From the Founder

When Life Throws You a Thunderbolt

Teenagers today are far too protected from the realities of life. Simplistic soap operas, reality television shows and a tidal wave of political correctness has led to a culture of over-reaction and self-indulgent melodrama from teenagers which serves more to perpetuate the effects of life’s issues, than it does to overcome them.

In my opinion a growing cross section of young people today are so soft it has created a cultural shift we may not be able to turn by the time these kids are the backbone of the nations’ productivity and are supporting us. The problems as I see them are as follows.

Teenagers today have the bar set way too low in relation to what constitutes ‘sickness’. Tiredness is not sickness. Tiredness is not an excuse for a day off school. A runny nose is not the flu. A headache is something 2.6 billion people a day suffer from; it’s not sickness, it is a headache. Broken bones do not stop you thinking and writing. Emotional issues are likely to be with you your whole life. Toughen up! Cope and go through the day anyway.

Of course issues such as genuine depression, viral conditions, food poisoning, extreme anxiety etc. are legitimate issues to miss school. I am not discounting these at all. We are here to support these conditions, but we are not here to support manifestations of these conditions where any degree of their presence constitutes a ‘total’ breakdown.

Teenagers today believe they have the ‘right’, to stay at home. This is not true. If laws are a reflection of rights, then the opposite is true. In the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 there is a legal responsibility for students to attend school all times when school is open for instruction.

But for me the key factor is this. Life is tough; life is not fair; but when you learn to accept this, life is the most wonderful gift. Kids today act like hardship is an injustice, when in fact it is a certainty of life. Coping with hardship, is coping with life. I believe it is therefore incumbent on us as educators and parents to teach our kids how to cope with the little hardships, so as when the big ones come along… (mental illness, family tragedy, freak accidents, divorce, financial ruin), they have been set up to cope. These thunderbolts in life should not be seen as knock-out blow but rather as opportunities learn, grow and in some cases realise how important friends and family can be when they know how to stand tall in a crisis.
As we draw to the end of Term 2 it is sobering to realise that more than half the School Year over. For our VCE students this means that they have completed over half the work they will need to in order to pass the year. For our students, VCE is not simply a rite of passage, for many of them it is something they thought they would never achieve. It represents a significant mental and emotional hurdle that they have fought to overcome, namely: the fear of failure and its flip side, the fear of success. And this is where the students become our teachers. It is easy as an educator to look at a student who is not completing a task that has been set, or is overdue and think it is as a result of laziness, not being motivated enough or procrastination. And there are certainly elements of this. But one thing I have learned is that when you sit down with a student for a bit and go over the task with them and give them a starting point, they generally continue with no issues. What this says to me is that they aren’t really asking for help with the task (although this is a part of it) they are asking for help because they feel overwhelmed, they doubt themselves and their abilities and they are afraid of failure. In the last week or two of submissions this often happens more regularly, even though there is generally less work to do. As the students come face to face with the potential for success or failure they start to falter as statements like ‘Am I good enough’, ‘do I deserve this’, ‘can I do this’, start to find a place in their thoughts. And while the temptation is to force them to do the work, the simpler solution is to sit down with them and let them know it is OK and take those first couple of steps with them until they start doing it themselves.

We needed it when we were one learning to walk and we needed it when we were five on our first day of school. Students may need it in VCE when starting their final Art piece or writing a SAC. And on reflection we often need it at times as adults when we are on that precipice between success and failure. I think the Dali Lama would advocate this peaceful approach and I think he would see the quiet strength in withholding the anger and frustration and just being there for the people we care about, sometimes walking with them, sometimes carrying them and sometimes just holding their hand while they hold ours back.
our instant emotional response to someone else’s words or actions, we can control or choose how we react to those words or actions. To get the outcome that best serve us and the person we are dealing with we should react with the emotional response that is most likely to achieve a desirable outcome. In situations where conflict with another arises, the ability to act from a state of compassion, regardless of the initial emotion that arises in us is the most likely response to succeed. I have tried this in a few situations over the last week with people in my life with whom I have had conflict and I have gained a greater insight into their situation and reasons for behaving the way they do. I don’t completely understand but in seeking to, I open the door for a resolution. However in writing this I can’t help but think of times when I would find it close to impossible to show compassion should anyone cause me physical pain, abuse or harm the people I love. And this is where I’ll have to leave compassion to the Dalai Lama….at least for now. But we all have to begin somewhere and the above is really about first steps.

Activities

Dalai Lama

On the 17th of June the school visited the Dalai Lama at the Melbourne Exhibition centre. The Dalai Lama is currently touring and sharing his message of kindness and compassion. We commend all the students on being well behaved and respectful during the talk. His holiness is not always easy to understand or follow and there is a bit ‘lost in translation’. But what was clear in his message was that compassion and understanding are something we should all be striving for in our own lives.

In theory it is hard to argue with the benefits of compassion, however in practice it is not an easy thing to do. When we are confronted with evil, vindictiveness, thoughtlessness, violence, manipulation, anger or fear it is not our instinct to have compassion for the people inflicting this on us.

For people who are not students of Buddhism, we may seek to integrate these philosophies into our lives in a way that fits with our own understanding of the world. So one thing I could take from this message of compassion is that we have control over our emotions and the way we act rather than react in situations.

While we do not always have control over the things that happen in our lives we can choose our response. This is something that was brought up in a PD this week concerning communication. Whilst we may not be able to control
Millionaire Hot seat

On the 16th of June the school participated in the filming of Millionaire Hot seat. This was an opportunity for students to see behind the scenes at the production of a game show and to gain an insight into the work that goes into the twenty or so minutes of footage we see on TV. For our media students it was a chance to see the realities of working on a television set. Students gained an insight into the many different roles involved in the production of the show; cameras, makeup, microphone, stage set up, audience organisation and crowd coaching. It was a chance to see that there is a lot more than meets the eye in producing a relatively simple and formulaic show such as Millionaire hot seat.

Part of the motivation behind the excursion was to give our students an insight into what it means to be successful. Eddie Maguire has had a varied career and significant impact on Melbourne media and culture. During the filming of six episodes over the five hours, he was completely focused, energetic and professional. He worked solidly for the 5 hours of filming, presentable, polite, making sure he was equally interested in each contestant and even fielding questions from the audience between takes and drawing the raffle at the end of the show.

And all this, keeping in mind he was up at 4:30am to prepare for his radio show that morning. As educators we often get frustrated with students who have big goals and dreams, but underestimate the work involved in achieving them. They set unrealistic goals in our opinion and we often quote Bill Gates ‘before you save the rain forest from the blood-sucking parasites of your parents’ generation, try delousing the closet in your bedroom.’ By showing students what it takes to be a success we hope they may raise their own expectations of themselves so they are able to reach their goals.

We were also lucky enough to share the experience as two contestants won $20,000 in one show and $50,000 in another. But more importantly $50 each was won by Amelia, Erin, Catherine in the after show raffle. I think the rest of the audience was slightly peeved that three out of the four prizes were won by ‘The Jon Carnegie School’ but Kate was cheering all the way.

Question Time with Eddie Maguire

As part of the filming Eddie answered questions in the Advertisement and news breaks. The students from the school also had the chance to ask Eddie a few questions:

Gem: Do you ever watch your own show?
Eddie: not really because I know what happens. I will watch it if it is on, but I’m not usually at home at 5:30...I’m at work.

Liam: What was your first job?
Eddie: Journalist for the Herald at the age of 13.

Gabby: Where did you go to school?
Eddie: CBC.

Kate: What motivates you?
Eddie: the show, it’s a job...the people I work with and, my family.
Birthdays

Happy Birthday to Lalage Zagroon who turned 18 on the 6th of June.
Happy Birthday to Sophie Chancellor who turned 17 on the 17th of June, and had the Dali Lama to wish her a happy Birthday.

DECV

DECV VCE Semester 1 finished on the 14th of June. Congratulations to all of our VCE students for successfully completing all their units for this Semester. Maddie Hopkins completed four units at year 11. Lalage Zagroon and Ash Doherty completed 4 units of VCE 2. Liam Adey completed 2 units towards an assessed VCE and Erin completed 5 units of an assessed VCE. We commend all of our VCE students for the hard work.

DECV Semester 2 commenced on the 17th of June. The first two weeks of the Semester should be completed before holidays. Week 3 commences after the JCS Term break.

Term 2 for our year 7-10 students is now also over and you should receive academic progress reports from DECV shortly.

Term 3 commences on Tuesday 16th July

Students will have a two week launch pad to ensure their subject loading, allocation and levels are best tailored to their educational needs.
Otway Retreat

Parents and students please be aware the dates for the Otway retreat are now Saturday the 13th and Sunday the 14th of July. More information will be provided to you. Please contact Hannah if you are interested in this opportunity.

Meeting Protocol

Dear School Community, as part of our safety and welfare procedure, please be aware that any meeting conducted on school premises may now be recorded.

Camp

The South East Asia Camp presents a range of cultural, social, geographical and real life learning opportunities. For students who have never been overseas this is an exciting opportunity. It is also a chance for students to see a different culture and way of life, vastly different to our own. Last year we had a tremendously successful camp to Thailand. Parents please be advised our South East Asia Trip will run from the 8th to the 13th of September. You will receive more information on this early in Term 3. The deposit will be payable early in Term 3 and the ‘spending money’ will be payable closer to departure. This is an optional camp, but is highly recommended.
Sashy sets the bar yet again!