



A TIME TO THRIVE

**Student
Transitions**

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Episode Eight

Harnessing the Power of HOPE

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 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 00:04

Hello, and welcome back. I'm Louise Wiles. And as usual, I'm with Elizabeth Gillies. Hi, Elizabeth. Lovely. Great to be here. And I'm really looking forward to talking about today's topic. We're living in quite challenging times, I probably don't need to emphasise that, politically, globally. And also, if you're listening to this as a student who is moving through some transition, you are starting, beginning some new experiences. And of course, we all 'hope', when we make these kinds of transitions that they are going to be happy, successful ones. So, we thought today, we would think a little bit about the subject of hope, because there's been quite a lot of research done on hope and thinking about the future in a positive way. So, some thoughts on hope today. I think we're going to start with a definition, Elizabeth you had a really lovely definition, so share that with us.

Elizabeth Gillies 01:25

Yeah. So, this definition of hope comes from, it's called VIA, it will be in the notes that we put together with the podcast, it's from values and action character strengths. And one of their character strengths, one of the 24 character strengths is hope. And they say hope has to do with positive expectations about the future. It involves optimistic thinking, it's not all about optimistic thinking, but it involves it, about focusing on the good things you want to come. And they see hope as more than a feel-good emotion. It's an action orientated strength, involving you doing things and believing that you can do them. So, it involves a little bit of motivation and confidence that whatever you hope for, what goals or actions that you want to be there in the future, you're going to reach them. So, they'll be realistic goals. And that you'll be able to find ways to reach them. So, people talk about with hope about a 'will'. So, the will is about you wanting these things for the future that're hopefully realistic, and the 'way' that you're going to get to them. So, will and a way is integral to hope.

Louise Wiles 02:54

And I think it's a nice contrast to some of our previous episodes, this just occurred to me, you know, where we've talked more about how sometimes through periods of change and transition, you can feel anxiety, and a little bit stressed by the change and the events that you're working through. And so, this is a nice contrast, because we're building on the optimistic side of this equation, recognising that at times, you'll also find it challenging. So, it's we're setting it, I guess, in a realistic setting as well, I think that's important to say. So, we're not saying it's all about fantasising and dreaming of a fantastic future and not recognising the reality of life. That's absolutely not what we want to say. And in fact, to demonstrate that I'm going to share with you a quote from a guy called Shane Lopez. He's done a lot of work on the area of hope.

"Every day for a week in 15 minutes stretches, I wrote down my thoughts about the future. This gave me a snapshot of my future thinking which fell into three categories. Sometimes I was fantasising. I had big thoughts that were pure fun and entertainment, about a fast convertible, next summer's vacation or retirement on the beach. These gave me a quick high, sometimes followed by a bit of a low. At other times I was dwelling, I hyper focused on my future thoughts on the bad things that might happen, such as struggling to get a job, taking 30 years to pay off my student loans, or never being able to retire. These thoughts made me anxious. And sometimes my thoughts were balanced between fantasising

and dwelling. They were exciting thoughts about my future, even while I acknowledged the challenges before me, and that's when I was hoping. Hoping felt different from the other types of future thinking. When hoping I felt compelled to act, Hope came along with a whole rash of plans for moving forward towards that future.”

So, I think that's lovely because the fantasising is about you, false hope, something that is probably not going happen, well it might do I suppose we, I guess you could put a plan together, getting a convertible, a fast convertible, but perhaps you're not particularly serious about it, that might be part of it as well. We often fantasise about amazing things, but don't really have the commitment to follow through. So that's why we're fantasising. Dwelling, and I'm quite sure, we all can recognise those, and we worry about our future. And that's perfectly natural too, as I just said before I read the quote, but what we really want to be, is to try and be realistic about our future thinking. And so, you know, we're hoping, and I think when we think about hope, we are thinking that the future will be better in some way than the present, that's probably part of it. But most importantly that we have the power to make it that way. So. it is a personal agency thing, it is something that we, a, have the commitment to and the motivation to the ambition to achieve. And that gives us the desire to then find the pathway, the way forward.

Elizabeth Gillies 06:23

And lovely. And there were a couple of words in it that I really liked as well. I like this word balance, being able to balance, you know, I'm having, you know, 'what if thoughts' about what's going to go wrong, but I'm also able to have 'what if thoughts' about the things that are going to go well. Because often our 'what ifs' are the catastrophic things, aren't they, but having a balance about well, there's that kind of thinking like that, but also, I'm capable of doing this other kind of thinking too that might lead me to that kind of better place that, you know, where I want to be, rather than where I don't want to be. So, I also like that kind of notion of noticing, having balance in your thoughts of what's going on in your mind. And having that will or agency to be able to do the things that you want to be able to do.

And so, it might be kind of useful for you to think about now, as, you know, as a person leaving school and going into these new different places. What are you hoping for? Have you got some realistic hopes about what you're going to be like, maybe in a month's time, or six months' time or something?

Sometimes I think we can be hopeful people, but our hope muscle isn't really activated until there's a challenge, until we must do something, until we have to think, okay, how am I going to be, how's that going to be like, and then be planning alongside about how you're going to do. So, it might be quite interesting for you to think about that, you know Louise and I have clear hopes about from the podcast. But it might be good to kind of for you to think about yours now.

Louise Wiles 08:16

And there's some real benefits to hopeful thinking isn't there? So, Elizabeth you were talking about that before, some research that has been conducted?

Elizabeth Gillies 08:26

Yeah. So hopeful people are less prone to depression. And we can maybe think about, well, why is that? Or hopeful people are more successful academically. They're healthier, they've just got better life satisfaction. And we can be like, well, Why is that like that? And it might be, because they're able to think about what they're going to be like in the future and have different kind of ways to be able to do it.

So, it's almost like a loop, isn't it? It's almost like a positive feedback route loop, in that you're hopeful about something, so, you'll do something to kind of make that happen. And so, then you're going to feel more and more like that. Whereas I guess the opposite is true if you have less hope, or if you're less optimistic. So important things about being able to, you know, we've talked about that hope muscle, you know, it's a character strength that you can grow and develop, like a lot of other strengths. So, it's about how you cultivate it, how you kind of look after it and tend it, to notice that balance, you know, do you have a balance or is it more one way than the other? Because I guess being too optimistic or hopeful about stuff is also not too good for you. You have to have that realism around where your hope is. So, you know, research says this there are huge benefits around being hopeful.

Louise Wiles 10:01

Yeah and I think the difference between optimism and hope is the plan that comes with. So, the hope theory, the theory that's been developed and the process that has been developed which we'll talk you through in a minute, is all around hope is all about sitting down and thinking about how you're going to achieve stuff, and what the potential obstacles might be along the way. So, it's a realistic plan, whereas optimism, you can, Yeah, it's lovely to be optimistic about events, but if you haven't thought through further than that, about how you ensure that those events are positive, they may not happen, they may not be successful, and your optimism may not be warranted. So, it's, it goes back to the agency and making things happen and being active.

I think perhaps one of the places to start when thinking about hope, is about developing our ability to see the future, because some people are much more forward future thinking than others, some people find it easier to envisage a future than others, I am quite future forward in my thinking, I enjoy thinking about the future. But I do know some people get quite concerned and worried about the future. So, it is a bit of a muscle to develop. And, also I'd say, start gently and just use short term future thinking initially. So perhaps just a month or two months, you don't have to be thinking five years down the line if that freaks you out. Just do it with a short-term basis. And a few tips about what you might be thinking, I'll give you some questions. So perhaps you want to take a pen and write these down. But what are you excited about, about the new experience? What lights you up when you think about it? And what goals might you have about those things that you're excited about? And then when I say goals, I don't mean they have to be massive, you know, high achieving goals, but I'm just thinking about, I'll share one thing, my daughter's just started at university, she loves playing netball. So, one of her hope, thoughts and goals could be about getting into a netball team and enjoying the experience and having fun and just developing a social life around that, that she feels involved in and has fun with, in a month's time, because it's all new right now, and she doesn't know anybody. So, you know, it's not a particularly massive, scary goal. But it just gives some direction to what she's doing. And so, think about what you're excited about and write down some goals, and then envision those goals coming to fruition. So how are you going to feel when you achieve that goal? What will you be doing, and achieving? And feeling? And how might that impact your life positively. So, thinking back to what Elizabeth has just said. So, see it and feel it and envision it in that way. And then the important thing about hope is that hope is created through deliberate practice. Through every moment from now until you achieve that goal that you've set, by deliberate practice, by doing stuff that will things that will make it happen for you. So then the next step is to think about the pathways, you want to talk a bit about pathways.

Elizabeth Gillies 13:29

The only other thing I was I was going to say about kind of setting your goal, you know, making your life a goal orientated for some of it, is that some of them what might be like Louise was saying, we talk about behavioural goals. So, what do I want to be doing? So, you know, I want to, you know, if you're thinking about in your job, like, I want to be really clear about what the expectations are of me or what my job description is, or if it's University, like joining a team, I will be part of the netball team, or I'm going to know my timetable and I'm going to be following it. So, I think sometimes just having those, those behavioural things, think about what you're going to be doing is a really good thing. And then on the pathways, I mean, there's never one pathway is there, you know, there could be several ways that you can reach your goal and because sometimes if you have one pathway, and there are obstacles in the way, as there often is, then it's good to have other options. You know, if there's a big obstacle comes in the way it's good to think about are potential obstacles but to know that you've got a fallback plan or another way of doing something. So, there's flexibility around that. So, you know, maybe thinking about, well, if this is my goal, you know, I want to I want to kind of know what my timetable is and be able to follow it. You know maybe you've got three different ways that you can do that, you know, I'm going to be sticking it up on my, you know, on my notice board, you know, I'm going to be preparing every week on a Sunday night about what I'm going to do, whatever it is, so that you know that you've got doable, ways of you know, getting to the goals. And I think three, threes good, if you need four, if you need one, if you need two, whatever is going to work for you. But maybe it'd be good to have different ways that you know, those pathways that are going to get you towards your goal. And it might be good to think about, reflect how close am I getting towards my goal? You know, what's helping me be there? Oh, this pathway's a good pathway, so keep on that one? So, a little bit of reflection on that would be quite good, too.

Louise Wiles 15:48

Yeah, yeah, I think that's a really important point, so, you're measuring your achievements, rather than, you know, distance from where you are now to actually achieving that goal. Because sometimes that can seem quite a long way away, quite challenging, perhaps a bit scary. So, if what you're measuring is the steps along the way, so the gain from where you are now to this time next week, what have you done, just reflect back on, you know, what few things you've done that have contributed to taking you towards achieving that goal. That's a much healthier way to think about your progress, and accomplishments than looking at the gap between where you are next week, and the goal, which still might seem quite a long way. Hopefully, you're motivated, you've got ambition to achieve that goal but then notice the accomplishments and achievements you're making as you go step by step towards that goal. And I think that's the point, it's tiny steps, isn't it? you don't want to be thinking you've got to take a big strides every single day because that then perhaps becomes overly challenging. Little tiny steps, because they will add up.

Elizabeth Gillies 16:57

And so, you know, in that that example that you gave at the start, Louise, about somebody writing things down, so write it down and you can evaluate yourself. And on a scale of naught to 10. With 10, I'm doing well and working well, I'm getting through it. And, you know, maybe one is the 'oh I'm taking

steps, but it's a bit slower' you know, so it's good to see your own progress. And actually, seeing your own progress even if you are at a one, you've made progress. So hopefully, that's going to add to your hope, and not take it away.

Louise Wiles 17:32

Yeah. And I think the other positive thing to think about, you know, when we set a goal, there is an element of challenge to that. But the positive thing about challenge is that challenge makes us stronger. So, you learn as you make your progress towards the goal and achieving that goal. You know, when you look back, you'll realise that you have probably some new skills, and you've learned a bit about yourself, and how you cope in different situations. And that's all helpful information that you can then apply to the next goal and perhaps bigger things that you want to achieve and so you gradually develop things that way.

Elizabeth Gillies 18:15

And how you bring that as well into yourself, how you can use hopeful talk, while you're getting through, which might increase kind of your motivation, your agency to kind of keep going on it. Because, you know, sometimes if you're working hard and stuff, it's easy to give up. So, you know, think about hopeful language like you know, I can do it, this is going to be possible, you might be imagining what it's going to be like once you've achieved your goals. So, things that you can say to yourself or visualise yourself about what it's going to be like, are the things that are maybe going to even help you more to keep on those pathways.

Louise Wiles 19:00

And I think is that everything that we've covered? I've got a final quote there. Actually, I've got two things I want to say. I've just suddenly looked down at my notes and some studies, high hopes students are more likely to graduate than their low hope colleagues, low hope colleagues are more likely to be dismissed than their high hope colleagues. So, if you're a student listening to that, that's your rationale for thinking about being a high hope student.

And a final quote from Charles Synder because I love this one, he talks about a rainbow.

“A rainbow is a prism that sends shards of multicoloured light in various directions. It lifts our spirits and makes us think of what is possible. Hope is the same. A personal rainbow of the mind.”

Elizabeth Gillies 19:57

Oh lovely. I'd love to do that in our graphics.

Louise Wiles 20:01

yes, I think we will, so go and get the notes and see it there – a rainbow.

Elizabeth Gillies 20:09 I was just gonna say that we hope to see you next time.

Resources

VIA Character Strengths www.viacharacter.org

C.R. Snyder *Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind. Psychological Inquiry. Vol 13 No 4 (2002)*

Shane Lopez *Making Hope Happen: Create the Future you Want for Yourself and Others. Gallup Scientist*

What is Hope in Psychology + 7 Exercises and Worksheets

<https://positivepsychology.com/hope-therapy>

Kate Snowise

www.thrive.how/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Thrive.How-Hope-Planning.pdf

Hope is an overused word, but the real thing can be very powerful

www.ualberta.ca/newtrail/research/seeking-hope.html

Hopeful things you can say to yourself

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_pzd3Nm0Q_IXRp2gjQoNRTjMsCKR9PY0/view

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