



NEW PLYMOUTH BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL
TE KURA TAMATĀNE O NGĀMOTU

HEADMASTERS SPEECH
AWARDS DINNER
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Designated Survivor Netflix Series Trailer

Good evening everyone, some of you are here wondering did he show us the wrong clip, maybe has he lost his marbles..... some of you are thinking great I get to watch Netflix, I don't have to listen to him. Some probably weren't even paying attention to the two and half minute clip of a random Netflix show.

Every year for this speech, I normally find some inspiration from either a book I have read or something topical or newsworthy. This year one of the best pieces of leadership inspiration was from a cheesy Netflix series.

Some of you have watched it maybe. Perhaps to the younger audience I have moved even further down the coolness scale. If that was even possible.

I am not one for Netflix series and this one was actually recommended to me by one of the NPBHS staff. An English teacher. An English teacher whom I believe is also very high up on the barometer of uncoolness. - Mr Elgar.

I am very thankful to Mr Elgar for he put me onto a leadership gem. I am not sure it if was intentional of him, maybe he felt like I was the Designated Headmaster. A role no one else wanted or thought I should do. Maybe he thought I needed to chill out a bit.... I expect (and hope) the later.

If it's good enough for a nearly retired English teacher, who is a connoisseur of great prose, a devourer of timeless verse, a disciple of epic motion picture. It's good enough for me I thought.

Tom Kirkman (the story's hero) was catapulted into the role of presidency by accident. He was due to be fired that day and ended up having the top job. He was nervous and inexperienced and certainly wasn't doing the role for the power or the prestige.

He did it because he had to. The best reason and the most important reason to step up and lead. This wasn't about ego, it was about leading with strong uncompromising values and morals. The best type of leadership.

Tom Kirkman was awesome and saved the world from mass destruction in just about every one of the 43 episodes, far fetched - tick , overly dramatic - tick, unrealistic - tick, more cheese than a mouse's pantry - tick.

But there were a number of very good leadership lessons which I thought I would share with you. After all, you are the leaders of today and tomorrow and with that comes great responsibility.

I also need to table, I don't particularly think the Americans do a great job of this whole presidency thing. The current fiasco is more like some far fetched Netflix series than Designated Survivor.

In fact if anyone wrote a series Trump Survivor, most would laugh it off and perhaps it wouldn't get past the censors office due to the racism and abhorrent sexism.

No offence to the Americans in the audience. No doubt you are here in NZ because you think the same way. If anyone is the antithesis of Donald Trump it's Tom Kirkman.

There are examples of positive life lessons everywhere. We just have to be open to them and learn from them. I found myself studying the characters the situations and outcomes of Tom Kirkman's every decision.

I found myself giving it these ones, these ones, and even these ones.... in the living room when Tom Kirkman made those crucial decisions the audience was hoping he would make - I can tell you I am not normally one for spontaneous acts of celebration - so it must have really struck a chord with me.

My wife, who didn't watch it, would walk past the lounge and give me strange looks like I was an intruder, cell phone at the ready to call the appropriate medical or emergency professionals.

After watching the series (not proud of myself, honesty call here, I did watch sometimes two episodes in a row, in a moment of reckless abandon one Sunday I watched three - that doesn't leave this room).

Weirdly, I even made a leadership reflection in our teaching appraisal journal, something we all have to do as part of our certification to remain as teachers. Even when I am relaxing I am working. Fellas - Very uncool - I know.

So what were the lessons from the series.

Doing the Right Thing doesn't always make you feel good

Young men, you will be faced with many tough decisions during your life and you must remember that doing the right thing doesn't always make you feel good.

The things that make you feel good in the short term are the easy things. It's the things that make you feel good for the rest of your life that really count.

I hope you all continue to do the right thing from here and you feel just as good when you are old and grey as you did when you just had your nappy changed.

For now I'm all you've got

There will be a few moments in your life when you will all have to step up. You will be the only one who can, who should, who will absolutely need to step up. Some in this room have already been in that position.

When that moment comes, and remember there maybe more than one moment, make sure you do step up. Make sure you make the most of that opportunity.

It could be a civil defence emergency, a medical emergency, a work or family emergency. Step up and do your best no matter what. When you are the logical one in the room lead with purpose and courage.

Your absolute best will be more than enough.

Without truth there can be no trust

This is an easy and cliché one... How truthful are you. Are you always truthful to your partner to your parents to those around you. It's very hard to do and I think it is always aspirational as I am not sure anyone has never told a lie but we should work hard to eliminate every last one.

It amazes me that people in relationships act differently around their partners than they do around their friends. Not sure why this is, you will all know someone like this.

If you can't be truthful to yourself and those around you by always being the real you, then I think you need to look at yourself. Let truth be the lighthouse not the iceberg, lurking, hidden from view.

Now be careful with the weapon of truth. That phrase, "*if you don't have anything nice to don't say anything at all*" works just fine as well. Take note of that phrase.

Also, a heads up, if you ever get married, some simple truths that I advise you just keep to yourselves (a little free advice if you will)... rather than speaking just keep quiet, don't say things like, and this is just an example... I don't really like your mother that much, you are overreacting, you couldn't drive if your life depended on it, I'm really just thinking about nothing at all.

For the record, I love my mother in law and my wife is a much better driver than me.

If everyone is afraid of losing how on earth can anyone win. Carpe Diem

Dare to win young men. Dare to dream big and achieve everything you want to achieve. Don't be constrained by societies rules and expectations of what you should do, what others have done before you - invisible timelines and glass ceilings socialising you into their wishes and expectations not your own.

Look after number one and dare to win your prize. Your prize could be anything. It can be anything. It should be anything.

Winning does not come at the cost of decency and morality. Everything else is up for grabs when you dare to win.

There are battles you lose even if you win

We have all been here before. Those times you have point scored in an argument, proved a friend or a parent wrong, been arrogant or gloating in victory.

The price we pay is a loss of friendship, loss of respect and ultimately a hit to our own self respect also.

Think about the outcome, think about the other person in the situation and try to establish if the small win was actually worth the longer term loss. Once again we have all made this mistake, if you have that's ok, learn from it. Grow from it. Challenge yourself to not do it again.

Take me for example, I promise to never call Mr Elgar uncool again. Tonight.

When your ship is taking on water you don't jump you grab a bucket and we're not defined by our difficulties were defined by how we respond to them

Grit, is the difference between high performance and non performance. What you do when the going gets tough is actually what defines you. We are all champions when life is good and life is easy. How do you react when you don't get that job, that promotion, that team selection, how you react is what really counts. When life is tough do you roll up your sleeves and work harder.

Tom Kirkman rolled up his sleeves, he got the job done. He's the man.

So there you have it. Tom Kirkman's leadership lessons. Young men you have my permission to watch this series.

You have my permission to binge watch it (3 episodes in a row) should you feel the need to.

Tell your caregivers its research the Headmaster gave to you. One catch - After your NCEA exams.

So young men, should you be thrust into Presidency or any other difficult situation, you have the tools, the blueprint the instruction manual to make great decisions, make those around you great and in doing so be truly great yourself.

I am confident in the future with you at the ready.

I am confident in all of you, you great young men.

Young Tom Kirkman's.

I am confident in you, our NPBHS Designated Survivors.

Thank you.

Paul Verić
Headmaster