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# Successful Student Transitions

## Episode Four What Matters to You?

# TRANSCRIPT EPISODE FOUR

## 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 show notes, resources and worksheets 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** 00:00

Hello, and welcome to the Fourth Episode of Student Transitions. It's lovely to be here with you. Again, my name is Louise Wiles. And I'm here together with Elizabeth Gillies for this fourth episode, and today we're going to be talking about meaning, creating your why and the value that values play in helping us to develop that meaning in our life. And the reason for focusing on this is that as you move into the next stage of your life, so if you're moving to university, or you're moving into the world of work, it's really a great time to sort of take stock and to really think about what's most important to you, and to then move forward in a way that honours that, as far as you can, okay, can't do all the time, but if we can, at times put a focus on this, then that can really help create meaning for ourselves in our lives. So, in the first episode, we talked about the acronym RAFT. And it was all about helping you to leave and arrive well. So, if you haven't listened to that episode, I recommend going back and listening to it. I'm going to focus on the T, which is the last letter in RAFT. And that's all about thinking forward, thinking towards the destination, and that's really where we are focused today. Now, often people will talk about searching for your why for why something's important, why it has meaning for you. They're talking about finding your purpose and meaning in life. I think at the meaning level, there's a big distinction between trying to find the meaning of life and trying to find meaning in life. And so upfront, I just want to make that distinction here. Because I'm not going to be talking about finding the meaning of life. That's not the point of this conversation today at all. You know, that is a really great philosophical question. And we can all invest time if we want to in into that question. And to researching that, reading for ourselves, we're probably not going to find a definitive answer, though. And so that's not what I'm going to focus on today. What I'm focusing on today is finding the meaning in our lives. So where can you find meaning in life? That is, what the focus is, what's the purpose behind what you're doing? And this new path that you're following? So, if you are listening to this and you're moving to university, then the question is, what is the reason for doing that? What is your why around that move and that decision? And it's really helpful to have clarity around that. And I think often we take the next step, because it's the next step, we are naturally encouraged by our culture to take, and we perhaps don't give it much more consideration than that. So, this is your opportunity to go a bit deeper, and to really uncover your answer to that question. And why is this so important? Well, Aristotle, that Greek philosopher that you no doubt have heard of many times before said happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim, and end of human existence. And he makes a really useful distinction between Hedonia, pleasure and eudaimonia - meaning, and while a meaningful and happy life overlap in certain ways and feed off each other, they both have different roots. And there's a really interesting study that I want to share with you that demonstrates this. So, two researchers, Veronica Kuta, and Richard Ryan, asked a whole load of students to get involved in the study. And the students were instructed to pursue meaning or pleasure over a 10-day period, doing at least one thing each day. So, students in the meaning group reported forgiving a friend, studying, thinking about their values, helping or cheering someone up. And students in the pleasure group listed activities like and here's a, quote, student related, sleeping in, playing games, going shopping. I wonder what you think the outcome was in terms of happiness and for finding meaning and purpose in life? Elizabeth what do you reckon, putting you on a spot there, sorry.

**Elizabeth Gillies** 04:39

Well, you would want it, you would want to kind of think that doing pleasurable things would lead you to being happy. However, I think is it the opposite is true?

**Louise Wiles 04:51**

No, actually, you're absolutely right. In the happiness pleasure group. People reported more positive feelings initially. So yes, it did have an initial positive impact. But these faded over, and this study was conducted over a three-month period, so these faded over the three months period. Those in the meaning group didn't feel as happy right afterwards, but they did rate their lives as more meaningful. And three months later, they felt more enriched, inspired and part of something greater than themselves. They also reported fewer negative moods. So, the outcome of that kind of explains human nature really doesn't it, that we all look for that sort of pleasurable injection of pleasure and enjoyment in some of the activities that we do. And we do find that, so we continue to do that and to look for those injections. But there's also another way, or a better way, if you like, of creating that sense of fulfilment, and that is to understand what is most meaningful for us. So over time, you know, pursuing meaning actually boosts psychological health and well-being more than pursuing pleasure or happiness on its own. The reality is, though, that for most of us, our lives are made up of a combination of the two. So that's, I think, the important point to say, here, we're not saying one over the other, it's a combination, and just making sure that we do have a focus on meaning, which is why we're talking about this today. So, Aristotle, then goes on to say that, a eudemonic life, so one that is about meaning, requires us to cultivate our best qualities, and live to our full potential. So, in order for us to do that, we need to develop our self-awareness if you like our self-knowledge, and understanding. And I think often if we haven't been encouraged to step back and think about this, this may be a bit of a new way of thinking. You know, we may know that we're good at certain subjects, and certain aspects of perhaps the coursework that we do, we know that we're good at certain sports and we might break that down a bit into some of the behaviours, but often, we don't take time to really step back and think about who we are, psychologically. So, Elizabeth, I'm really interested to know what you think might contribute to developing that understanding, you know, what should we be looking at, to develop an understanding of our psychological configuration, if you like?

**Elizabeth Gillies 07:38**

And I so agree with you, Louise, in that, you know, school curriculum is jam packed with a lot of important things. However, there's less on that kind of reflective, observer self, just like we were doing on leaves in the stream, which takes you into kind of seeing how your mind works, looking at what's happening. So how important this is to kind of like, take a chance to kind of press a pause button and say, well, what is important to me? So we'd be thinking about our values. And then I think you might be unpacking that a little bit later. And there's a really good package called VIA characteristics, values in action. And I would encourage people to have a look at that and have a try. I've done it, and I kind of know that my what my top three characteristics, my top three values are. Perseverance, Fairness, Love. And it's not just about having those, it's about using them as a compass. So, I'd say values are important. And the other thing I think that's really interesting about having a bit of knowledge, who you are, is like what roles do you play? What relationships do you have? And roles I'm thinking about? You know, for me, I'm a mother, I'm a partner. I'm a sister, I'm a psychologist. So, there are lots of these kind of places where I am these different things and the kind of relationships I have with other people. So, I've got values, roles, relationships, maybe thinking a little bit about doing the things that I really

enjoy, like they were asked in the study. You know, I really enjoy you know, that sometimes you don't have to be big things, but I really enjoy that first cup of coffee I have in the morning. The small things in life sometimes are the best so that doing things, being able to able to savour those things as well. So, I don't know what do you think about that Louise?

**Louise Wiles 09:49**

No, absolutely. So, I definitely had those on my list identifying values. And yeah in relation to the, the VIA my I my three will love of learning, honesty and fairness, fairness is a common one there we have as well. Then understanding our personal strengths as well. So, taking time to, to think about strengths, often, quite consciously in relation to things that we're doing, tasks that we're undertaking, because our strengths energise us, they motivate us, and help us to perform at a higher level. So being conscious of what a task or an activity calls us to do, and linking that to our strengths can be really beneficial and motivating, it helps us to keep on persevering through if we're facing challenges in the tasks that we're undertaking. And roles and relationships, understanding our roles, definitely, absolutely, and thinking about how those are changing as we're working through a transition, because they will, you know, as as you move perhaps from your home environment to university, your roles will change slightly in terms of, you know, perhaps your relationship with your parents, and how that evolves, and relationship to friends back home. But then your role as a student will change as well. One of the big things that universities highlight is the move to independent learning. So that is a big one. And thinking, as you think about that change in your role to an independent learner, thinking about the talents and skills that you have that you can apply to that new challenge. So, talents, for example, often when we're talking about talents, we're talking about our innate, oftentimes our innate, if you think about sports, people, musicians, there's often an innate element to that talent, doesn't mean that they are good just because of that innate talent, but we start with some innate talent often, and build on that. And there is a strong biological loading towards some of those such as musical abilities, sporting ability, interpersonal ability, but we're not relying on that talent on its own, we also build the skills around that talent to become proficient and experts in those areas. So, it's understanding your sort of preferred, or your natural, innate talent, but then also thinking about the skills that you've built. If you think through your education, what skills have you built as you've been a student? If you think about studying for A level, or if you did IB, international baccalaureate, no, what skills did you develop through those years that will be relevant and helpful to you as you become, work towards becoming even more of an independent learner at university? So, considering those and then, as Elizabeth said, you know, our passions, what we love doing, and really taking time to notice that, you know, what does light you up? As you're going through the day, what do you really enjoy? And, and noticing that, because I think often we forget to notice that, and we do what we think we should be doing. But if we really also took time to think, well, that was something that really inspired me, we'll do more of that. And we can come back to that. So, over the coming weeks, we probably will come back to different elements of those four areas. But today, I wanted to spend some time talking about values, and thinking about how we can understand and identify our values, and then use those as a compass as Elizabeth said for what comes as we move forward in this transition period. So values, how would you define values, or value, Elizabeth?

**Elizabeth Gillies 13:36**

A value is something that is, well it's, it's like a direction of where you're going to go to, so, I would say the difference between a goal and a value, a goal might be something like, I want to pass my driving



tests, so you can do it, tick. But a value is something that's going to stay with you. So, you're never hopefully always going to pass your driving test. Hopefully you get that endpoint. So, this value is something at the core of you, that exists without you really having to try very hard. And that's why I think sometimes we don't notice it, because it's always there and part of us. So, they be the things that give your life direction, to know who you're going, to know that this is really important to me when we were both talking about fairness. I mean, I don't know I've just got this feeling that there is more awareness of fairness in the world, and how it is such an important thing, for maybe more people. But it's about how we kind of live this life that we want to live, that's taking us forward. We've got to, we've got to keep working at it. So, we're never just say, 'Oh, I'm going to be somebody, that person that perseveres. You've actually got to do it as an action.

**Louise Wiles 15:11**

Yeah, yeah. So the values great. I love the description you've given there, Elizabeth. And I think values are, you know, they're what we consider in life to be important, they're our ideals, and they guide us in our decisions and our choices. And it's quite difficult to make decisions and choices if you don't know what's important to you. And I think perhaps that's an issue for quite a lot of people these days that they haven't had time to, or haven't had the focus on thinking about what's important for them. And so if they become lost, and unable to make some of the bigger life decisions that they might be faced with, or to make them confidently, that's the thing, so understanding your values will help you to make those decisions confidently. And yeah, and they help us to explain why something is important to us why it's meaningful to us. So they're really, really helpful in guiding us through life. And it gives us concrete ways of to finding meaning because we can all say we want to find meaning in life, but you know, how do we find meaning in life? Well values, or understanding of values is one way. So, our values, also, so having understood our values, our values then impact the way in which we perceive life and perceive situations, our attitude to them, and then ultimately, our behaviours and actions. So for example, if you have the value of sustainability, and I was thinking about this, because I was having a conversation with my teenage daughter about this the other day. And we were talking about fast fashion, and her love of buying clothes, which often ends up being something from the fast fashion world, and we were just talking about, 'well you say you have this value of sustainability, but I don't see it always in action.' So, the theory would be that if we really value sustainability, that's one of our core values, then that impacts how we look and how we perceive the world of fast fashion, it will influence our attitude to it and our behaviour, in that we probably won't buy clothing that's been produced through fast fashion. And also understanding our values will impact on our emotions. And I think that's a really important one, because we'll feel hopefully drawn towards what we feel positive about. So, if we were enacting our values, and we're following through on our values, we will feel good about it. Equally, we will not feel good about it, if we don't. So having had this conversation with my daughter, I think she started to feel a bit uncomfortable about her most recent purchase. And that is the point and the purpose of values, really, so our values will help us also to set goals and then motivate our action towards achieving those goals. So, if our goal is not to buy fast clothing through fast fashion, and we have that value of sustainability, then, hopefully, the two will interact, and we will not purchase too many of those items of clothing. So, it's a pathway. And you know, I suppose also the other thing to say about goals, you know, goals are the end, a goal is what we want to achieve, but we have to follow a pathway to get there. And you know, the pathway is often full of challenges. So, for my daughter, the challenge was there, "Well, I liked that item of clothing, it looked good on me." Yeah, it was fast fashion. But there probably was a

conflict there, of a couple of values. And so, the value that has the greatest importance ultimately will guide us on our pathway. And so we need to be aware of that. And to think about that, that's helpful. So, understanding our values can be really valuable. And when times get tough, it can help us with direction and help us with decisions. So just thinking about what the sources of our values are.

Elizabeth, what would you say, you know, what influences us in terms of our views about values in our lives and what's important to us?

**Elizabeth Gillies 19:33**

Well, I'm sure the environment around us whether it's the immediate environment, like your family, or a wider kind of cultural environment, they will have huge impacts on our values. And I'm sure the media and social media for young people, play huge roles in you know how we are kind of living our lives, are we thinking about it, or are we not thinking about it? And my guess would be is that when people start to do some values work, often on themselves and thinking about what is important to them, then they can start to lead a little bit more of what I would call an intentional life. So rather than getting caught up by, you know, like your conversation with your daughter, she was likely thinking a bit like we were talking in the last episode, having more of things as a great thing, you know, having more because that's part of my, my Stone Age mindset. But actually then when you, but it's coming into conflict with this value, you know, so you can start to make more intentional decisions about things. That's that make you feel a lot more, and I'm going to say this word, congruence. So, it fits you better, it kind of lives with you better. So, I think our kind of environment will be shaping a lot of both the values that are around for us.

**Louise Wiles 21:09**

Absolutely. So, we have all those sources and inputs that contribute to Yeah, our values and unconsciously, often as well. So, this is a chance to, as you say, to think intentionally about what we find as most important to ourselves, or we want to honour in that sense. So, the aim is to self-reflect and to consider how well, well to understand firstly, what your current values are, and then to ask, how are they contributing to a my overall sense of well-being and sense of meaning. And because ultimately, that's what we're wanting to secure, isn't it? And as you're now transitioning into a new stage of life, it's worth taking time to reflect and to set this in the context of your new environment, because things are moving on. So how to identify your values. But I think the first place is to start thinking about the different life domains that are important to you. So, this could be your study in the new environment, if you're moving to university, if you're moving into the world of work, your new world of work, and the new work environment. You might be wanting to think about relationships, and what's important to you, in terms of those relationships, particularly as you establish new relationships. And then the whole area, you know, you can be setting up and establishing new interests and hobbies. So, what's important to you about those, so perhaps take a different life domain for this exercise and think about this exercise in relation to that life domain. And then again, repeat for a different life domain, because you can have different values, you might find there are common values, but there might also be different values. And that's, that's just fine. This is about you. It's not about anyone else, there's no right or wrong answer. It's just what makes sense to you. That's the important thing to say about this. So, take a domain. So let's take relationships, for example. And you want to ask yourself - What kind of person would I like to be in this life domain? What would you want to stand for? And what would you never stand for in that area? So those opposing questions, those opposite questions. And then how would you like to think, behave



and feel in this life domain? And I think the best thing to do is to take those questions and write about them, journal about them. Or you could ask a friend to have a conversation with you about them and ask them to jot down as you're writing, jot down the things that jump out to them from the conversation. But either way, just take some time, perhaps a good half an hour an hour to think about that lifetime domain and jot down answers to those questions. So once again, the most questions are, what kind of person would you like to be in the life domain that you've identified? What would you want to stand for? What would you never stand for? And how would you like to think, behave and feel in that life and then look back and identify potential values that underlie your answers. So just go through and highlight things that jump out to you. And we will provide in the notes that accompany this episode, a list of potential values. It's not an exhaustive one, but it will just help prompt your thinking as you're looking through and reviewing what you've written or discussed with your friend. So that will help you to identify your key values. I would then perhaps play game numbering them, you know, which one is most important and reacting to that.

**Elizabeth Gillies 25:44**

I really like those questions Louise, and I a bit like you, I was kind of torn between should we just read out some values, read out what they are. But I actually think having a blank sheet and thinking about what the kind of person that I would like to be, like, with nothing else to kind of, like interfere with those thought processes are really good thing. So of course, we are going to give you some values that are around, but trust yourself that you'll know yourself, trust yourself that you'll be able to kind of ask yourself those questions. And I think for some values, as Louise said, you might put them in a list order, some, you might find will lend themselves more to transition times, for instance, I often think in a transition time humour is a really, you know, having a good sense of humour is a really good one to have a good fit. Oh, there I am thinking about, I'm going to be the loneliest person in this town, something like that. Being able to kind of use that, observe yourself again with it. So, there might be some of your values might lead you to use them in certain cases, certain situations than in others.

**Louise Wiles 27:05**

Yes, brilliant. Yeah. Yeah, definitely. So, and this is an exercise that you just continue to do, values aren't set in stone as your life evolves, as things change, so perhaps your values will. You may find that certain values pop up over and over again. But there are many other ones that arrive because you're in new experiences, new relationships, and so something pops up as being important. And that's, that's fine, that's absolutely fine. So, I hope this gets you started thinking about what's important to you why it's important to you, that's your values. And that then leads into helping you find what's meaningful for you, in your new experience and your new life. And I think, I would just probably finish with an end note about meaning, and for me, often people talk about, 'well, what is the meaning the purpose behind something?', and it's this big sense and big sense of the word. And I think often actually, it's in the little details. So, it's just thinking as you're sitting down to your first assignment, well why is this important to me at the moment, you know, and what's the purpose for me in this exercise it doesn't have to be any bigger than that. That will help you get through it and feel inspired and motivated to do your best.

**Elizabeth Gillies 28:28**

Lovely Louise, just take one step at a time, isn't it?

**Louise Wiles** 28:33

Absolutely. Yes, one small step at a time. So, we'll be back with episode five soon and the next small step in your transition process. Bye bye for now.

## Resources and References

The values work and resources are from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy acknowledging the work of Russ Harris. His website link is below

[www.actmindfully.com.au](http://www.actmindfully.com.au)

### Uncovering values

Values discussion cards created from Harris, R. (2019). ACT made simple: An easy-to-read primer on acceptance and commitment therapy. New Harbinger Publications.

[www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/values-discussion-cards](http://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/values-discussion-cards)

An example of a Values list from Russ Harris

[www.actmindfully.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Values\\_Checklist\\_-\\_Russ\\_Harris.pdf](http://www.actmindfully.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Values_Checklist_-_Russ_Harris.pdf)

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