

Letter from Jenna, International Education Outreach Manager at One Giant Leap Australia Foundation.

To all the students who don't fit in the normal box and want to experiment, explore and design strange and wonderful things- this is to you.

I'm a little weird. As a child I invented pulley systems with my skipping rope to move plushies up and down my favourite climbing tree. My sister would skip with her rope and look at me with a strange expression. I looked to my sister a lot and thought I had to be like her. She got the best grades, was the top student- so I assumed I'd have to follow her example. Use the skipping rope for its intended purpose, not as part of a pulley system. If I did things like her, I'd be the best- have the best future, best career, and by that process- be happy and successful.



I followed this mindset for years- the path of happiness and success. I felt successful but I wasn't happy. My friends, family, peers, teachers- they would tell me to just be me. But what does that even mean? How do I know that the me that I am thinking of is **authentically** me? I thought about experiences that were different from my sister that made me excited.

I made a costume and hot glued myself into it- I couldn't use the toilet for 6 hours because the whole thing would fall apart. I learned soldering because a friend of mine pulled a window mechanism out of an old car and we wanted to re-engineer the electronics. My sister would never have done this. I realised- this is me. This weird, experimental kid is me. Everything felt easier from that point onwards.

To the weird students- you know the people you can trust and depend on. Think about the things that make you work hard- so when you step back you say 'yeah, I did this' proudly. You already have the skills that fit into a STEAM career- and it might not exist yet. That's okay. It will appear when the time is right.

Trust your instincts, and keep moving forward.

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