



Acts of Kindness

Floored by an 11-year-old! (in the nicest possible way)

Let me share a beautiful story from earlier this week. Sue and I were invited to be guest authors at Tarneit P-9 College in Melbourne. The opportunity that we were presented with was to speak to 200+ Year 6 students about our book. Well, we love talking about our book, we love young people, and therefore we quickly responded with a resounding yes!

As the day approached, Sue and I thought about how to adapt our message to be relevant and engaging to 10- to 12-year-olds. While we were preparing, one of the Year 6 teachers shared some welcome letters the students had written to us. This simple but thoughtful gesture felt like such an act of kindness! Each of the nine Year 6 teachers had their own copy of our book, which they had let the students borrow and read over the past few weeks. Some students had then asked if they could write to us on their own initiative. The heartfelt messages in these letters absolutely floored us.

To give you one example, a Year 6 boy wrote: “I used to be scared of fear because I thought it was a bad thing, but that was before your inspirational quote on Page 52. It really touched my heart, because I’m always scared of doing something outside my comfort zone, like for example letting my sister go outside but now I know that that means I love her.”

Reading these letters inspired us to create a ‘lite’ version of our 7-Step process. We designed a 3-step method to help the students draft their very first personal manifesto.

- **Step 1: The Energising Step** (just like in our book!) – We asked the students to reflect on the character strengths they saw in their friends, and then on a strength they saw in themselves. They completed the sentence starter: “What’s one of my character strengths?”
- **Step 2: The Grateful Step** – The students talked about the various gifts (emotional, social, physical, etc.) they’ve received in life. They then finished the sentence: “One of the gifts I am grateful for is ... and this helps me to ...”
- **Step 3: The Hopeful Step** – We guided the students in exploring one of their hopes for the future. We also discussed the difference between action-oriented hope and passive, wishful thinking. They wrapped up by completing the sentence: “One of my hopes for the future is...”

By the end, the students had drafted their personal manifestos, which they would refine later in class and then graphically design using their tech skills.

The kindness of the student letters moved us deeply. But what truly warmed our hearts was how attentively the students listened, participated in the exercises, and then asked such thoughtful questions. Their acts of kindness gave us far more than we ever expected.