to try, explore, and share ideas.

### Tone & boundaries

- Warm, relaxed, non-judgemental

### You might say something like:

- “There are no wrong ideas here.”

Participants may draw, write, use arrows or symbols, or explain verbally. All forms of expression are valid.

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## **Core messages to reinforce throughout**

### Facilitator intent

Reduce fear and self-censorship by repeating permission to express all ideas.

### Core ideas to reinforce:

- There are no wrong ideas
  - Bonkers, strange, or unfinished ideas are welcome
  - Tiny ideas can grow
  - It's not about Dragons Den commercial type inventing this is about fun and imagination
  - It doesn't have to work
  - Simple marks and words are enough
  - This is about imagination, not getting things right
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## **Materials**

Projector for powerpoint slides and video preferable.

### Essential

- Invention / idea sheets (A3 preferred, A4 acceptable)
- Person/moment worksheet
- Black pens
- Coloured pencils

## Optional support materials

Use only if helpful:

- Prompt cards (in folder)
- Direct Youtube video link <https://youtu.be/1xgY2vKma2w>
- Guided powerpoint video <https://youtu.be/yP43AuRPLlw>

ROOM SET UP: tables, chairs, a screen to share powerpoint video

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## How people work best in this workshop

### Guidance

- Warm-ups work best in pairs or groups
  - Inventing works best individually
  - Sharing should always be optional
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## Workshop flow

### 1. Welcome & context (8 minutes)

#### Facilitator intent

Help participants feel oriented, welcomed, and relaxed about what's coming. Briefly introduce the project.

#### Play the challenge intro video in the powerpoint.

Show powerpoint for images of INVENTORS!:

Explain that ten years ago local artist and inventor Dominic Wilcox asked children in Sunderland and South Tyneside to draw playful invention ideas. Some of those drawings were later brought to life by makers as physical objects. The project went viral around the world and led to starting Little Inventors that has inspired children around the world.

- Show a few of the children's ideas made real on the slides.

#### Tone & boundaries

Friendly and invitational. Reduce pressure early.

You might say something like:

- "Today is about trying an idea, not finishing something."
  - "You don't need to be good at drawing, stick people and words are perfect."
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## 2. Playful warm-up: loosening thinking

### Facilitator intent

Loosen self-censorship and show there is no single right answer.

### Tone & boundaries

Playful and curious. Celebrate variety, not usefulness.

### 5 minutes: Brain Warm up activity: The Lost and Found Office of Oddities



These are objects that no one knows what they are or what they do.

Have a think about what you think they are or could be used for.

A series of photos or real odd objects provided are shown to the group for their ideas  
(See workshop folder for the photos)

Ask:

- Who might use this?
- What could it do?
- How might it make someone feel a bit better?

Encourage many different answers.

Celebrate variety.

### 5 minutes: Warm up activity 2: Bonkers combos

#### Join two things to make a new invention

Show a selection of random everyday objects. (shown in the workshop slides)

Ask people to think up a new invention that combines the functions of two objects together.  
ie. a maraca toothbrush

### 3 minutes: Warm up activity 3: Draw with Non-dominant hand

A simple way to get people drawing even if low confidence. Draw the person next to you or a selected object with your non-dominant hand.

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### **3. Gentle warm-up to the theme: happiness (5 minutes)**

#### **Facilitator intent**

Help participants notice that happiness comes in many forms, from fun and excitement to ease, kindness, and small moments where life feels a bit better.

#### **Tone & boundaries**

Quiet, reflective, unforced.  
Sharing is always optional.

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#### **Invite reflection**

Ask:

**“What’s one small thing that made your day feel a bit nicer recently?”**

After the question has landed, gently broaden what that might mean:

“That could be funny or exciting, but it could also be something that makes things feel easier, calmer, more comfortable, or helps someone feel more confident, included, or cared for.

Add a gentle doorway to friction:

“Often that happens because something that was a bit tricky, annoying, or tiring suddenly felt easier.”

Reassure:

“Very ordinary things are perfect.”

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#### **Optional writing and noticing**

Invite participants to write their moment on a Post-it note or small piece of paper.

Say:

“This is just for you, you don’t have to share it.”

Invite people to place their notes on a wall or table.

Allow a short pause for participants to quietly read what others have written.

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## **Gentle bridge to inventing**

Close the section by connecting forward:

“These small moments, fun ones, kind ones, or ones where things feel a bit easier, are exactly what we’ll be inventing around today.”

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# **4. Before you invent for happiness: choose someone and a moment (10 minutes)**

## **Facilitator intent**

Give participants a clear, human starting point so inventing feels focused, relatable, and manageable.

Participants should finish this step knowing:

- who they are inventing for
- when in that person’s day the invention shows up
- what could make that moment better

That is enough to begin.

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## **Introduce the idea**

Hand out the worksheets.

Say something like:

“Before we start inventing, we’re going to choose who we’re inventing for, and when.”

“You’re not inventing yet, just choosing a starting point.”

“This doesn’t have to be perfect, you can change it later.”

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## **Step 1: Choose a person (2–3 minutes)**

Invite participants to think of:

- someone they know (a friend, relative, neighbour)
- or a type of person (a teacher, a bus driver, a carer)
- or someone imagined (someone who feels tired, rushed, or lonely)
- or even a pet

Reassure:

“There’s no right choice, pick someone who feels easy to think about.”

Encourage them to jot down one or two options.

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## **Step 2: Choose an ordinary moment (4–5 minutes)**

Ask them to think about:

a normal, everyday moment in that person’s day

Make the link clear:

“This is the moment your invention will be for.”

Guide the scale:

“Small, everyday moments work best, something that lasts a few minutes, not the whole day.”

If helpful, gently suggest examples:

- getting up or getting dressed
- travelling or waiting
- working or learning
- doing chores
- winding down at the end of the day

Add:

“It could be a moment that feels a bit tricky or tiring, or just a moment where you’d like to make them smile or feel appreciated.”

Encourage them to write a short phrase.

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## **Step 3: Make that moment better (4–5 minutes)**

Ask:

“In that moment, what could make it better?”

Keep it open and simple:

“It could be something that makes it easier, calmer, more comfortable, more fun, or helps someone feel noticed, included, or appreciated.”

Reinforce scale:

“It doesn’t need to fix everything, even a small change is enough.”

Encourage a few quick notes, not a full idea.

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## **Light example (optional, spoken)**

“For example: a teacher at the end of the school day, and something that helps them relax or feel appreciated.”

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## **Close and transition**

Create a clear next step:

“Now choose the person and moment you want to invent for.”

“If you know who it’s for and when it happens, you’re ready to start inventing.”

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# 5. Moving from thinking into inventing (5 minutes)

## Facilitator intent

Help participants move into inventing without pressure, and show that inventing can begin from kindness, joy, or noticing small difficulties.

## Tone & boundaries

Vagueness is welcome.  
Messy, unfinished ideas are encouraged.

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## Reframe inventing

Say something like:

“When we say ‘inventing’ today, we don’t mean designing something perfect.”

“We just mean imagining something that *could* exist in the world.”

Clarify what that might look like:

“It might be something you hold, wear, touch, place somewhere, or interact with.”

Balance the motivations:

“Sometimes inventions help with things people struggle with.  
Sometimes they surprise, cheer someone up, or show care.  
All of that counts as inventing here.”

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## Connect back to the person and moment

Say:

“Using the person and moment you just chose, you’re going to start imagining something that could bring a bit of happiness into that moment.”

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## Lower the bar clearly

Reassure participants:

“You don’t need a clear idea yet.”

“Inventing usually starts with vague thoughts, half-ideas, or rough sketches.”

“Messy is exactly right at this stage.”

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## **Gentle physical transition**

Invite action without pressure:

“Take a pen and some paper.”

“You might start with a word, a scribble, or a very rough shape.”

“It doesn’t have to mean anything yet.”

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## **Close and move into inventing time**

End with permission:

“Just see what might be possible.”

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# **6. Brainstorm time: start loose (10-15 minutes)**

## **Facilitator intent**

Create protected time for individual exploration. This is time for participants to *play with ideas* for their chosen person and moment.

If people are absorbed, let this run a little longer and shorten sharing later.

## **Tone & boundaries**

Quiet, supportive, non-interventionist.

This is the first sustained inventing time.

The focus is on exploring possibilities, not choosing, finishing, or making anything “good”.

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## Set up the space

Make sure everyone has paper and something to draw or write with.

Begin by reinforcing:

“You’re exploring on your own to start with.”

“Take a few minutes just to see what might be possible.”

You might add:

“There’s no rush and no right direction.”

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## Invite loose exploration

You might say:

“Let’s try three tiny invention ideas.”

“Spend about two minutes on each.”

“They can be extremely rough, just a scribble and a few words.”

Add:

“Start with your person and moment, and imagine something that could make that moment better.”

Reassure:

“They can be tiny, silly, kind, helpful, or unfinished.”

“Don’t worry about being neat, messy is perfect.”

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## If someone seems stuck

Quietly offer **one gentle prompt only**, then step back:

- “Who’s it for?”
- “When does it happen?”

- “What part makes it feel nicer or more fun, kind, or surprising?”

**Another gentle way in:**

**“Sometimes it helps to think about an everyday object that could create that feeling, or to imagine mixing two everyday things together.”**

Avoid layering prompts. One is enough.

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## **Facilitator role**

Throughout this time:

- move slowly around the room
- notice who looks hesitant
- offer quiet encouragement, for example:
  - “Keep going.”
  - “You can add a few words.”
  - “That’s interesting.”

Then step back.

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## **Optional pair talk (offer, don’t require)**

After some individual exploration, you may offer:

“If it helps, you can turn to the person next to you and say what you’re thinking about.”

Keep this very brief:

- 1–2 minutes
- pairs only
- either person may choose not to speak

Then gently bring the room back to individual inventing.

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## **Optional inspiration paths**

*(Use only if someone is really stuck or asks for another way in.)*

Say:

“If you’re feeling stuck, **or just want another way in**, keep the same person and moment you chose earlier.”

“These are just different ways of looking at that moment. You can ignore them or change them.”

Offer **one option at a time**, not the full list.

Possible starting points:

- **Create surprise and delight**  
Small surprises, playful moments, tiny celebrations
  - **Make someone smile or laugh**  
Silly ideas, gentle humour, unexpected moments
  - **Help people feel connected**  
Families, friends, neighbours, people far apart
  - **Make kindness easier**  
Sharing, thanking, helping, cheering someone up
  - **Turn boredom into fun**  
Waiting, queuing, chores, lunch breaks
  - **Reduce daily frustrations**  
Mornings, lost items, mess, noise, confusion
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## Using prompt cards (only if really, really stuck)

Prompt cards are found in the workshop pack.

Examples include:

Invent something for someone who misses a person who lives far away.

Invent something to make someone laugh while they’re waiting.

Guidance:

- Don’t give them to everyone
- Offer quietly if someone is stuck
- Let the participant choose one, or hand one out

Say:

“This is just a starting point. You can change it or ignore it.”

Prompt cards are **confidence aids, not tasks**.

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## Close this section

As time comes to an end, gently signal the transition:

“Start to notice which idea you’re enjoying exploring.”

“You don’t need to decide yet — just take note.”

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## 7. Choose an idea & explain it on the sheet (25 minutes)

### Facilitator intent

Help participants explain one idea clearly on the idea sheet.

### Tone & boundaries

Focus on communication, not drawing skill.

### Ask participants to choose:

- the idea they like most
- or the one that feels kindest or most fun

### Give out the provided drawing sheet

- one main picture
- arrows showing what happens
- clear labels explaining parts or actions
- Add colour.
- Give it a name
- one or two sentences:
  - “My invention is for...”
  - “It brings a bit of happiness by (making them smile, helping them relax, giving them confidence, making them feel included, or making something easier..)”

Sheet will be similar in design to this

**Invention**

1. Use a black pen, DRAW BIG, add colour and labels.

**JOY LAB**  
Inventing for Happiness

Date ..... Age .....

First name .....

Organisation/school .....

Name of invention .....

**2. Explain your idea!**

*How does it work? Who is it for? How will it bring happiness?*

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Upload your idea at [joylab.org.uk](http://joylab.org.uk) to submit your idea

## If someone says: “I can’t draw”

You can say:

“A box with arrows is a drawing.”

“Stick people are drawings.”

“Words *are* very useful here.”

As long as the sheet explains the idea then that is ok.

You might say something like:

- “Choose the idea that feels kindest or most fun to you.”
- “Use words, arrows, and labels to help explain it.”

Encourage a name and sentences explaining who it’s for and how it creates happiness.

## Optional extensions

(Only if confidence is high and time allows)

- add a second drawing showing it in use

## 8. Sharing & celebration (8 minutes)

Ask participants to stand up and share their ideas.

- Celebrate all the ideas with applause.

Close with something positive:

“You all invented something today, that's something worth celebrating!”

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## 9. Share the forms to collect feedback from participants (4 minutes)

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### What success looks like

Success looks like:

- Participants surprising themselves
- A wide range of different ideas
- People thinking:
  - “I didn’t think I was creative, but I am”
  - “That was fun”
  - “I could try this again”