



Prefects' Assembly Morning Comment 2026

Friday 26 June

Prefect, Amelia Blockley



Have you ever been having that WOW.... moment in life, and then, it all disappears due to something that is completely out of your control? Let me take you on **my** journey through some of these experiences.

At the end of last year, I faced one of the hardest challenges of my life so far. One night, my family got a phone call with the news that one of my cousins had gone missing. I was shocked. The days and weeks that followed were filled with nonstop searching for him, looking in the hills, on the beaches and around the cliffs, in boats, in walking shoes, and still finding no answers. My initial shock turned into sadness, hopelessness, grief, and pain. It wasn't easy and it is still sensitive in many ways to this day. It's a continuing journey for me, my extended family and many others. At the time I didn't know what to do, I felt stuck and I was struggling. But I reached out. I talked to friends. I leaned on family. I

found people who would listen.

There are times in life where you are going to be at your lowest of lows and you are not going to know what to do; there are going to be moments where you feel like giving up; there are going to be times where you feel that you don't belong. But let me tell you one thing... giving up is never the answer. It's not the solution. It doesn't make the situation better. And there is **always** growth on the other side of tough times. Everyone will face challenges at some point in their life, whether it's really big or seemingly small. But every challenge matters. Albert Einstein, one of the most famous scientists of all time, was once a refugee and said: "In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."

At St Andrew's College, we have so many opportunities; sport, music, debating, performing arts, academic competitions, and countless other extra curricular activities. All of these interests and passions take a lot of dedicated time and from this, there can be the added pressure; pressure of peers; pressure to work harder or do better. The pressure itself can become a challenge. There are so many mental and physical challenges that people can face.

I have grown up with so many opportunities, and I am incredibly grateful for them, but in Year 8 the chance to take them all, changed. I faced a challenge that I'm still facing today, and it has had a massive effect on my sport. I have had to pull out of teams, pull out of games, pull out of seasons, all because of an ongoing injury to my patella. And for someone who loves sport... this became a huge obstacle. With no easy fixes available I had to push through pain to try keep playing sport at the level that I wanted to. Dealing with multiple models of knee braces, miles of D3K6 tape, along with feelings of misery and disappointment over the years. With no permanent solutions, this was a big challenge. I've had to fight the physical pain, battle the mental frustration, and deal with missing out on so many chances that could have led to more successes.

Some of us heard Old Collegian Lauren Whittaker speak a few years ago about the setbacks she faced with her ACL injury and how she overcame it with the support from teachers, family and peers. Her story showed me that challenges don't have to stop us.



Her story also gave me the confidence to go way **way** out of my comfort zone to put my hand up to deliver this speech today.

My goal today isn't to give you any solutions, but to give you some ideas on how to face your personal challenges, whether it is pressure to achieve well, the time commitments from a hobby or activity you do, or if it is a mentally overwhelming situation.

For me the most important thing is to **stay connected** in with friends and family; seeking out the school counsellor, or finding a teacher when you need to chat to someone.

Another thing that helps is asking myself some questions. What is the most creative way I can turn this weakness or limitation into a strength? How can you turn the negatives into positives without it spilling over into other parts of my life and affecting anyone else? The art of turning a negative into a positive means that you are finding solutions to help yourself and be true to who you are.

It is also helpful to find one **small, manageable step** I can take today to make this situation seem less massive? Because often it's not the giant leaps but taking one small step after another that creates progress and that progress becomes growth.

To quote Dr Seuss: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself. Any direction you choose."

I've also learnt that if you want to become the best version of yourself, challenges are unavoidable. Having this **mindset** means that those challenges could end in a result that you didn't even know you could achieve. "Always remember you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think and loved more than you know." When we do lots of the small manageable steps, even if they are hard, they can turn into bigger outcomes or dreams.

With challenges comes a chance to make a difference, to become a better person, to step out of your comfort zone and make you stronger. Overcoming challenges is about seeing what the real you is like. Are you someone who takes that extra chance? If it gets hard, do you give up? Or do you strive for a better outcome? Do you ask for help?

Nelson Mandela said: "It **always** seems impossible until it's done."

Some challenges will always stay with us, but they can remind us of hope, of friendship and of strength we didn't know we had.

When my cousin went missing, we didn't just sit back and lose hope; our extended families and friends all searched for him together and yes, it was so hard at times because there were no signs and there is **still** no resolution. But we stuck together. We supported one another somehow and it helped us all carry the load.

Helen Keller, famous for overcoming incredible odds to become the first deaf and blind person to earn a degree in the US said, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

Look around you! These people are the people that you get to do life with. They can share your sadness and disappointment; help you carry the hard moments and remind you that you don't have to do it alone.

If you take one thing away from this speech, let it be that giving up is never an option, challenges will come and go in your life, but you never have to face them alone. There are people who care, people out there to help you.



St Andrew's College

The challenges don't need to define who you are, but how you overcome them does.

So step out and seek help.

And remember, as Dr Seuss said...

"Today you are you, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you."