

Well, here it is:

I've found that nothing in life is worthwhile unless you take risks.

Nothing.

Nelson Mandela said:

“There is no passion to be found playing small—in settling for a life that’s less than the one you’re capable of living.”

I'm sure in your experiences—in school... in deciding what you want to do with life—people have told you to make sure you have something to “fall back on.”

But I've never understood that concept, having something to fall back on. I am good at falling. Oh, no Keddie's at it again.

If I'm going to fall, I don't want to fall back on anything. I want to fall... forward.

At least I figure that way I'll see what I'm about to hit.

Fall forward.

Here's what I mean:

Don Bradman had seven ducks in 80 Tests for Australia.

But you don't hear about the ducks. People remember the 99.94 batting average.

Fall forward.

Thomas Edison conducted 1,000 failed experiments. Did you know that?

I didn't either—because #1,001 was the light bulb.

Fall forward.

Every failed experiment is one step closer to success.

You've got to take risks. And I'm sure you've probably heard that before.

But I want to talk about why it's so important.

I've got three reasons—and then you can pick up your iPhones.

First... you will fail at some point in your life. Accept it. You will lose. You will embarrass yourself. You will suck at something. There is no doubt about it.

That's probably not a traditional message for a graduation ceremony. But, hey, I'm telling you—embrace it.

Because it's inevitable. I'll tell you, man, have I ever failed. But you see I did not fail when I became your Year Adviser. I hit the jackpot.

And I should know: In the Theatrical World, you fail all the time.

Early in my career, I auditioned for a musical. A perfect role for me, I thought—except for the fact that I can't sing.

So, I'm in the wings, about to go on stage but the guy in front of me is singing like Sam Smith (Not you Sam), the singer, and I am just shrinking getting smaller and smaller...

So, I come out with my little sheet music, and it was, get this "'Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and His Comets, that's what I came up with.

So, I hand it to the accompanist, and she looks at it and looks at me and looks at the director, so I start to sing and they're not saying anything. I think I must be getting better, so I start getting into it. You know – Your goanna rock around the clock tonight"

But after the first verse, the director cuts me off: "Thank you. Thank you very much, that was different, you'll be hearing from me."

The next part of the audition is the acting part. I figure, I can't sing, but I know I can act.

But the guy I was paired with to do the scene couldn't be more overdramatic and over-the-top.

Suffice to say, I didn't get the part. So, career as a triple threat bombed big time.

But here's the thing: I didn't quit. I didn't fall back.

I walked out of there to prepare for the next audition, and the next audition, and the next one. I prayed, and I prayed, but I continued to fail, and I failed, and I failed.

But it didn't matter. Because you know what? You hang around Jimbo's Barbershop long enough—sooner or later you will get a haircut.

You will catch a break.

IN 2016 I did a musical called GREASE, and it sold out every single show. It was a smash Hit! And I didn't have to sing in it, by the way.

And here's the kicker— I did that for my love of the theatre.

The point is, every graduate here today has the training and the talent to succeed.

But do you have guts to fail?

Here's my second point about failure:

If you don't fail... you're not even trying.

My wife told me this expression: "To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did."

Les Brown, a motivational speaker, made an analogy about this.

Imagine you're on your deathbed—and standing around your bed are the ghosts representing your unfilled potential.

The ghosts of the ideas you never acted on. The ghosts of the talents you didn't use.

And they're standing around your bed. Angry. Disappointed. Upset.

"We came to you because you could have brought us to life," they say. "And now we go to the grave together."

So, I ask you today: How many ghosts are going to be around your bed when your time comes?

You've invested a lot in your education. And people have invested in you.

And let me tell you, the world needs your talents.

Man does it ever.

There are countries in Africa - beautiful countries, but there are places with terrible poverty that need help. And Africa is just the tip of the iceberg. The Middle East needs your help. Nepal needs your help. The homeless, a huge issue in our country, need your help. The Farmers, god bless them, need your help.

The world and Australia need a lot—and we need it from you, the young people.

So, get out there. Give it everything you've got—whether it's your time, your talent, your prayers, or your treasure.

So, what are you going to do with what you have? Go and get what you want!

Some of you will be business majors. Some of you will be health care workers, nurses, sociologists, engineers. Some of you will save lives for a living. Some of you will use your patience to design amazing things. Some of you will invent cool stuff with flashing lights. Some of you will use your gifts make lots of money.

Whatever it is... what are you going to do with what you have?

Now here's my last point about failure:

Sometimes it's the best way to figure out where you're going.

Your life will never be a straight path. That's just boring. Look at me for example:

I began at University of New England as a student with no clue what I wanted to do. That lasted until I was influenced by a girl, let's call her Lisa, who asked me out to a night of plays run by the seniors in the Performing Arts Faculty. It was BYO and cheese and crackers. A little weird for this Canadian but I went with the flow. And I loved it.

This girl, Lisa, she said I had a talent I could not see. She said to me I should audition for Theatre Studies 101. I laughed at her. Then she threw down the gauntlet. She dared me. Never one to pass on the dare. I said "Yes, damn it, I will."

I auditioned. I arrived late because I was playing pool at the Uni Bistro and having a few beers, when Lisa came by and said, "what are you doing you meathead, get your arse down there." She took my pool cue and I ran.

I rocked up. By the way I had no idea what an audition was so when the Head of Department said what had I prepared I said "Ah, something I wrote." Lying through my teeth, I was put on the spot I mumbled some stuff that came to my head about pain and oh life is like a flower... something totally crazy. The Heads nodded and stared at me strangely. Then they gave me a passage, they called it a "Cold Reading" I thought, why is it cold? It was from

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams. They said, you know it. I lied and said “yup” I thought “why the heck is a streetcar named desire? Weird.

I read the famous monologue by Stanley Kowalski: *Honey, I told you, I thoroughly checked out on these stories! Now, wait, let me finish. The trouble with your sister, she couldn't put on her act in Laurel. They got wised up after two or three dates with her and they quit, and then she goes on to another – the same act, the same lies – But this town was too small for her wicked ways. She was known as a character, regarded not as different but downright loco-nuts. She was washed up. So That's why she's here with us this summer!*

So, I got rejected. It felt ... well you can image. A low point. But I pushed on. This Lisa, she said to me – the chances you take ... the people you meet ... the people you love ... the faith that you have – that's what's going to define your life.

Damn, that was good. She was right. So, we Segway ... to this

And I can't think of a better message as we send you off today.

To not only take risks, but to be open to life.

To accept new views and to be open to new opinions.

Because remember this:

When you leave the friendly confines of Port Macquarie know that it was an honour to be your Year Adviser. I hope I gave you rays of hope in times of darkness. I hope you got my jokes. I hope I guided you. I hope I made you smile. It was quite a ride. 6 years. Wow.

So... members of the class of 2018: This is your mission:

When you fall throughout life—and maybe even tonight when you party — fall forward.

Don't just aspire to make a living. Aspire to make a difference.

Congratulations, Year 12, you made it! You don't have to be brilliant – YOU are! I will miss you. I love you, I respect you.

Peace out. Keddie out.