

For those of you who have just completed Year 12, congratulations, you did it. You've reached the end. 13 years of school. Nearly 5000 days as a student. All behind you.

But, you're not really finished, you're actually just beginning...You've reached the start of the road. An unpredictable road. A road that may run straight just as you thought it would, or it might wind in a roundabout direction or branch off in ways you never expected. Given the ever-changing world that we're in, it's most likely to be the latter. But that's the beauty of being at the beginning. There's no way of knowing where you'll end up. Everything is a possibility.

My own journey has been an interesting and sometimes surprising one.

27 years ago, when I sat where you are now, I could never have imagined where the path I was about to step on would take me. I didn't even know that half the jobs I've had existed. I can't imagine that I would have ever believed that I'd be the Managing Director of the Walt Disney Company, let alone a board member of my beloved Western Bulldogs. It's not what I set out to do, but it's where my journey has taken me.

That journey has seen me work across multiple industries from publishing, consumer goods, retail and media. I've run businesses across India, Korea and South East Asia and my career has provided me with the opportunity to travel the world. For four years, my husband and I surprisingly found ourselves living in the mid-west in the US where I was the Global head of Advertising and Brand Management at Hallmark Cards. Unexpected, but exciting.

When I left Mentone Girls' Secondary College, my first step was a Bachelor of Arts here at Monash, I majored in Politics and English. Whilst I was ambitious and knew I wanted to be successful in my chosen career, it wasn't clear to me at that point what my chosen career would be. It was from there that my journey began to unfold. One experience led to another, inspiration came from unexpected places.

As I work for the world's largest entertainment company, famous for special entertainment with heart, perhaps it's not so surprising that the characters within our films have a deep and infinite wisdom that often strikes a chord with me. I thought I'd share some of my favourites with you tonight.

As you listen to my speech, there's no question you may find it odd that I'm quoting Disney characters at such a formal event, despite my obvious bias towards the business that I love. But I hope, as you listen to the sentiment within each quote, that the underlying insight will resonate with you...

As you all sit here at this special event, I can only imagine what you might be dreaming of for your future. Take heed from Jiminy Cricket, Pinocchio's conscience who said. **"If your heart is in your dream, no request is too extreme"**.

Without question, you should believe with all your heart that whatever it is you want to achieve, you can. There's always a way if you want it enough.

Aurora from sleeping beauty believed **'if you dream a thing more than once, it's sure to come true'**, and Ariel from the Little Mermaid wondered, **'Who says that my dreams have to just stay my dreams'**.

Whether you achieve your hearts desire or not isn't in the hands of anyone else.

Alice in Wonderland declared, **'this is my dream, I'll decide where I go from here'**.

But what if what you've been dreaming of all along, turns out to not be what you thought it would?

Rapunzel pondered **'I've been looking out of a window for 18 years, dreaming what I might feel like when those lights rise in the sky. What if it's not everything I dreamed it will be?'**

It's natural as you prepare for your future that you may feel anxious, worried if you're on the right track. I'm sure many of you will face sliding door moments. Try not to worry too much about this. As Alice also said, **'If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there'**,

As far as whether things will turn out as you thought, according to Remy from Ratatouille **'The only thing predictable about life is its unpredictability'**.

But I agree with the wise Mrs Pott's from Beauty & the Beast who believed – **'It'll all turn out alright in the end, you'll see'**. And she was right.

Grandmother Willow from Pocahontas advised, **'Sometimes the right path is not the easiest one'**. So be prepared to fight for what you want. If you're knocked down, get back up again. You are in charge of your own destiny.

It's so important that regardless of what's going on around you that you believe in your own strengths and are true to yourself. Cinderella said, **'The greatest risk any of us will take is to be seen as we are.'**

Believe Mufasa from the Lion King whose key insight shared with his son was **'Look inside yourself, you are more than what you have become.'**

Be prepared to back yourself, even when others don't. You will be surprised how strong you can be.

As Rapunzel said, **'Don't trust anyone who says you can't do it, show them you can.'**

The villain Ursula in The Little Mermaid shared a poignant insight: **'A woman doesn't know how precious her voice is until she has been silenced'**. Believe in your own voice. Be prepared to stand up for yourself and what you believe in – always.

And when push comes to shove, remember Maree from the Aristocats who believed defiantly that **'Ladies don't start fights, but they sure can finish them'**.

Most importantly, no matter what happens, like Dory, **'Just keep swimming'**.

There's no question the journey you have been on to date, has shaped where you are today. I personally feel very privileged to have had a Mentone Girls' Secondary College education. The school gave me the confidence to believe in myself, to reach for the stars, even if at the time, I didn't know which star to reach for.

You too are all very lucky to have this amazing foundation. However, I'm sure on your journey through school to date, you have faced good times as well as challenges, but as you start this next chapter, I agree with Edna Mode from the Incredibles who says, **'I never look back darling, it distracts me from the now'**.

Regardless of what has come before, every new year is a new beginning.

I hope it's the beginning of everything you ever dreamed, or have yet to dream.

For me, as well as achieving the career I'd aspired to, I'm also blessed to have a 14 year old son, a 10 year old daughter and a 24 year old stepdaughter. There's no question, it's been a juggle, but I wouldn't have it any other way. We're all in it together.

For those who are finishing up at the school and starting out on YOUR journey, as you head out into the big, wide and exciting world, remember the words of the wise philosopher Winnie the Pooh who said **'You are indeed braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think.'**

I wish you all the very best of luck.

Congratulations on your achievement.