

## Graduation Speech UWC RCN 2017

Liv Ronglan, Norwegian Red Cross

Dear Students. Congratulations! It is wonderful to see you! A beautiful bucket of certified Red Cross ambassadors ready to influence the world. I am so honored to be representing The Red Cross on a day like this.

I find this place remarkable. The whole world present in this little fjord bay. It inspires me to see how you all grab the opportunities that are here, both academically and in other programs. Thanks to the management team, teachers and staff for the fantastic school you are creating for the students every day!

A college shaped by the UWC values and the 7 fundamental principles of the Red Cross was at the heart of the founding fathers of this school. Our common vision is to prepare you to be ethical leaders and ambassadors for UWC & Red Cross Values throughout your lives. This is not a wishy washi little statement. It is quite ambitious!

But, as I have seen from the leadership of this school and having learned to know some of you, I know this is on track! You leave this school with potential to be real ethical leaders and Red Cross ambassadors in your communities, being trained in Humanity, Impartiality, tolerance and peace, looking for positive resources in all humans and build on similarities and trust rather than the opposite. This is the mindset that is so needed in the world today.

I want to quote Dalai Lama who says; The planet does not need more so called “successful people”. The planet desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers and lovers of all kind! He also says; People were created to be loved. Things were created to be used. The reason why the world is in chaos is because things are being loved and people are being used! We need to change this perspective!

Every day the RC sees the devastating consequences of conflicts & war. This has to end! It's extremely hard to restore what is broken. So, we must prevent it from happening! That is where you come in, graduates. The circle of hatred and violence, suspicion and prejudice needs to be broken by someone who sees people for what they truly are, who can present new solutions and create peace and understanding coming from within.

One of the great RC shapers, Jean Pictet, highlighted mutual understanding, compassion and respect for all human beings as values for the principle of Humanity. And to train an impartial mindset we need to strengthen skills like active listening, empathy, non-violent communication and tolerance.

This is your competence, dear students. You have been living this form of humanity and impartiality every day for 2 years. Sharing rooms with 5 other students from different cultures, worked together in projects and assisting people who need help. Some of you have been volunteers at the Haugland Rehabilitation Centre and some of you have been guides at Ridder Rennet, some of you have been first aiders.

But even if you have not been active in humanitarian and voluntary work, you have been trained in the principles of humanity and impartiality anyway, because these principles are about human connection, learning how to relate to others in an open, curious and positive way. It is a two-way flow of energy, thoughts, feelings, behavior. Being conscious about your effects on others and using empathy to truly understand the perspective of others will make you ethical leaders.

If I should, on the last day of school, encourage you to be serious in learning a skill, I would say: Go on and learn non-violent communication:

The key is to become an active listener- to yourself and others. It is all about looking for your feelings and deepest needs, and look for the deepest needs in others. Instead of acting spontaneously based on your immediate reactions, you take a deep breath and observe what happens in you. Then you can speak about your needs and desires, and avoid attacking the other.

In the Red Cross, we use this communication method in our activities, most importantly in street mediation. This activity trains teenagers to solve tensions and conflicts by using non-violent communication instead of violence. One of the guys told me he had solved a threatening situation in a taxi line late at night just by talking about his own feelings, needs and desires. So, you need to be honest and personal and avoid the generalizations, attacks and judgements.

And you are well trained; at this school, you have developed the ability to challenge assumptions, change perspectives and think in a different way. Use it!

I want to use this opportunity to give you 5 points of advice on your way out in the world:

1. Dare to be vulnerable, open and honest when you connect with people
2. Cut the small talk – get on with the Big talk, ask important question, use non-violent communication
3. Don't let anyone talk you down, and that includes your own critical voice
4. Be a Red Cross ambassador, in action and in speech. And do contact your national, regional or local Red Cross or Red Crescent society when you get home

And last, but not least, always remember; It is nice to be important, but it is much more important to be nice.

Dear students, on behalf of the Norwegian Red Cross; Go out there and make the necessary changes! I wish you the very best of luck! Thank you!