

A TIME TO THRIVE

Successful Student Transitions

**Series 2 Episode 13
Voices in Transition**

Transcript and Resources

Welcome to Successful 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 episode is part of Series Two: Voices in Transition, where we share peoples personal stories. You will here the voices of students and their reflections on their experience of transition and also of professionals who work to support students in transition.

This is the full transcript with links to associated episodes.

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

Introduction

Welcome to Successful Student Transitions - a Time to Thrive

Life is full of change and resulting periods of transition.

And some of life's big transitions begin as students as we move through the educational process and then on to the world of work or further education, university, and independent living.

If we can learn as students how to thrive through transitions, we will acquire invaluable skills that will support us through a lifetime of change and transition.

So, if you're facing changes in our life as a student, listen on as we share our insights and suggestions to help you thrive in a world where change is the only constant.

Welcome to Episode 13 - Maia

Welcome to Successful Students in Transition: A Time to Thrive

In this podcast we're going to introduce you to Maia— a student in her third and final year at university. We will be talking and reflecting on the move from school, taking a gap year and being almost at the end of her time at university with the next change approaching.

We want you to listen out for common experiences of transition that she articulates very well.

She talks about the importance of taking time to work out what and where to study. Taking a gap year can have many benefits.

And about the importance of thinking about what you might need to make your university experience successful once you have gained the grades.

Maia reminds us that life has ups and downs -and this is no different at university. So having a good understanding about what makes you be your best, being open to meeting new people, even sharing feelings and how you manage stress are important skills

Listen out for her getting ready for the next transition and the process happening again. This time, with the skills and experience of having made a big transition on her own.

When listening to Maia's story, think about what resonates with you and what might help you thrive in your transition to university.

Elizabeth Gillies 02:38

I'd like to say welcome to Successful Student Transitions - A time to thrive. And this is our students, young people voices. And today, I'm really happy to welcome Maia, whose a third year at university. So she's been through that transition into university. And there's another one coming up and also, she's

had the experience of having a gap year. So maybe those are kind of things that we want to talk about. So welcome, Maia, welcome.

Maia 03:11

Hello.

Elizabeth 03:14

Um, I know this is going back a little bit, but what do you remember about that transition to university?

Maia 03:22

Um, well, I think because a couple of my friends had been the year before. I kind of and I'd visited them in my year off, I kind of thought I had an idea of what it would be like, and I'd visited halls and everything. But I didn't realise how hard it would actually be moving away from home. It was very, very, very fun. But it did come with a lot of stress, I think at the time.

Elizabeth Gillies 03:56

So it's interesting, you kind of say, it's fun. And it's stressful too. Has it stayed like that for those your third year? But has it stayed like that all the time? Or was that it kind of peaked at the beginning or,

Maia 04:16

I think I've been quite lucky in the fact that the people in my first year are the people that I've become like best friends with. And we now we've lived together in second year and third year. So I think staying together has kind of like, helped the stress of not having to then live with different people across the three years, but I was lucky that I did end up liking them because I know a lot of people don't.

Elizabeth Gillies 04:43

Yeah, and I think you're fortunate to find your friends early on because I don't know if you know this, there's this thing at the beginning of university called a kind of friendship frenzy. Did you feel that?

Maia 04:55

Oh, yeah. Well, cuz at uni, well my uni. You find housing very early. And so there's a big stress around trying to find people to live with. And obviously, because I had COVID, when I joined, it was even more stressful. At the time, I was like, I don't even know these people. I don't know if I'm gonna like them next year. But luckily, I do and it's all fine. But that was a massive, massive stress.

Elizabeth Gillies 05:24

And it's, it's those kind of like, what if, what if I don't like them, isn't it? That kind of anxiety, that predicting the bad, the worst of things isn't it? And there you are, you've been you've done it well Maia, right.

Maia 05:39

Yeah. Three years later.

Elizabeth 05:41

Yeah. So helped making friendships and stuff like that. Okay, any surprises for you about going to university? Did you think it was going to be like that or not?

Maia 05:54

I don't know, I thought it would be I don't know, actually what I thought it would be like. It was probably more so like the lack of routine and that you can do whatever you kind of want to do, which in a way is good. But you kind of then miss it. Because you kind of felt a bit like, Oh, God, what am I doing?

Elizabeth Gillies 06:17

And maybe Maia, when there was COVID around when you went and so there weren't lectures and stuff like that?

Maia 06:22

It was nothing. Absolutely nothing. And that was really hard. I did find it, you'd get up. You'd have a lecture online in your room. You couldn't go out, but I mean, the only reason I kind of went out is to go on a walk or to go to the shops. So it was a bit hard.

Elizabeth Gillies 06:43

So kind of your room became work, living, kind of everything a lot of the time. Yeah,

Maia 06:50

We spent a lot of time in our kitchen

Elizabeth Gillies 06:57

So good you got on with each other. I mean, of course, we can't go back and change that COVID stuff. But is there anything that you think, if I was to do all over again, is there anything that you would have done differently?

Maia 07:10

Um, I think maybe not stress as much. Because I don't know, I'd be I'd been at school for seven years. And I'd have the same kind of group of friends at school. And so I kind of naively thought that I'd go to uni and I'd find a group of girls that it would be completely the same, but it wasn't, but luckily it is now. But not to think that it's expected that you'll find that group of friends immediately. So I'd say kind of like - it will come.

Elizabeth Gillies 07:56

And and you know, if you, you likely have, it's not out yet. But we've, we've got a very interesting one just on relationships. And there was a bit of research that we kind of looked at by a British psychologist Robin Dunbar. And he was saying about relationships. They take time and effort. And he's kind of through his research, and everything from Oxford University. He was predicting that it takes about five months to make a good close friend. So that's well past first term.

Maia 08:21

Definitely, definitely. I didn't think I was myself until probably like midway through term two. And I'd already agreed to live with people, kind of midterm one. So luckily, it worked out.

Elizabeth Gillies 08:37

So I like that thing. Don't stress so much Maia, that's what you might be saying to yourself, it's gonna be fine. Okay. And just going back, because, you know, hearing what you said there about there you were in school for seven years, had all these firm sort of friendships, and they were really close and things. Just out of my curiosity, how did school kind of talk to about this transition to university? Or did they do it? Um, well,

Maia 09:08

Um well, it was very much focused on getting there rather than actually going there. It was working towards getting the grades to get there, but kind of, you're off on your own once you go, which I think you're kind of just expected to know. And it'll be okay. I think.

Elizabeth Gillies 9:30

Yeah. And that's a really lovely way of putting it, you know, that schools are focused on getting you there, kind of not necessarily helping you be there. Because I think that's, it's a big difference, isn't it?

Maia 9:44

Yeah, definitely.

Elizabeth 09:46

Okay. Do you wish school had helped you with some stuff? And if they had, what would they have done?

Maia 09:53

I think because I think the main kind of stressful part of year 13 It's getting the grades to get into uni. And you're so relieved that you kind of get a place at this uni that you don't even think going past it. You actually have to then go, and the stresses that come with that. Maybe I don't know what schools could do, but kind of prepare you for the fact that it's not kind of, the first few weeks aren't going to be this amazing experience, because they are and they can be. But like it does come with stressful times as well. Because you are away from home first time.

Elizabeth Gillies 10:36

I think you're right Maia, because often people say 'oh, it'll be the best years of your life, you'll go off and do this. But actually it's stressful, so maybe some tools around kind of managing those beginning things. And tell me a little bit. Why did you decide on the gap here? Because that's an interesting choice.

Maia 10:55

Um, well, in year 13, I had no idea what I wanted to do at uni, I was kind of floating around ideas. And like, I found it really hard to write a personal statement, because I didn't really know what I wanted to

do. But I ended up writing a personal statement and applying for biology. But kind of seeing my grades at the end of year 13, I was like biology is not for me. I'm gonna reapply. And I kind of took my gap year to think what do I actually really want to do. And then I decided to do geography, which is what I'm doing that. So that was the kind of main reason but I'm glad I did it. Because I don't think I could have gone in September.

Elizabeth Gillies 11:44

So having that bit of space to think properly. Yeah, I think you're right, Maia, that sometimes it all feels like quite a rushed and funnelled. And once you've chosen these things, it's almost like that's the track I'm on I can't move. So, good for you and kind of thinking actually hold on a minute. Maybe this is not not the thing for me. There's something else for me. And so you use that gap year to kind of explore a little bit.

Maia 12:08

Yeah, well, because at the time, I was still swimming competitively, so I wanted to continue that. And I wanted to work a little bit and then travel, but obviously I couldn't end up travelling because of COVID and everything, but it was, I think it was definitely a good a good thing to take a year out, because it kind of made me grow up a bit as well, I think

Elizabeth Gillies 12:35

So maybe you're kind of advice to people is if you're really not completely sold on what you're gonna do take a gap year, take some time out. So

Maia 12:44

Yeah, because I think at school it kind of it, well in my school it wasn't kind of an option because not that they wouldn't let you have a gap year, but it was kind of pushed to go straight to uni, whereas I think taking a break can kind of help you prepare a bit more for it.

Elizabeth Gillies 13:03

I think so. And often people say, I don't know what you think, but sometimes kids that have gone and had a gap year are a little bit more mature. I don't know.

Maia 13:15

I think especially for boys, it's, I think, because half of my housemates took a gap year and half didn't. And the people that did it are boys, and you can tell a lot that they have, because they just a bit more grown up

Elizabeth Gillies 13:30

And also, when you first go to university in that frenzy that goes on around friendship, when they've been on a gap year, that's all people want to talk about. You gotta watch that. Great. Yeah, I think gap years, you know, for the right people, for the right reasons, I think there are good things to take. And coming up to, sorry to kind of drop this in. But when you're thinking about this transition from university, do you think it's going to be similar or different from that change from leaving school? Or not?

Maia 14:13

I think it might be worse.

Elizabeth Gillies 14:14

Now, let's be cautious about always predicting 'Whoa, what if that bad thing happens?'

Maia 14:18

Because a few of my friends from school have, they finished this this summer just gone. They thought it was the most stressful kind of summer of their lives, because they were kind of pummelled with questions about what are you doing? So I think, I'm trying not to let it get to me. But it definitely is, like the pressures kind of on to get something going after? Yeah.

Elizabeth Gillies 14:47

You know, I think I don't know if this is a helpful thing, you can be the judge of it. My, I think whatever kind of transition you're in, like any change that's happening, that's the toughest one, you know, when you're going to university, that's the tough one at the time, because that's what you're thinking about. And then when it comes up to the one, you know, leaving university, that's a tough one. You know, you come on to have a baby or something. And then that will be the tough one. It's interesting that it's sometimes, that whatever you're in at the moment, that can be the toughest. Because you can look back and say at university, I did it, I did it. Well. I'm going and hopefully when you're looking back at the time, when you're leaving university, it will be the same, it kind of worked out. But it's useful to kind of look and think about what might be the similar and what might be different I think you're right, you know, in some way that it might be, it could be more of a kind of difficult one because it's not a university world that you're going into the world. And, oh, shall I join that feast then and say, Do you know what you're gonna do? Are you thoughts about it? Have you?

Maia 16:12

I mean, I've got some ideas, but it's just, I think cuz the degree I do there is kind of no, kind of set direction of what you can go because you can go into anything really? So at the moment, not really, but I don't know,

Elizabeth Gillies 16:30

Good for you for choosing a part of geography then that is very open to lots of things because you know, there's some courses that might be narrower, but that it's going to open you and I mean one of the one of the podcasts we're thinking of doing it is about what after university, how to access careers advice, because I mean, lots of universities do all that kind of stuff. And it's how to kind of link in with that or how to talk to other people, or where you get ideas from, where do you find your passion and kind of see. So that might be one for you keep your, be all, being open, just as you were when you went to university. Can I ask you a little kind of like things a bit more about you because I think it's useful to know about what helped you because in some of the work that my colleague Louise and I are doing is like, we want to help young people understand what are the things that normally happen it in a transition, the kind of processes of it because there are cycles and things you can look at, but also about helping people know, young people know, what are the things that help them specifically, do you know what helped you Maia, in any transitions, but then maybe future ones?

Maia 17:53

I think. In the first year of joining Uni, I didn't really know what would help. But like, since kind of living through it, now I know what to do if I am feeling kind of stressed. And everything because I kind of grew up in I did, like elite sport up until the age of 18. And I stopped because of COVID. And the first year of uni, none of the gyms were open, nothing was open. And so I couldn't really do anything. So I kind of lost that a bit. But in second year, and now in third year, I've kind of got it back. And I think that has helped massively.

Elizabeth Gillies 18:34

Yeah, I think that activity, being active and stuff is a really good kind of protector of mental health and stuff, but just knowing that, you know, you don't need a gym to do it. So sports one thing, anything else Maia?

Maia 18:51

I think maybe routine. I'm massively a routine person. I didn't think I was, but I definitely am. Because having a plan to your day kind of gives you a purpose, I think. And I even knowing like when your meal times are, what you're going to cook, or when you're gonna go out and meet someone or, you know, I just think it massively helps me anyway.

Elizabeth Gillies 19:19

And I think you were right about saying about school, school is very routine, you know, you know, times are things suddenly when you go to university, especially around the covid time, there was none of that was there well, there was some, you know, lectures, but, you know, how many contact hours did you have in your first year? Do you remember?

Maia 19:40

12? 16? Maybe,

Elizabeth Gillies 19:46

And then they weren't contact hours in person, they were online? So going from that this, you know, five days a week, school nine to four, three, there? It is, it's a big change so, routine, sport. Anything else Maia, you think that helped you?

Maia 20:03

Um, maybe kind of, maybe not in the first few kind of weeks, but finding people that you kind of feel comfortable around. You can kind of say that you're stressed too, if that makes sense. Because, the first kind of friends that I could make, that I could then speak about being feeling stressed, or whatever about, was when I kind of felt most comfortable.

Elizabeth Gillies 20:37

Yeah. And there is something there isn't there Maia, about being open to be vulnerable when actually connecting to other people. Because most people you'd say to, most people, if you say, I'm really feeling not feeling great, I'm feeling a bit stressed about this. Most people would, would interact with

you with compassion and caring, wouldn't they? They're not gonna round and say for goodness sake, pull yourself together. They're not going to say that, maybe Mums and Dad's do, or maybe we say it to ourselves. But I think finding people that we can be vulnerable to and open to is one of the things that cements relationships, isn't it? And then they'll say it to you.

Maia 21:24

It kind of makes you feel a bit more sane. I guess. If they're going through the same thing.

Elizabeth Gillies 21:18

Yeah. And that's what you started off with, wasn't it? You know, you have to know that, you know that, 99% of people will be feeling some kind of discomfort about being in this new place, being on your own, having lots of things to learn and take in so no, you're not on your own is a good, good thing to kind of understand. And you know, that thing about knowing how to make friends because there you've been in school for seven years. You're not thinking about how do I make friends? You've never had to think about that for a long time. And then suddenly, you are

Maia 22:07

Yeah, I think as well because if you if you are going to make friends at school or wherever, you're not on your own. Whereas if you get thrown into uni, you don't really know anyone you might know a few people but you kind of have to make the, you don't have a group behind you kind of helping you, I guess.

Elizabeth Gillies 22:29

And yes, going home to think well, I have to leave all that

Maia, 22:38

Yeah, exactly.

Elizabeth Gillies 20:02

Yeah. So I like that sport, routines, people. Yes. That's a really nice combination to me. Maybe those are the things that you'd say to people, I don't know, what else would you? What kind of advice would you give people? They're going off to university this this September? What kind of things would you be saying to them.

Maia 23:00

Try, it's harder said than done, but just try not to stay in your room for the first three weeks. And it can be completely mentally draining after those three weeks. But it allows you to speak to as many people as you can, and kind of see how many people there are out there, I guess. Because the more people you meet, the more likely you are to get on with someone I think.

Elizabeth Gillies 23:28

I think you're right. You're never going to meet them in your room.

Maia 23:32

Yeah, exactly. As much as it can feel horrible, you have to do it.

Elizabeth Gillies 23:36

It's a little bit like in my world of psychology, people talk about tolerating some discomfort. So you have to tolerate it's uncomfortable going and talking to people and smiling and being nice, and all you have to do when you're new. But that's how you're going to make friends, isn't it? So try it is your thing. Just try.

Maia 24:06

Yeah try again and again.

Elizabeth Gillies 24:08

Anything else Maia?

Maia 24:12

It's hard to say because this is me looking back on it as a third year. But drinking as much as we did maybe wasn't the most beneficial to everyone's mental health, I guess. Like, and it is, because everyone's going out. And it's great. But like doing that for the whole first year isn't most beneficial because it impacts, not is, I think it impacts things more than you think they would, I think.

Elizabeth Gillies 24:43

And you better be cautious of that, haven't you? And that's that's a hard one when everybody else, like that's what they're doing as well.

Maia 24:54

Yeah. Because you're not going to feel good, if you've drunk for four days a week for so long. Do you know what I mean?

Elizabeth Gillies 25:01

I do. I remember it too, it's never a good thing, yeah, so kind of party, you have to go and enjoy yourself, but maybe not too much of all the drinking and stuff that kind of can go on.

Maia 25:19

We'll maybe do it, for like, because obviously it's a social thing as well. Kind of maybe commit to it. But don't do it for the whole year, I guess. Because it's hard not to and in freshers in that first term.

Elizabeth Gillies 25:37

So, keep an eye on it. I like that advice. Try things. But watch the drinking. Have fun, go out and do things and have fun but just kind of watch how you're, I mean, it's, it's something that I kind of like talking about, in a way. It's, it's being that Observer Self, able to observe yourself, like, did I go over the top last night? Am I doing too much of that? Am I getting my work done? Am I able to kind of look back and see how well am I doing at university? Like give yourself some sort of gauge and understanding about how it's all going is a good thing? Any kind of last, any other things that you'd like to share that you think's important? Maia?

Maia 26:26

I think it's uni as a whole though, I think a lot of people say it's, it's the most amazing time of your life. And it is, like I've had the best three years ever. But like it hasn't come without its kind of ups and downs I think, and I think that's been the same for everyone. I think, maybe expect to have an amazing time, but it can be quite hard as well. Especially with work and everything's Yeah,

Elizabeth Gillies 27:01

Yeah. So we've got one of our podcasts, I think that's really well said Maia, and we've got one of our podcasts that will be out now. And it's called Asking for Help. It's about knowing, because of course there's going to be ups and you don't ask for help with them, but you should know where to go to and ask for help. And of course your other friends and stuff are great people to go to and parents are great people to go to. And sometimes there's a kind of like support at university as well which might or might not be used. Maia, I have really, you have really hit home some important things for me. And I'm sure for other people going off to university about, you know, it looks like, for me, it's taken, you didn't maybe know what you when you went to university about the things that were going to help you in that transition. But you've got them now. I mean, isn't that great? And you know, to know that, that you've got things you can rely on, things about yourself, about your sports and how you kind of organise yourself in routines, and how you how you are with other people, seems to me to be a great kind of blueprint for any kind of future transition.

Maia 28:22.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Gillies 28:26

So well done to you and try it. But watch out. I'd like to say a big thank you to Maia for sharing her wisdom with us today and her experience and Maia I wish you very well in your next transition. So thank you very much.

Further Listening

To learn about all the other episodes, access transcripts for free and buy the Think Sheets associated with episodes 1 – 10 go [HERE](#)

We hope you have enjoyed this interview with Maia with her knowledge and experience of taking your time to work out what's important for you in this next transition.

You might want to listen to all the previous podcasts in the series but especially

Podcast One – Beat the Transition Blues -where we talk more in depth about the nature of change, transition, and adjustment and why struggle can be part of the journey to grow knowledge and resilience.

Podcast 3 Minding your mind – where we talk about the origin of common thoughts during times of transition - the 'what if's' and why they can sometimes be challenging and helpful in making good choices.

Podcast 4 What matters to you - where we talk about knowing our values and what's important to us can help carry us through the challenging times.

And if friendships on your mind, **Podcast 9 Nurturing supportive relationships** could be helpful in what and how to develop new friendships

Please check out all the podcasts, transcripts and Think Sheets that you can purchase to dig deeper into the topics of transition and where we share more resources. For all these resources go [HERE](#)

Thanks for listening.

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