I would like to tell you a story of a little girl who was in a drawing lesson. She was six, and she was at the back, drawing. This girl hardly ever paid attention in class, but in this drawing lesson, she did. The teacher was fascinated. She went over to her, and she said, "What are you drawing?" And the little girl said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." And the teacher said, "But nobody knows what God looks like." And the girl said, "They will, in a minute."

The remarkable thing is that kids will take a chance. If they don't know, they'll have a go. They're not frightened of being wrong. I don't mean to say that being wrong is the same thing as being creative. What we do know is, if you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original. And by the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. As adults we stigmatize mistakes. And we're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can happen to you. And the result is that we are educating people out of their creative capacities.

Picasso once said this, he said that all children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up. I believe this passionately, that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it. So why is this?

Our education system is predicated on the idea of academic ability. And there's a reason. Around the world, there were no public systems of education, really, before the 19th century. They all came into being to meet the needs of industrialism. So, this hierarchy is rooted on two ideas.

Number one, that the most useful subjects for work are at the top. So, you were probably steered benignly away from things at school when you were a kid, things you liked, on the grounds that you would never get a job doing that. Don't do music, you're not going to be a musician; don't do art, you won't be an artist. Benign advice -- now, profoundly mistaken. The whole world is engulfed in an educational revolution.

And the second is academic ability, which has really come to dominate our view of intelligence, because universities designed the system in their image. And the consequence is that many highly-talented, brilliant, creative
people think they're not intelligent, because the thing they were good at, at school wasn't valued, or was actually stigmatized. And I think we can't afford to go on that way.

In the next 30 years, according to UNESCO, more people worldwide will be graduating through education than since the beginning of history. More people, and it's the result of technology and its transformative effect on work, and demography and the huge explosion in population.

Suddenly, degrees aren't worth anything. Isn't that true? Several decades ago if you had a degree, you had a job. If you didn't have a job, it's because you didn't want one. But now kids with degrees are often heading home to carry on playing video games, because you need an MA where the previous job required a BA, and now you need a PhD for the other. It's a process of academic inflation. And it indicates the whole structure of education is shifting beneath our feet. We need to radically rethink our view of intelligence and stop educating young people out of their creative capacities.

(Adapted from Sir Ken Robinson’s TED talk February 2006)