

Friendship and Focus in the Slow Lane

Speech presented in February at Year 12 Wellbeing Retreat by Ms Alison Layne, School Counsellor

'Good evening everyone. Can I just say what a pleasure it is to be back with you all this year! There's nothing I enjoy more than talking about health and wellbeing and I am delighted that our principal has had the foresight to prioritise this issue at the start of your final, very busy year. It is important that we all acknowledge the significance of this year in your lives; it is one that will be filled with exciting highs, and probably some lousy lows (not too many, hopefully), and it is also a year of profound transition — from adolescence to adulthood and from secondary schooling to the world beyond. I am hoping this session will offer some practical advice regarding how you can all help to be there for each other, and therefore see the year through without too much drama.

(Slide one)



Now, let's start with something that I'm sure you're all very excited about: the end-of-year celebrations. Check out these fun-loving school leavers — it looks like they're having a great time, doesn't it? I bet quite a few of you have already started planning your own end-of-year adventures. There are some exciting times ahead, no doubt.

But I want you to look closer. I'm wondering if everyone here has made the smart choices up to this point. I wonder if they're all in the right shape to continue making smart choices for the rest of the evening. And I wonder if they've all got good friends looking out for them as this night of nights unfolds...

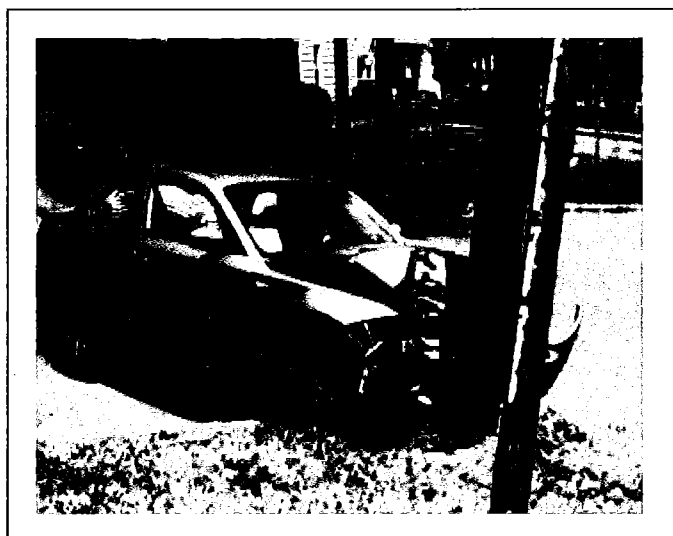
What I really want to stress this evening is just how important it is for all of you to be looking out for each other. Not just during these end-of-year festivities either, but throughout the year. There will undoubtedly be times when you'll feel under pressure, either from the demands of coursework or from people who will push you to achieve your best: your teachers, your parents, even some of your peers. There will, on the other hand, be times when you feel under pressure to behave in ways that might feel uncomfortable or even plain wrong. And it is at *these* times that you will need good friends the most — friends who will help to reassure you, help you stay on track, help you make the smart choices.

Now, let's get an indication with hands: how many of you are already Learner drivers, en route to your Ps? Yes, just as I thought, a hefty percentage. It's exciting, isn't it? Knowing that every time you get behind the wheel and successfully navigate from A to B you inch closer to that future dream where driving means freedom... rather than an argument with mum or dad about the pitfalls of the parallel park! But just for a moment I want you to consider a true story. It involves a young man your age, with exactly your sense of excitement about the future and the freedom it so palpably represents. Let's call him 'Phil'. Phil turned eighteen in March of his final year of school, and decided to immediately get his Ps, despite some protestation from concerned parents who felt that — given Phil's academic woes and a tendency to be easily led by mates — he should put the licence idea on hold until he had finished the academic year.

I know — some of you are thinking that this is a typically conservative response from parents, who are forever putting the brakes on the social development of their children. But consider their perspective: Phil had really struggled in Year 11. His grades had slipped substantially, and mum and dad were concerned that a burgeoning social life was getting in the way of an education. In fact, towards the end of that year Phil's school counsellor had recommended a form of academic probation for the first term of Year 12. Phil had agreed that this was a reasonable way forward. So there he is, commencing his final, exciting year of schooling, on probation but keen to make a real go of his studies, and

Until Thursday March 27, in just the third week of the new school year, when Phil crashed the family car into a telephone pole and blew .077 in a subsequent breath test.

(Slide two)



Here we go — that’s the car. A nice one too, isn’t it? (Or, I should say, wasn’t it?) Now I see some of you are finding this amusing, and thankfully no-one here was seriously injured — Phil survived, and so did the three passengers that he foolishly decided to drive home from the party they had attended that night. But the cost was substantial: a car written off, a licence revoked, stressful court appearances, strained friendships and family relationships and, tragically, a level of stress and anxiety in Phil so high that he was unable to complete his VCE studies. And of course, it could have been much, much worse...

“Why is she telling us this depressing story?” I hear you asking. And yes, I’m sorry, I know it seems like bleak territory for the start of the year. But what Phil’s story can teach us is that sometimes — perhaps particularly during adolescence when the weight of social expectation sits heavily on our shoulders — we can feel pressured to make stupid choices. Phil badly wanted his Ps because two of his best friends had them. And on the night of the accident he was far too keen to impress those friends, and made some terrible mistakes as a result: he had been drinking, was carrying an illegal number of passengers, and was speeding. And in a moment, a bright future suddenly got a lot darker. Perhaps if Phil’s friends had been more supportive, it would have turned out differently.

Speed is actually a good metaphor for our talk today. When we are in Year 12, we want everything to happen quickly. (OK — other than the school holidays!) We want to clock up the kilometres quickly, we want to get through our SACs quickly, we want the academic year to go quickly, to just be over. And who doesn’t want to experience that feeling of waking up, after the final Year 12 examination, with the realisation that the unflattering beige and brown school uniform will never be worn again (other than at a ‘back to school’ nightclub theme party)? But I would suggest that what we really need to remember in this final year, is that we would do well to slow down. To go easy on the markers of adulthood that we are so keen to embrace — getting a licence, drinking alcohol, going out to bars — but that can sometimes have a negative impact on our health and safety. And sometimes we need others to remind us to slow down — good friends who have our best interests at heart, and who understand exactly what we’re going through.

Slide one is shown again

So, these happy people have every right to smile — they’ve achieved so much. And of course, we can always find examples of people who don’t know how to slow down, and thankfully they are a minority; for every idiot who takes it too far and too fast there are hundreds of smart adults who know their limits, and how to **apply the brakes**. But when it comes to an event like Schoolies, I would encourage you to remember — particularly when you’re feeling swamped with deadlines — that it isn’t going anywhere! It will be there waiting, like a patient friend, when the exams are done and dusted and that beige and brown uniform has been relegated to the dark recesses of the wardrobe, replaced by board shorts or bikinis! So make an effort this year to look out for each other; because everyone needs the support of those around them. And in less than nine months you will all be free: free to drive yourself around, to let your hair down, to unwind in whatever way you like. Less than nine months! It’s not far away at all. Just slow down, and savour every minute of what will no doubt be one of the most exciting years of your life. Thanks everyone.

END OF SECTION C

"Friendship and Focus in the Slow Lane" infobus 2012

In her speech given at the Year 12 Wellbeing retreat, School Councilor Ms Alison Hayne enthusiastically endorses the need for responsibility, ~~and~~ friendship and focus in the upcoming year for Year 12s. ✓
~~Hayne~~ Hayne appeals to her audience. By identifying with her audience and targeting their sense of fear, Hayne inclusively encourages her audience to reflect on their ^{own} actions and friendships.

By the utilisation of a clear and logical structure of argument allows Hayne to lead her listeners through her points with efficiency and increases the likelihood of her persuasion to be effective. Her opening outlines her discussion, providing a spring board for her ideas. Her the inclusion of phrases such as "look closer" and "consider their perspective" encourage her listeners to engage with her ideas ~~to~~ as she follows on to outline them ^{reasonably} clearly and succinctly. The repetition of the words "I wonder" also ~~encourage its~~ function to ~~quest~~ lead audience thinking ~~and~~ in the direction of her desired line of argument. Hayne ~~at~~ acknowledges the slightly broad generalisations, such as "when we are in year 12, we want everything to happen quickly" in a ~~she~~ humorous fashion ^{in brackets for example "lots of other than the school holidays"} which provides entertainment and respite from the heavy subject matter of her speech. The brackets signify the side-line nature of her ~~discussion~~ point. The clarity and logic with which Hayne expresses her speech ~~allow creates a clear path for of argument for readers and~~ bolsters her argument ~~through~~ by depicting herself as reasonable. ✓
 She's also very chummy, very chatty, isn't she?
~~Hayne's~~ ^{and metaphor} collective and emotive language utilised by Hayne to identify with her

a sense of familiarity between the speaker and her audience, thus increasing the likelihood of her gaining their trust, more collective language such as "you" and "all of you" refers to the students as a collective and relates to them directly, thus ~~facilitates~~ speaking specifically to her audience. Her ~~inter~~ personalisation of the speech is created through the repetition of the word "I", implicating herself in her message and allows her to directly address her perceived concerns of her audience, for example "How ~~and~~ I hear you asking". This ~~also~~ bolsters her ~~credibility~~ ^{argument} as it demonstrates her close ~~proximity~~ ^{knowledge} with the audience and their needs. Emotive language such as the expression "It's exciting!" and "terrible mistakes" allow Hayne to invite emotional involvement of her audience and to reflect favourably on the "exciting!" potentials of life beyond year 12 ~~and~~ reflect negatively on the "terrible mistakes" that can be made. Hayne's choice of a speed ~~metaphor~~ ^{metaphor} functions to relate specifically to year 12 students' desires and personal likes, demonstrating her connection with the audience. ~~and~~ The metaphor is alluded to in the ^{with} title "Friendship and Focus in the Slow Lane" where alliteration is well-matched with the metaphor to generate a catchy title. The slide of "fun-loving school leaders" appeals to her audience's ~~desire~~ ^{desire} pursuit of enjoyment and desire to celebrate. ~~and~~ When it is shown again in the conclusion of the speech, Hayne invites her audience to recognise the work the young people have done to gain their "right to smile" through the ~~contrast~~ ^{contemplation} of the ~~last~~ ^{insight} slide and ~~discussion~~ ^{discussion} gained during ~~the~~ ^{the} by the ~~utilisation~~ ^{utilisation} of an anecdote.

anonymity

3

An anecdote functions as evidence of ^{foundational} ~~the~~
 Keynes' argument to generate notions of fear in
 her audience. The past tense in the short
~~past~~ staccato sentence "The future was bright"
 generates a sense of foreboding that ignites
 tension in the audience. The phrase "let's call
 him 'Phil'" gives the anecdote a sense of
anonymity ^{personalization} that allows the audience to relate
 strongly to common themes such as the
 "science idea". ~~through which~~ ^{through this} ~~the~~
~~her~~ ~~listener's~~ sense of freedom ~~to~~ ~~avoid~~ an
~~argument~~ ~~with~~ ~~mine~~ ~~or~~ By comparing listeners
 with Phil, a form of relationship is established that
 allows ^{involve} listeners in Phil's story. ~~we~~ words such
 as "a young man your age, with exactly your
 sense of excitement about the future" generate this
 notion that Phil ~~is~~ could be any ordinary student
 allowing listeners to familiarize with him. Specific
 details about Phil's ^{crash} ~~breath~~ ^{-test} ~~such~~ as "Thursday
 March 27" and "9.077" ^{reading} create a
 sense of genuineness and credibility ^{of} ~~at~~
 the side of a ~~crushed~~ ^{crushed} car ^{and steel pole} ~~with~~
 air bags in a suburban street ^{is designed to} ~~with~~ ^{shocks} ~~viewer~~
 viewers at the ~~normal~~ relative normality of the
 car and street with the exception of the
 mangled bonnet. The presence of the pole invites
 the imagination of viewers, particularly through the
 phrase ~~it~~ could have been much, much worse...
 Compelling evidence in the form of an
 anecdote ~~allow~~ and supporting visual generates
 foreboding notions and appeals to an
 audience's desire for safety and happiness.
 maybe this could go at the start of the piece.
 Ms Alison ^{and emotive} ~~clear~~ ^{language} ~~logic~~ ^{and} ~~collective~~
 anecdote ~~are~~ ^{likely} ~~to~~ ^{be} ~~effective~~ ⁱⁿ ~~a~~ ^{persuasive}
~~and~~ ~~highly~~ ~~credible~~ ^{tragically} ^{credible} ^{pointedly}

Explain why:
ie. link your assessment
style to the needs of
your particular
listeners

coming and needs years. In the future, although teenage and school-leaver habits may change slightly, it is highly likely that this issue will be discussed with a similar clarity and evidence although its method of delivery may become virtual as technology and society, including schools, evolve.

At
156/10

At clear and straightforward.
Slow your thinking down to
90% and this will help reduce
those annoying crossroads which
distract. Have fun with this task.

PJW