



THE LEARNING CONNEXION

School of Creativity and Art

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Jonathan Milne Director of The Learning Connexion – Graduation Speech 2020

Thanks for being with us for a rather different graduation and before we go any further congratulations to all our graduates, it is always a pleasure to be at this stage and be able to say well done, you have really done well. I was going to talk about strange times and everybody's in the strange time and you probably don't need to hear much more about that, although the interesting thing is we're always in strange times. I think in some ways the boring catastrophes are the most important, where things are quietly happening and they kind of sneak up on us. We've had a pandemic, but historically there have been quite a lot of pandemics. We know in logical terms that this is likely to happen. But there are other things, several matters, especially environmental matters and so on which we don't know quite how to go forward and I think the important thing from that point of view is creativity has a vital role to play. Like how do we deal with climate change, how do we deal actually with education change, how do we deal with economic change and at first you think well this is beyond my reach and up to a point yes I think that's right, but collectively I think we can have a real impact and that's what I see as a fundamental of The Learning Connexion I think it's a provider that can make a difference if everyone goes with us. I think there is a place for everyone and we can all make a difference in our own way and I think there's also a place for the organisation as a whole where we can nudge things along.

I think it's important to remember that creativity itself involves danger, I was looking at the meaning of the word orthodox and orthodox comes down to 'right teaching' and creativity demands to some extent that we step out of 'right teaching' because we don't know where it's going to end up, so what we are teaching in a sense has to be unorthodox, has to prepare people for change and we have to make the best of change and build on that. Now mostly in education the tradition is that we get rewarded for right answers, we don't get generally rewarded for asking the right questions or for coming up with situations which just present such complicated puzzles we can't even get to the point of knowing what the question is. And yet with creativity that's happening all the time and I think in education terms people think it's dangerous to go into a situation where people are asking these questions or stepping very much into the unknown. I think it's actually far more dangerous to get into somewhere where creativity is stifled, I think creativity right now is the hope for the future, not the other way around, it's not the danger it is actually the hope.

Now our school agreement says what I think is one of the most important fundamentals, we have to look after yourself, look after others, look after the environment. If we can move from there we've got something profoundly different, because I think at the moment clearly that looking after is not occurring on the scale that it needs to occur. Actually there is a curious thing, Einstein said "creativity is contagious, pass it on". Makes it sound a bit like a pandemic, but I think that's exactly what we have to do, we have to make creativity contagious, we have to inspire other people. And in fact if the other people are inspired, if each one of us can inspire more than one person it is going to spread in a way I

think that is at the heart of our purpose. We have to spread creativity. I like the idea also that we actually have to spread this idea of looking after each other, which the government has described as kindness and I think that's pretty good. So if we're developing creativity and kindness, we are going in a direction that has a chance of working really well. I think some of this overlaps with the Serenity Prayer and it's worth mentioning that, it says, "grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change to the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference". And I think that puts us all in a position where we can make our own call and we have the chance to move forward. I believe as a group we can have an influence on change and individually we change what matters for us in our own world. All about it is figuring out what changes to make. And the message I have comes back to focusing on making kindness and creativity contagious, curiosity and conversations are a way of life and they never stop, that is why we are here and that is why we work together. So my message is be kind and stay open to your creativity, congratulations and enjoy your journey, thank you.