



Episode One

Beat the Transition Blues

With

Elizabeth Gillies and Louise Wiles

Welcome to Student Transitions – A Time to Thrive

This podcast series is for you if you are:

- A student leaving full-time education and moving into the world of work
- A student moving to university or some form of higher education
- An educator, parent or counsellor supporting students as they take the next steps in their journey from school/college/sixth form into the world of further education or work.

For many students this represents the first big life transition. It can be an exciting and challenging time.

This podcast series provides strategies that develop self-awareness, understanding and the ability to thrive through times of transition.

This is the full transcript.

You can also access the Think Sheets and resources mentioned in the podcast by registering [HERE](#).

About Your Hosts

Elizabeth Gillies

Elizabeth is an Education Psychologist based in London who has worked in schools as a psychologist at the individual, group and systems level for over 30 years.



She has been fortunate to live, work and raise her family in America, Japan, and Australia so, unsurprisingly, she is interested in the challenges and opportunities of transitions.

Elizabeth is a CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) and ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) specialist. She works in schools, on-line and, near her home base in South London, incorporating walking with talking therapy in green spaces.

At the crunch points at the beginning and end of the school year, Elizabeth runs workshops for young people, teachers, and parents to help them understand common patterns of transition and how to use this knowledge to help themselves during this time and future changes.

Together with a great group of professionals in London, Elizabeth is growing a multi professional support service called Special Networks and can be found [HERE](#)

Elizabeth is a member of FIGT (Families in Global Transition) and with Louise and another FIGT member, is a co-chair of the FIGT UK affiliate. Link to FIGT. Connect via LinkedIn [HERE](#)

About Louise Wiles

Louise Wiles is a well-being, change and transition consultant, trainer and coach and the parent of two teens.



Alarmed by the recent explosion of well-being challenges amongst children and teens, especially during exam years and through times of change and transition. Louise believes we should be better preparing young people for life beyond school and university so that they can thrive through the natural highs and lows of life.

Louise combines her professional background in organisational psychology (MSc) and coaching, with her expertise as a wellbeing, positive change and strengths practitioner and her personal experience of life on the move, to develop training courses and coaching programmes that help her clients prepare for, and thrive, through the challenge of change and transition.

You can connect with Louise on LinkedIn [HERE](#)
Website [HERE](#) and contact Louise [HERE](#)

Louise is also the author of ***Thriving Abroad: The Definitive Guide to Professional and Personal Relocation Success***

Transcript

Louise Wiles 0:00

So hello, and a very warm welcome to the first in our new series or new podcast series called Student Transitions, a Time to Thrive. I'm Louise Wiles, a change and transition coach and consultant, and I'm here together with Elizabeth Gillies. Elizabeth, would you like to introduce yourself?

Elizabeth Gillies 0:26

Hi there. I'm an Educational Psychologist, and also ACT, Acceptance and Commitment Therapist working in London, but also in kind of lots of other places too, like you as well Louise.

Louise Wiles 0:40 Fantastic. And we both come together to present and to co-host this podcast series and because we both lived abroad and transitions have been quite a feature, I guess, of our lives. So, we're bringing both personal and professional interest and expertise to these conversations. So today, this is really an introductory conversation, where we're just bringing some of our ideas and thoughts around transitions, particularly in relation to students who are leaving Sixth Form education, college education and moving on into perhaps higher education, into apprenticeships, into colleges for further education. So, they're often moving away from what they've known for a number of years, and into some completely new environments, perhaps some are experiencing serial transitions where they're moving from school, to university, to college, to work, but also locations as well, perhaps they're leaving home for the first time. So, there are multiple transitions happening at the same time. That's what we're going to discuss a bit about now. So, let's start and talk about why we think it's so important to put some focus on this period of change and transition.

Elizabeth Gillies Speaker 2:02

Yeah, I think you've already mentioned something that's really important is that often this can be the first big remembered transition that young people are going through, and it's a time when they're going off on their own, often, to a new place, to a new setting having left, you know, school where they know everything really well, everything's very known to them and familiar and, schools have kind of, have worked hard at making this learning a place where they feel connected, and they belong. Then, we need to kind of do some work about when that fracture happens, and they're going somewhere new, they need to kind of have different skills to help them thrive in this new place. And certainly, kind of from the main research around transition, the biggest kind of meta-analysis in education of what helps young people learn. You know, we know the positives, but actually the biggest negative factor is mobility. So, when children and young people change schools, then it's a risky time for them. So, I think that's why we've talked about it, Louise, about let's put something out there about just talking about this, this whole change process.

Louise Wiles 3:37

Okay, and I think that's a lovely introduction, and it makes me think a bit also about, you know, why it's important to think about the transition and the experience of transition. And for this, we can draw on some of our experiences professionally and personally from international mobility and moving because there's this concept called culture shock, which is really using kind of the change curve that perhaps, if you work in organisations, that you're familiar with, which is that as we work through changes, there's usually a dip of some kind. And this certainly, I think, applies to transitions to university as well, because we, as students, if you're listening to this, you perhaps will relate to this in other times of change as well. You know, initially, you feel great excitement about the change, you're looking forward

to it, you embark on the change, and initially, it's perhaps exciting and fun, you begin to meet new people and new experiences. But over time, there can then be a bit of dip in terms of your emotional response to it and your experience. And often that's because you're in a new environment, one that you're not so familiar with, so you're being stretched in different ways, you're being challenged in new ways, and you're needing to adapt to that and your new reality. And so, there's a bit of a dip, and that can feel disorientating and challenging. And we can feel uncomfortable at those times and if we don't understand that it's part of the experience, we can think perhaps there's something not right with us. But, we're here to tell you that that kind of dip is totally part of the experience. And actually, you're experiencing what so many other people will be experiencing, and perhaps don't discuss. It might be something that people cover up and feel that is a weakness, but it's actually not, it's nothing to do with you, it's to do with the experience and your response to new things. So, this podcast in this conversation, we're going to talk about some ways of managing yourselves through that, coping with that experience of change, perhaps reducing the dip, not eliminating it entirely, because you probably won't, but reducing it and learning to cope with the ups and downs. And it's not necessarily one dip, what we found in international mobility is that there can be multiple dips, they just may not all have the same level of depth, and they may be precipitated by different things going on in your life. And so that's why it's important to talk about transition and to understand that it's a normal experience in transition.

Elizabeth Gillies 6:13

And I think that's a good thing to kind of, really, you know, to pinpoint there, that when people are moving abroad, or going to different culture, and we'll talk about how University is a different culture or work or, or apprenticeships or whatever people are going to, the fact that they know that there are these things that happen in a transition is really important. And the research is, isn't it, Louise, that when people are prepared for this, they can recognise 'Oh, I'm in the dip', you know, and I know we've talked about it, they've given us some ideas about how I get myself back out of that dip and move on to not just coping but thriving in this place. And so, I guess that's part of what we're doing, is talking about why we must, you know really kind of investigate transition, to know what they are, and then help people think about, well, how can I be in that kind of, in that place, as well.

Louise Wiles 7:12

And actually, another thought about transition and another reason why it's valuable to think about it, and to reflect on your transitions now is that this is the first perhaps of many transitions, you actually have experienced transitions in your past, you perhaps didn't recognise them as transitions, or maybe you have, I don't know, but this might be one of your biggest transitions to date. But there will be many more, there's a lot of evidence to suggest that we are always in transitions in some way. But we also make multiple transitions throughout our lives, you know, transitions from one job to another, from one country to another one part of a country to another one house to another. And relationships change and transition, and so many other aspects of our lives will go through transition. So, if we take time now to reflect on transition, to understand the experience, then we develop skills and abilities that we can apply to those in the future, which will help enormously. So, there's a reason for doing this right now as part of ongoing education.

Elizabeth Gillies 8:18

Yeah, you know, Louise, I guess when we're talking to young people about transition, often it's things like their pet died, or there was a new baby born in the family or moving from primary to secondary school. So, I think you're right, it's important that we remember that they haven't been, you know, in year seven, the whole life, they move from seven, to eight, and nine, you know, so there are these transitions around. And I think what we want to do is make this ordinary transition of stuff that happens to make it extraordinary, so that they're understanding how I can be, you know, how I can be the best I can be during these times of change.

Louise Wiles 9:00

Absolutely. Okay, so let's move on then and talk a little bit about where do you start when you're thinking about as perhaps you are listening to this, this next transition, this next move that you're making in your life? What do you start to think about as you make that transition?

Elizabeth Gillies 9:20

I think you and I would talk, Louise about a cycle of transition. So, we're always somewhere on it, you know. And I saw something nice the other day, it was an image about a bridge. So, you go, you're on one side of the bridge and you go to the other, but I think in transition there are all these bridges coming up. So, it is you go from this kind of place of being settled, knowing where you are, to know you're leaving to kind of being in limbo-land and not here or there, entering into your new place and then doing the work to get you back to settled again. So that's the kind of transition cycle that people talk about. So, we're all on it at some point, of that kind of place, either we've got to where we want to be and we're working, we're thriving well, or we haven't got there yet or we're just leaving somewhere or something, so that that kind of cycles are good thing to know.

Louise Wiles 10:21

Yes, yes, absolutely. And to hold it in your mind. And I guess alongside that, to recognise that as you cycle through that cycle, you'll have different emotional reactions at different stages. So yeah, I talked about excitement at the beginning of experience. And I think often when we're making a move, like going to university or starting a new job, we imagine it's all going to be exciting, new, and enjoyable all the time. But really, that's not reality. And that's not life, you know, there will be times when you don't feel so positive about the experience, and that is absolutely fine. And our emotional reaction and response to it is something that it's good to learn to notice and to recognise and to accept as being part of the process. And I think, you know, we often hear about students, taking the university transition for example, students who do find that they don't feel so happy, perhaps they feel concerned and worried, and a bit fearful at times about the new experience. And we can build that in our minds to be something that perhaps it doesn't need to be if we stop ourselves and recognise that actually, this is okay. That there is struggle in a lot of what we do in life, you know, and so, there's quite a lot of research that's been done about how we learn to thrive in life, and the sort of well-being components of a thriving life. But one of the big recognitions that has come from that is that people also struggle, and it is possible to thrive in life and also struggle at the same time, you may struggle with certain aspects of your new life, but then enjoy and thrive in others. And those two elements of life can live in duality together. It's not an all or nothing experience. And I think that's really important to know and understand.

Elizabeth Gillies 12:13

And, you know, if we go a little bit deeper in depth with that as well, because I think it's a really important thing to know that our emotions don't come in ones. They usually come all together, you know, so we have conflicting emotions, sometimes, like, you know, anxiety and excitement, happy and sad. And, you know, those things that are important to us, it's like that double sided coin. So, the things that are important to us, and the things that matter for us, because of the challenge. So, one side of the coin is the important stuff. And the other side of the coin is the challenging stuff. So, if you want to, you know, have good friendships, for instance, if that's what's really important to you, that's what's going to challenge you when it doesn't work? So, you have, that's exactly what it is. It's like, these things kind of exist together.

Louise Wiles 13:09

And I think the interesting thing about some of the research and perhaps in the notes or on the blog post that we write to, to accompany this, we'll put a link to the research. But one of the things that they found in the research I'm referring to is, the people who said that they

were thriving, despite struggle, were often, or generally the ones who had an understanding of the coping strategies they could use to cope with that sort of dichotomy, that mix of emotional responses. So, what we really want to go and talk about and talk with you a bit about now, is some introduction to perhaps what those coping strategies could be. Because if we can develop and learn to cope with the challenges, then we can live more comfortably with this mix of thriving in the struggle, anxious and happy and treatment and all of the things that Elizabeth has just described.

Elizabeth Gillies 14:01

Yeah, one of the things that I think Louise and I both use is a strengths-based approach to things. So, we would, we would look at people's strengths or even their values sometimes and think about how they're putting them into play. So, you know, if I've got a strength from the values in action, which is a nice, kind of research-based intervention, you know, it's about you know, if I've got a good sense of humour, which could be a great strength to have. It's about how could I use that in my, in this transition. So, understanding people's strengths will be a good thing. Understanding a little bit about the neuroscience about the stress that comes up in transitions, normally. You know, we're going from settled where we know everything to this new place where we don't know. So sometimes people might be a little bit concerned about that, some people might thrive in it, some people might be quite anxious about it. So, there will be personal response, you know, responses and reactions about, you know, how people, you know, go through change and transition?

Louise Wiles 15:14

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think, one of the strategies that we have come across as we've lived and worked abroad has been this concept called RAFT, which helps people to leave a previous experience positively and look forward to the future. And I think this is a helpful one to use, if you're sitting listening to this, and you're preparing to move perhaps from home to university or from school to new college experience, this is a really useful one to think through. So, I know that there are four aspects to it. And I know that Elizabeth, you talk about the R in slightly different way to how I do, so, you talk about the R. And then we will work through RAFT.

Elizabeth Gillies 16:05

So, each of these letters that are the R, the A, the F, and the T stands for a different type of thing. And in the traditional model the R is about reconciliation, but I kind of talk a little bit about Repair. So, if there are any kind of things that you need to repair between you and other people, before you leave. Or even maybe within yourself, like, is there something that I wish I'd done differently? Is there something that I want to do differently when I go on to somewhere else? Is there something that I need to say sorry for? Is there something I need to make amends for? So those R's are really reflections about the kind of person you've been, and to think about, you know, what do I need to do to have no regrets? So, there's lots of R's in here, to move forward kind of thinking - that job's done, I can leave that cleanly behind me, and move on to my next stage, is there anything else that you'd say about an R, Louise?

Louise Wiles 17:12

No, I think you've covered it all there.

Elizabeth Gillies 17:16

The A is about affirmation. So about recognising the people that have had your back, been with you on this journey in this place that you are now. So, be able to acknowledge them, to be able to say thank you, and maybe even affirm for yourself - what have I done to be successful here? So, to know, to recognise the positives that have helped you in that place. So that's the R, and A and of course, the F is going to be about farewell. It's about saying goodbye. And we all, I'm sure we're going to do a whole discussion about saying goodbye,

because I think it is a big one, it's a good skill to learn - about how do you say farewell to place, people, sometimes possessions. Is there a favourite place that you're going to say, au revoir to? you might well come back, how you're going to say it to people? sometimes it's gathering, sometimes, you know, I always prefer people to, you know, to say it in person if they can or to write something. So that kind of farewell, it's a ritual, isn't it, and how important those rituals are in our life. And kind of, you'll notice that, you know, the R, the A and F, they're all about leaving that place well, before we go on, people often rush into the T, which is about Think Destination. They're kind of eager to get to the next place. But you know, tidy up before you go. Do those jobs that you need to do and then you can go off with a, you know, feeling that you've kind of had closure there. So, the T's about thinking destination, what you're looking forward to, what kind of the person you're going to be, what you're going to enjoy, what are the things you need. If there's someone I know going off to university, I often buy them a doorstopper to use in times because they want to open the door and be available for conversations but also to close it too. But it's about, it's a kind of metaphor about you can choose to be open. You can be choose to be open for business and be out there doing stuff. And, when you don't want to do it, you can close your door. So that Think Destination is that forward looking. How am I going to be? What do I need, and R, the A and F are about kind of closing behind you.

Louise Wiles 20:07

Yeah. And I think it's really important to acknowledge that they are the R and A and F is often, as Elizabeth said, people will jump to think destination. So, you're thinking about the new experience and not recognising what you're leaving behind. And often there is a sense of loss for that, but we don't acknowledge it. And the theory behind it is that if we don't acknowledge those losses, over time, they can accumulate and cause us psychological challenges in the future. So, it's valuable to take time. And I think to put a positive spin on the first part as well. Elizabeth talked about sort of affirming the positive experience, aspects of the experience. And I think definitely take time to think about your achievements as well. You know, I think as you're about to go to university on to further education or your new career, take time to recognise what it's taken you to get to this point and what you have achieved, I think that is a really valuable thing to take stock of. And also, think about what you have loved about it, and savour that, there's a lot of positive psychology research, which highlights the value of savouring our past experiences. So, being able to recall them, we can, in those moments, relive the emotional positivity of those experiences. And that can be very positive for our emotional well-being in the moment. So, take time to think about what did you love about your school or your friendship groups, or things you've done, and perhaps write a little bit about them, so that you remember them, and you can recall them in the future.

Elizabeth Gillies 21:45

And I love the savouring idea. And it also might give you an idea about that's what helped you be settled. That's what helped you to belong to somewhere. So, you don't have to do exactly the same wherever you go. But as I kind of, like thing to know that if you are part of a netball team, or if you are, you had a responsibility in school, or, you know, if you did something, those are the things you can use to get back to settled too. So, I love that idea of savouring, getting to be familiar with what's important to you, and what was valuable for you, so that you can use this in the new place.

Louise Wiles 22:27

Yeah, I think there's one area that probably if you're a student, going to university, wherever you are, and you're having to build those new social networks, those new friendships, it can seem quite daunting. But if you reflect on the friendships you've had in the past and how you've developed those in the past, you recognise you've got amazing relationship building skills that you can use in the new environment, so that helps as well. And I think what we're doing here is, we talked about the final part of this podcast, we will talk about the sort of

platform that you'd be building that would help provide the base if you like for, for this change and transition. So, talking about the strengths that Elizabeth was talking about earlier that you can identify and carry forward, we all have multiple strengths. So, it's worth taking time to think about those, thinking about the achievements as I've just mentioned. And as Elizabeth has just mentioned, the savouring as part of that platform, that as your basis, your foundation for moving forward. I think the other important thing, and this relates to the thinking forward from RAFT and that is being clear about your why for what the next stage of your life is. So yes, if you're going to university you're interested, hopefully in the subject you're going to study, but what else do you hope to achieve from your time at university? What is the why, for the whole experience, not just the course that you've decided to undertake?

Elizabeth Gillies 24:07

Lovely, Louise, and it's thinking about some goals to set yourself, isn't it? And I think this hopefully, this, we're going to do is help you build a platform to do two things, in particular, one, understand about what this transition process is for now and forever. And also, to help you think about, there'll be a range of things that we will talk about discuss skills, ideas, strategies, that will help you kind of build your own unique way to thrive in wherever you do.

Louise Wiles 24:43

Yeah, yeah. Brilliant. Well, I think that's probably enough for today.

Elizabeth Gillies 24:51

Some tasters for the future,

Louise Wiles 24:54

Tasters for the future. We've got tonnes more to share with you. This is just a really big overview and as Elizabeth has just said, we will come back with deep dives into many aspects that we have covered here. So, thank you so much for listening. And I think it's goodbye from me

Elizabeth Gillies 25:12

And goodbye from me, tune in again.

Louise Wiles 25:15

We'll be back soon. Bye bye

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