

THE THRIVING ABROAD PODCAST

**#Episode 64: Supporting Expat Kids to
Thrive**

**Developing Emotional Intelligence and
Resilience**

With

Louise Wiles and Dr Sarah Whyte

TRANSCRIPT

Welcome

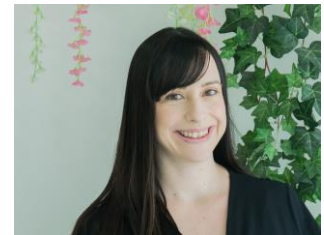
Thanks for taking time to download the transcript from today's conversation. If you would like to learn more about us, have some questions or would simply like to start a conversation with us our website/contact details are given below.

The questions we ask ourselves, shape our lives. Here are some questions prompted by today's podcast:

- How do you speak about and model friendship to your children?
- In what way do you respond when your children are feeling sad and emotional?
- How could you respond more helpfully?
- What is your resilience response – dandelion or orchid, or somewhere in between?
- What causes you and your children to feel overloaded and stressed?
- What can you do to calm your response and support your children to calm their own?
- How do you show yourself self-compassion in times of change and transition?

About Podcast Guest: Dr Sarah Whyte

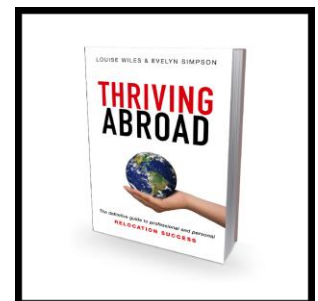
Dr Sarah Whyte works as a consultant, speaker, facilitator and an ICF credentialed coach. She has a degree in psychology, a masters in education and her doctorate focused on supporting Third Culture Kids with emotional intelligence. Based in Singapore, Sarah works with organisations, international schools and families to equip people with powerful, practical skills to boost their resilience and emotional wellbeing throughout global relocations.



- Learn more about Sarah and her work [HERE](#)
- Interested in Sarah's new book, learn more [HERE](#)
- To buy the coaching cards Sarah mentions go [HERE](#)

About Podcast Host: Louise Wiles

Louise is an expat change and transition coach with professional experience as a learning and development specialist and personal performance coach, with a Master's in Occupational Psychology from the University of Leicester (UK). Louise has lived and worked across Europe moving internationally seven times in the past twenty years. Louise recently published the book: *Thriving Abroad: The definitive guide to professional and personal relocation success*. Buy a copy [HERE](#) - use the code THRIVING20 to access a 20% discount and register to download the associated workbook for free [HERE](#). You can get in touch with Louise [HERE](#)



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Louise Wiles 00:38

Hello, Sarah, really lovely to welcome you to the Thriving Abroad podcast today.

Dr Sarah Whyte 00:44

Thank you. I'm really excited to be here and to be chatting to you.

Louise Wiles 00:48

Well, it's great that you're here. So my morning your afternoon, because Sarah is sitting talking to us from Singapore. I'm sure we're going to hear a bit more about that in a minute. But just to start us off Sarah And to help people to kind of imagine who you are, and where you are, tell us a little bit about your expat experience so far, and what's led you to be in Singapore? And then a little bit about what you do professionally?

Dr Sarah Whyte 01:12

Sure, yeah. Happy to. So, my expat journey started when I was in my late 20s. I was a primary school teacher, and was very happy living my life in the UK. But had thought, actually teaching abroad sounds really appealing, be great to have some teaching experience in an international school. Not to mention the opportunities for travel, which, you know, I've never been travelling around Asia before. So that sounded like a great option. And so, I actually applied for a job at the British International School in Singapore, having never been to Singapore before. Got the job, and just thought, 'Oh, this will be a nice two years', you know, do some teaching, and, you know, have a really different experience, slightly different curriculum, and have all these experiences. Living in a different country, and 12 years later, I'm still here. So, I can thoroughly recommend Singapore. It's a it's a great place to live. I met my husband here, he's Australian. And yeah, so my, my teaching experience here was very much, I was a primary class teacher. But, I was also head of curriculum for the personal and social curriculum at school. Did that for seven years, and that was really interesting, because I got to really, really have some impact in terms of things like friendship skills, and conflict resolution, which I very quickly realised was very different in an international school, compared to working in the UK. Now, if you can imagine my school in the UK, I loved it. It was in an area where children went to the school that parents had also gone to, in most cases, the grandparents had also gone to the same school. And, you know, even the whole family, cousins, they all lived within walking distance of the school. So, to get a new child was very unusual. And for a child to leave was also very, very unusual. So contrast that, with moving to Singapore. In my first term where out of my classe of 24, a quarter of the children left to go elsewhere in the first term. And I'd also come from an area in the northeast, which was, you know, lots of parents working minimum wage jobs, working two jobs to support families, to conversations where kids like, 'Oh, well this this year, we went diving in the Maldives and what did you do this summer'? And I was like, Well, it wasn't quite like that - It was moving country, which was quite a shock to the system.

Dr Sarah Whyte 03:50

So, all of a sudden had this really different cohort of children, which was really interesting, but what I started noticing was there were quite specific challenges associated with this very high rate of mobility in the community. And that led me to actually focus my doctoral thesis on supporting third culture kids with an emotional intelligence intervention, because I wanted to do something that would really helped the community I was working in. But, in the end,

what that meant was I actually ended up moving into self employment and into my own business. So I now work as a Consultant, a facilitator, a Speaker and I'm an Accredited Coach with ICF. And my focus is really all about equipping people with simple strategies, but powerful strategies, to build their resilience and their well being to really help them thrive. And part of what I do is focusing on well being and resilience in the context of relocation, particularly for families and particularly supporting children. Because, certainly when I was reading for my doctorate, I was quite surprised at how little research there was in the area. And also, you know, the kind of lack of resources at that time for supporting families with essentially what is quite a disruptive thing, and quite difficult to deal with, in lots of ways.

Louise Wiles 05:20

Fantastic, right. So that's great. Thank you for that introduction. So we're gonna pull on all that experience and expertise now.

Dr Sarah Whyte 05:29

Excellent.

Louise Wiles 05:29

Because I have got a feeling that you've got quite a lot to share with us about how we can better support children, and I totally agree, having lived in Portugal and international schools, I have seen exactly that, that whilst everyone was experiencing this kind of mobile life and quite high rates of transition and change. There wasn't a huge amount of support for that. So I'm really interested to talk more about this and, and how we can better support our kids through it.

Dr Sarah Whyte 05:58

Sorry, sorry, Louise. If I can just add in at this point as well, I think I don't know what your experience was. But certainly, my experience as a teacher and some other parents, is, it's quite amazing how quickly people accept this as the status quo. Is that, 'Oh we move a lot, people leave a lot, but that's just the way things are here'. I don't know what your experience was with that. But, I certainly thought, Well, that doesn't sound right. There's got to be something else you can actually do to support a bit better. And international schools, I think, are in such a good position to actually support families with that. And my take on it was always, I think we could actually help a little bit more with this.

Louise Wiles 06:40

Yes, yeah. No, I agree. I think I think there was often this kind of assumption that the support was there. But for me, it's interesting, isn't it? Because also, as you said that, I was just thinking about that kind of cycle every year when it gets to summer or the last term and, you know, the kids are preparing to leave and it was always a process that we're all going through and chuntering about. So, for those of us who were staying, we'd be sad to be seeing people going and having to adjust to the fact that they weren't going to be there, and seeing them withdraw as well, which I think was often quite a surprising thing for me, that they were, you know people psychologically begin to withdraw from you and from their friendships, I think sometimes as well. The stayers were experiencing that, whereas the goers were experiencing their range of challenges around moving on. But, we weren't really talking about it. It was just kind of well this is it, this is how it is. And the same with the

school. So yes. really interested to talk more about this. So, let's start then, by that that's one of the challenges I guess to that point every year that happens when kids kids are leaving. Let's talk a bit more about the challenges that you as a teacher in a professional working in this area have had seen and working in an international school?

Dr Sarah Whyte 07:55

Yeah, sure, I think and certainly one thing that came through in the research. And it's really interesting reading about this having been a teacher, because, every piece of evidence or every story, I immediately could connect that to a child that I taught. You know like that that, like you say that withdrawn from friendships, I could immediately pictured girls that had happened to who were like, 'well, I'm moving. So I need to find a new best friend. So we can still be friends, but we're not best friends anymore'. And I was like, the amount of upset this causes. And, I'm just thinking, right, you know, look, as a teacher, I'm trained in how to teach children how to read and how to support with writing and how to extend writing and how to teach maths, but nobody has trained me in this. And so, it was really an interesting process going through the whole Doctorate. And one of the things that came out in that research is, one of the big issues for children who grow up internationally, is unresolved grief. And that's basically when if you think about grief, it sounds really dramatic. But, when you look at the definition of grief, it's really about a normal and natural reaction to loss and change. And, if you think about these mobile lifestyles that many of us lead, they are absolutely characterised by so much loss and change. And it's constant. You know, like in international schools, you've basically got that end of the year, where it's just a huge disruption, there's so much loss and there's so much change, and everyone's just trying to deal with that and cope with that as best they can. So, this issue of unresolved grief, um is basically when those feelings around loss and change, of losing friends of moving on and leaving somewhere behind, are when that feeling of grief hasn't been processed. So, typically, what I hear from children, is that their parents will say to them, 'oh, it's and we know it's hard moving, but let's just focus on the positives, let's focus on the really good stuff. And yeah, you're missing friends, but you'll make new friends'. And, I think parents are missing a really valuable opportunity there, just to focus on how children actually feel and let them process that grief and talk about being sad. There's a real misconception among parents that talking about grief makes it worse, when in fact, the opposite is actually true. It's vital to talk about it because, children need to process it to make sense of it. And it's only when you've moved through that feeling that you can put it to one side and say, 'Okay, I'm going to I'm going to move on now'. When that's unresolved, that can lead to issues later on. Not all children, but certainly that can be an issue. So, that's definitely a really important thing for parents to be focusing on, I would say.

Louise Wiles 10:53

Yes, definitely. And I've experienced that personally, many, many times. And um, what do you notice, I mean, thinking about children of different ages. So, do you notice and have you noticed them coping with or facing different challenges, different sets of challenges at these points of transition?

Dr Sarah Whyte 11:17

Yeah, I think age has a lot to do with how easy or difficult they find the transition. So typically teenage years 12 to 15 are the trickiest time to move. And, you know, ideally, you wouldn't

move at that time, but life is far from perfect. And, sometimes moving is not a choice. Sometimes it's, you know, the best time to go, I think for parents of teens to recognise, that's a difficult time because children are starting to really put together their identity based on their peer group and their friendships, and to suddenly change and move from a place where they're known and they fit into the social structures is quite a big thing for them. For younger children, what you know, we're talking about, you know, up to five year olds. They don't tend to have a lot of concept of time or distance. So, you'll move country, but they'll say, 'Oh come my friend come rounds play?', you know, you might be in the UK and your friends in Malaysia and you're like, 'Well, no, they're in Malaysia' and they go, 'okay, right, okay'. And, I think the younger children are, the more they tend to have very random, you know, outbursts of grief. So, everything seems fine, I think if you think about an adult, we tend to think about grief as starting is very intense and gradually, gradually, gradually easing off until we can live with it. But with children, it's there one minute, it's not the next, they'll go off and play. So, I think it's just recognising that children express this differently depending on their developmental stage. And, it's important to recognise it for what it is, because, of course, because of their ages, they're going to have a different experience, in terms of moving, and this is how a great friendship group if you've lived in a place for a long time, all of these things make it harder for them to move. you know, so yeah.

Louise Wiles 13:12

And, going back to the beginning, you were talking about some of the challenges around conflict resolution. And I'm just really interested to you know, for you that was very different, obviously, from the school in Newcastle, in a small school where kids knew each other and families knew each other, to international schools. So, what were the differences you observed and the challenges you see international children facing in that respect?

Dr Sarah Whyte 13:40

Yeah, so it's quite well documented in the third culture kid literature, that conflict resolution is a bit of an issue for third culture kids, because they don't really see the need for it. Mainly because, sooner or later that other person will leave or you will. There are also a lot of new people coming in. So, if you fall out with one friend, well, you can go be friends with somebody else. So, it's a skill that I think international schools and parents really need to emphasise and to focus on because it could be this could be the case that, okay, it's an easier way to deal with it when you're a child. But as we know as adults, in the workplace, in our lives, we don't always work with people that we get on with. And, you know, and it's, we might have issues people. And so, learning those skills are such a valuable life skills. I think it's really important. If you contrast that to my school in the UK, those children were together from the age of three to 11. And a lot of them went to secondary school together. So really, there was an emphasis on 'you have to get this sorted out because you're going to be together for years'. And if it's not sorted out, it's going to make life pretty difficult for everybody. So I think that's the difference, that transience of international schools does lend itself to avoiding resolving any conflicts because it's uncomfortable. It's not nice to resolve arguments and perhaps admit that you made a mistake or you didn't handle things as well as you could. No one likes doing that. It's not, it's not pleasant. But, it is important. It is an important skill to learn. So yeah, that's something I'd really emphasise for those international parents and for teachers and international schools as well.

Louise Wiles 15:31

Yeah. And that kind of makes me think about just kids seeing relationships as transient as well. So not having to put the effort, you know, that that person's moved on now. So we'll just forget about them and move on to the next one. And not thinking about relationships as continuous that, okay, the person doesn't need to actually be in front of me to still be a friend. And I think, I think I've seen that in the literature too, you know about how that develops in and evolves into adulthood where, you know, for longer term relationships as a challenge because 'Oh, well, you know, after three or four years when things got a bit difficult, well I just let that one go and moved on' and so perhaps people have a problem and connecting and perpetuating a relationship whether it's really close personal one or or broader friendship one.

Dr Sarah Whyte 16:22

Well, if you think about the the amount of time it takes to develop a close relationship, obviously, if you've got children, international schools, it's very unusual that children who were friends in nursery will stay at the same school together through to the age of 18. And obviously, just that lack of proximity makes it really difficult to develop that depth and that trust in those relationships. I don't have an answer for that one, unfortunately. I think. I think it's it's, it's a difficult one because of the circumstances there isn't really the opportunity to develop that depth. What I would say is it's important, again, that conflict resolution is important. So, we're not just throwing away relationships just because things are a bit tricky. And, it's also being open to new friendships as well. And, I certainly see that more with adults than I do with children. It's like 'Well, I don't really want to make new friends because they can leave. And that's really painful. So I will only make friends with people who are newer here long term. If they're here for a year, I'm not going to bother.' It's interesting because because people come for year. I came for two years. I'm still here 12 years later, whereas other people I know who had no intention of leaving, one partner got a great job offer and all of a sudden they move, where they never intended to leave. So, I just think you just never know what's going to happen. It's a shame to close yourself off to those amazing friendships and those opportunities. Just because people aren't necessarily going to be here very long. I think the richness of the friendship and the support and the trust that you build, the grief when they leave is the price that you pay for that. And it's just, working out if it's worth it for you. It is for me, I think it's worth it. And but it is difficult. And I know it's hard when people leave. And I think even as adults, we certainly experienced that grief as well. And and that loss and we notice it when people aren't there anymore, whether you move on yourself or whether you're a long term stayer and people move around you.

Louise Wiles 18:33

Yeah, I definitely relate to that. And I think, actually one of the thoughts now having moved back to the UK. And so having collected a lovely group of friends who are just unfortunately scattered all over the world. What I discover is, when we do get back together again, it's like the clocks just go back because I know you were talking about depth of relationship there, but I think there is a shared aspect of expat life and the support that you provide to each other, which often is more in depth than perhaps in your own country, because in your own country, you've got your normal support networks you know family, longer term friends, whereas abroad, you don't. So, you rely on those expat friends perhaps more than you would, other short term friends in your home country. So, that develops a much deeper

connection I think and a shared experience, that means when you do meet up again, you know, it's like, 'Oh, wow, yeah, that connection is still there, and still deep, I find anyway.

Dr Sarah Whyte 19:28

Yeah, absolutely.

Louise Wiles 19:30

Which is lovely. And so that's one of the benefits.

Dr Sarah Whyte 19:34

It is. And I think just being around people who understand the challenges as well, because it's really easy for people who are, who stayed in, my home country, for example, to look at my Facebook page and be like, 'Oh, wow, you have this really amazing, glamorous life' and you're like, well, it's not representative of how my life really is. I'm not on Facebook saying, 'Oh, this is really hard people are leaving.' That's not that's not how I choose to post on social media, but maybe we should be doing that so we're giving people a more representative idea of what it's about. I think you're right in that, you know, that your friends as an expat almost take the place of your family in terms of support. And, there is that depth because, I think certainly in Singapore - it's interesting friends in Singapore who moved to Australia, and they're like, 'You now, we just assumed it would be like Singapore, everyone was like, Oh come along, come and meet our friends come to a barbecue', You know, very welcoming, come and join the group. Because, it's always good to have new friends, because people always leave. Where going to Australia where most people have grown up there and already have their friends and have their family, it's a very different experience.

Louise Wiles 20:46

And I found that going back to the UK too. So you know, I'm in an area where people have lived here for generations, a bit like your Newcastle situation, not quite at that extreme, but in some senses it is. You know, a lot of people, for example, I have a group of tennis people I play with, and they've lived in this area all their lives, so they're, you know, they're lovely, but they have very established lives and friendship groups. And it does take time to settle back into - that's an issue for repatriation and that's another conversation, but um, so just just one final question around challenges at the moment. So given the pandemic and where we are at the moment, have you noticed any specific challenges that students and teachers are facing in relation to that?

Dr Sarah Whyte 21:29

Yeah, I think a lot of people with the pandemic, there are a lot of quite abrupt relocations happening. So, perhaps people didn't intend to leave. But, there's been a job redundancy and they've had to leave. Or, we know quite a few people who are like, 'we don't want to be isolated from family. This has made us think we don't want to be here right now. We want to be around our family and so we're going to move back to the UK or back to Australia and we're back to Ever our home country is' - and that's, you know, that's hard because it's, it's pretty, it's pretty quick. And I think, normally you have a bit of a run up to leaving. So, that plus the physical distancing measures that are in a lot of places. So, in Singapore, for example, we can have a meal in the restaurant, but we're limited to a group of five, at the minute. So having those limited group sizes, having schools being closed, having exams,

cancelled. All of this adds up to the leavers really missing out on all the rituals and routines, which signify the end of their time in that place, and that they're moving on to another place. So, international schools often do this very well. Goodbye assemblies. I know we attend many leaving parties, people who are moving on it's a chance for everyone to get together and mark the occasion. If you think about international schools where graduations mark the end of the year, I know that international schools have done a really brilliant job of doing as much of that online as possible. But, it's not the same as doing it in person. So, I think just to recognise that, that adjustment to moving at this time, because people have missed out on a lot of usual pieces of the jigsaw, that would really help them to feel more adjusted to leaving, it's really important just to take the time and process those feelings, and, you know, say your goodbyes in a way that works for you, given the restrictions that we're all facing right now. People have got really creative with this, graduation ceremonies online or, you know, you see, there's been plenty of things on social media, people driving past friends houses, when it's parties, and you know, waving at them and things. So, I think there were definitely things that can be done to market but it definitely makes it more difficult, so an added challenge, I would say if you're if you're leaving, and even if you're being left, because saying goodbye to the people who are leaving is as important for you as it is for them.

Louise Wiles 24:13

And I guess starting the new term and the gaps in the classroom, it will be quite poignant. I remember I imagine this year you know if people have disappeared over the summer, or whatever holiday month, depending on which hemisphere you're in?

Dr Sarah Whyte 24:27

Absolutely. And I think Yeah, obviously, for the schools who had their summer break in July and August, that for many countries was when things were really hitting a peak. You know, those physical distancing measures were really in place. So yeah, just really unfortunate timing in terms of coinciding with end of the year. People moving on needing to say goodbye. So I think, Yeah, just important to recognise that that is an extra challenge and to pay attention to that, and to talk about that and to recognise that it's difficult, and you might have missed out on saying goodbye. And that, saying goodbye might not have looked the way you thought it would, when you finally came to leave. And I just think it's important to acknowledge that, even just acknowledging that is really vital in that process.

Louise Wiles 25:21

Yeah, no, I totally agree. Totally agree. So, your Doctorate looked at emotional intelligence, and the title was 'Thinking About Our Feelings'. So, I'm really interested to talk a little bit with you about how we can develop emotional intelligence in schools and the value of emotional resilience in helping children to thrive through the international experience. So, can you talk a little bit about why emotional intelligence matters and emotional resilience matters so much, and how we can use that knowledge. Sorry this is a massive question, I know it's probably the whole of your Thesis.

Dr Sarah Whyte 26:06

So, just to recap on your question, it's how how we can teach emotional intelligence and emotional resilience and also why it's important. Yeah. So let me let me answer the first one first, and on emotional intelligence and emotional resilience. Now, this is something which

typically, teachers, in any context don't have training on. I didn't get trained on this. I did external training and started to train people in this myself. And the feedback I always get from teachers is, 'Oh my god, this is amazing. Like, why why have we not done this sooner?' Because, it's things like giving children emotional vocabulary as part of it. Teaching children what to do with uncomfortable feelings, how to process them, what to actually, you know, the process to follow to work through those feelings so you can start to engage the rational part of your brain. The reason, there's two elements to it, I always think, there's the court element, which is how teachers are modelling this and how teachers are talking about this. And that comes down to things like when you are dealing with an argument that's happened in the classroom or some kind of conflict resolution again - What language are you using around emotions and how they're impacting the situation? But there's also the taught part as well, which is how are you teaching children the skills of emotional intelligence that can be done through different curriculum areas, English is a really good one. You know, it's something that can be woven into studying books and studying characters. But, for that to happen teachers need to be taught in this, need to be trained in it, because it's not something you would necessarily just pick up and not realise, you know, not realise that you've picked up and think 'Oh, well, I've just sort of learned to do that on the job. It is definitely something that's worth having the training on. And, certainly for the emotional resilience, I always talk about that as being, 'it's how well we deal with adversity and how well we deal with challenges and changes with very much an emotional focus. So, I think what's, interesting with that is, there tends to be an assumption that children are resilient naturally. And I hear this a lot from parents from teachers: 'Oh but children are really resilient, they just bounced back'. I'm not quite sure where this is coming from, because some children are resilient, and some are less so. I did a really interesting diploma all about neuroscience and Dr. Sarah McKay, who, who runs this course, talked about dandelions and orchids in terms of resilience. She said there are genetic differences in resilience. So, If you think about dandelions in the UK, they're basically a weed, but they can grow and flourish and thrive anywhere, no matter what the conditions. So, if you equate that to resilience, you've got your children who are resilient no matter what, high resilience, that's just the way they are. The orchids, however, not so much in Singapore, we have the exact perfect climate for them. But orchids tend to require quite careful, nurturing, and quite specific conditions to flourish. And that, again, relates to those children who maybe have a little bit less resilience naturally, they're going to need a little bit more support with that. I think it's, it's also important to remember that resilience is not this fixed state, that it can be really impacted by challenges and by adversity because, if you have a small challenge, it's probably going to give your resilience little bit of a knock, but if you're facing challenge after challenge after challenge after challenge your resilience is really taking a battering. So, you've really got to think about how you're actually going to help with that, and what you can do to actually protect your resilience. Now, again, for parents and for teachers, it's really helpful when we think about children or teenagers, they're going to have a very different opinion on what an adversity or a challenge is to you, as an adult. And that's all right. Because even if you don't think it's a big deal, they do. And it's got a lot to do with brain development. And Daniel Siegal has an amazing brain model all about the downstairs brain and the upstairs brain, basically he talks about the downstairs brain as being very much, you know, the emotional reaction, the fight or flight response, when children will argue or freeze or withdraw. And the upstairs brain, is very much the higher order thinking, the reasoning, being rational, but that upstairs brain isn't fully formed until people are about 25. So, a lot of the time our children and young people are very much ruled by emotion by, you know,

automatic reaction. And, they can be really upset and parents are like, 'I don't understand what the problem is, why are you so upset about that?'

Dr Sarah Whyte 31:20

I think it's just really important for all of us in terms of developing that resilience, is to model the process, to model how we get through, you know, facing challenges and adversity. And, what I always recommend is absolutely listening, and making sure we're connecting with empathy. So, rather than telling children how they should feel about it, just recognising how they do feel. So like, you know, I got left out of a game at lunchtime, rather than saying, 'Oh, I know how that feels. Oh, just ignore them. We don't need them'. Try just putting yourself in their shoes and say, 'well, that must that must have been hurtful that must have been disappointing for you'. Model the language for younger children, older teenagers can often explain how they feel if they're chatting to you about it. But then, actually giving them the opportunity to come up with solutions to their own challenges is really vital, partly because it's helping to develop that upstairs brain. And it's helping to develop all those skills of decision making and rational thinking and, you know, actually exercising and making those connections in that part of the brain, but also because, they might come up with solutions that you would never have thought of. And, it's good for them to realise that they have choice, and they have several options and several paths, they could choose to go down to solve the problem. And, that's part of an optimistic outlook as well, which again, comes back to emotional intelligence. So, there's a lot of advantages in developing that emotional resilience aspect for sure.

Louise Wiles 33:04

Wow. Yes. Yeah. As I listen to you speak, it all seems so just, not obvious, but just so sensible. And as a parent, I think one of the things as a parent, you want to make things better for your children. But what I'm hearing you say is that actually give them the space to make it better for themselves in a way by thinking it through, sharing with you, but finding their own way forward. Would that be a good summary?

Dr Sarah Whyte 33:35

Yeah, absolutely. I think it's. I didn't fully understand this until I was a parent myself. But, you absolutely would do anything to stop your children being miserable. But, I think that short term solving things for them, actually does them a little bit of a disservice long term. Because again, you're missing the opportunity to help them develop those skills, those executive functioning skills. to think 'Well, how do you actually solve this?' Because, you're not always going to be there. You're not in their yard at school, you're not there when they're playing football or hockey, you're not there in the classroom when something's happening. So, the more you can coach them through this and talk them through this process, the better their skills will become over time. And it's so hard, so hard, to stand back and let them do things. I think about what I am like when my baby actually falls over. I'm like, why not help her straight away? Actually, her learning is how to get herself up. She needs to learn how to do that. And it's hard. It's totally hard to do it. But, I think as a parent, recognising it's difficult, and recognising your own feelings about that is also part of the process.

Louise Wiles 34:50

Yeah, and I think that's such a good analogy, because physically, you know, watching our children develop from a physical perspective, when they're young. We do know, okay, as long as they're not in any danger. That, yeah, let's let them discover how to get themselves back up or how to do whatever physical activity they're trying to do, and work out for themselves or just guide them gently, but not do it for them. But when it comes to the emotional side of life, we're there 'Oh let us gather them up and hug them and make it all better for them'

Dr Sarah Whyte 35:18

I think definitely like gather them and hug them is essential. I think providing that comfort is really, really important. Because, acknowledging the feelings first, is a really important first step. You can't have a conversation about problem solving when they're still in a very emotional state. And, anybody who's had young children will see this straight away. You know, you can't just tell them to calm down and they do it. It's really, talking about you lost the ball, you're upset, and you know, have a cuddle, and once they've calmed down, that's the time then to talk about how they might solve the problem and what they might do to make it better. Yeah, and of course, there's some guidance involved in that. That's absolutely absolutely fine parents have that experience, but certainly, as you say just give them some space, give them some time. I always hear from parents, 'but this always seems to happen when I'm in a hurry. It's always a bad time. Or it's always an I'm dropping them off in the car. It's always when we're running late'. And, I think if you can deal with it, then and there, great. If you can't, I mean, particularly for younger children, because they tend to have very short attention spans, and you try and come back to it and they don't know what you're talking about. Certainly, as the children get older, it's definitely something you can come back to at a later stage and check in with that and say 'oh remember what we talked about. And and how's that going? And did you try the solution? How well did it work? And would you do the same thing again?' Really just asking them questions about, how they've, how they found that works and how well it's worked for them. It's so valuable. It's so valuable for them. And actually, at the end of the day, as a parent, it actually makes your life easier too, because you're bringing up your child to be emotionally resilient, which is such a good skill. And the more resilient they get, the more independent they'll be with that, which is perfect. That's, you know, that's your aim right, it is to have children who can be independent and self sufficient in the world. And that emotional part, like you say, just like the physical part, that's all part of it.

Louise Wiles 37:24

Yeah, yeah. And I think that just brings me to my last question, which I just wanted to say, as I know, parents will be listening to this - what lessons can parents take from this to apply to their lives and the way in which they deal with with tough situations, challenging situations and transition, which I guess is a common theme in these kinds of conversations

Dr Sarah Whyte 37:45

I think so. I think it's, um, a lot of the strategies for parents are actually the same strategies that I would recommend for children. Obviously, you're going to have slightly different conversations around those. So when we're when we're talking about relocation, recognising that it is a process, and it's very emotional and the emotional transition part of it takes a lot longer than the physical move. Think about flights now, you can be in a completely new

country within 24 hours, most places. But, the emotional transition takes a lot longer. One thing that I do, you know, I do have for mainly for parents to use with children. I do have some coaching cards about moving country, which basically have conversation starters, which focus on each stage of the move with descriptions of each stage, depending on where you are. And while, I did develop them for children, primarily, quite a few parents have said to me, 'actually we've used these with each other. I, my husband and I, my wife and I, we use them with each other and we've had conversations that we've never have thought of having, but it's actually been really helpful to get an insight into how we're coping and how things are going for us'. So that's been very helpful. I think for parents as well, yeah, such a good lesson for your children, we need to have that self compassion. It's all right not to be alright with this, it's okay to find things hard. And just give yourself a bit of time and space to notice and process your difficult feelings as well. So, we talk about resilience, and a lot of people think of resilience as doing something new, I'm going to start to meditate or have to go and exercise or I have to do this. Sometimes it's really about doing less, you know, taking some time cancelling all the busy plans that you have just you know, spending some time with the children sitting on the sofa watching a film, just making a bit of space and a bit of time. And I know you talked about your support network as well, and whether they're in the same countries or somewhere else. Brene Brown talks about this a lot, but really embracing your own vulnerability and recognising that moving is a very vulnerable time, whether you're seven or whether you're 37, or whether you're 57. It's a very difficult thing to do. So, really use a support network, reach out and let them know you're finding things difficult. And then, you know, that's what they're there for. And you would do the same for them. But people don't always realise you're finding things difficult. Sometimes you just need to let them know. So, that would be certainly my recommendation for parents really. I've kind of wrapped all of this up in a book that I'm putting together at the minute, which gives parents a lot of practical tips on how they can support their whole family throughout a move. But, it's all wrapped up as a story format, so hopefully, easy to read, rather than just lots of instructions about what to do and when to do it. So, story of a family who are moving themselves, the challenges they are facing, and getting some great advice from mentors on how to approach things and, the best way to actually move forward with the children and for themselves.

Louise Wiles 41:07

Wow, that sounds fantastic. So when is that? When is that due to be available, come out?

Dr Sarah Whyte 41:12

Yes, I'm aiming to publish start of November. So the updates will be on my website and social media. So, if people are interested in that they can sign up to be notified once it's out. And so yeah, if people are interested in that, definitely take a look. And just send me your name so I can keep you informed.

Louise Wiles 41:33

Okay, brilliant. Well, I will put links to all of that, and also the coaching cards on the blog post associated with this episode, so go and have a look at that Thriving Abroad.com and you'll see the links all there. And so Sarah, one final question to wrap up. Yeah, you've lived abroad now for 12 years. I think you've given us quite a lot of tips that probably link into this question, but I would like to finish with it. So if there was one number one tip that you would share about what it takes to thrive abroad. What would it be?

Dr Sarah Whyte 42:05

Absolutely. Well, the short answer is obviously emotional resilience. But the explanation behind that is living overseas often means that you're living in an environment, a social environment, which is constantly changing, there are constant 'goodbyes' happening. But, there are also constant 'hellos' new people who might turn out to be really good friends. And we know from the research that social connection is totally vital to our well being. But, as I said before, people are 'I don't want to go through this again', it's very easy to get fatigued when you've moved a lot. Or if you've been, you know, here in one place a long time and people have moved around you. And it's easier to avoid sometimes meeting new people, or only focusing on people who you think are going to stay long term. But, what I would say to people is just be careful with that because you miss out on so many lovely experiences and so many really valuable friendships. And, as I said, that grief when friends leave, is the price you pay for those amazing friendships, which is where that emotional resilience really comes into play. Because that's a vital part of dealing with the way you feel about that. So, we can continue to put ourselves out there and be proactive, and make social connections and make friends because, you know, people leave all the time in different overseas postings. So, it's really important that you're constantly proactive, really practising your resilience and continuing to proactively tend to your social network.

Louise Wiles 43:47

Fantastic. And I would say I totally agree from my experience of moving a number of times and you know having to re establish networks and that fatigue, I can totally relate to, but every time the friendships have come back, you know, and the experiences and the positive aspects of those experiences have all been down to the friendship. So, yeah, without a doubt, yeah.

Dr Sarah Whyte 44:13

People are such a big part of your experience I think when you live away from your home country and from your family. Like we said before, that your friends almost become your family. They become your support network. And, and you know, you can choose to avoid the grief and the loss when they leave. But that also means you miss out on all the really good stuff as well. So, it's a tough decision to make, isn't it?

Louise Wiles 44:37

It is, It is, but an easy one, I think. Yeah, though, so thank you so much, Sarah. That has been a fantastic conversation. I think we've covered a huge amount of ground. Really great, great advice and strategies there. So, I hope everyone has enjoyed the conversation. And once again, go to Thriving Abroad.com and look for the links to Sarahs Website and the coaching cards she's spoken about. So thank you very much for your time today, Sarah.

Dr Sarah Whyte 45:08

Thank you. It's been a pleasure to chat with you.

Louise Wiles 45:11

Thank you and bye for now.

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