

A TIME TO THRIVE

Successful Student Transitions

**Series 2 Episode 15
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 15 - Naomi

Welcome to Successful Students in Transition: A Time to Thrive

In this podcast we're going to introduce you to Naomi— a final year student at university. Naomi was born in the UK, her family located to America when she was 11. She had always planned to return to study in the UK and has been able to fulfil this wish with only two terms until her graduation. Then she plans to return to that other "home" in America. We will be talking and reflecting on her transition to the UK and her future transitions.

Listen out for the common experiences of transition that she articulates very well.

- The mix of feelings of excitement and nervousness of all transitions.
- Her preparation for the double transition of moving countries and meeting different learning expectations.
- The surprise of being new in a place you thought you knew.
- Her skills to adapt through asking for help, problem solving skills, accepting her challenges and going through it.
- Her strong vision about what she wants in life and her willingness to do what she needs to do.
- Balancing her studies with building a productive and fun life.
- And some great advice about going abroad to study.

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

Transcript

Elizabeth Gillies 02:44

Welcome to Successful Student Transitions, A time to thrive. And today we have got the great pleasure of having Naomi join us, who's a 21-year-old from America who braved coming to the UK to study. And so, we're going to talk about her transitions or her kind of doubled transition. So, the transition both to university and coming to the UK. So welcome, Naomi. So we've been thinking with other people about what were their experiences and expectations when they're kind of coming to university and a little bit about what helped and hindered them in that process. Can you say a little bit about that?

Naomi 03:36

Yeah. So, I was really excited coming to university, I've been kind of, I think I've been kind of academically prepared for it for a few years, but it was kind of getting to the point where you're kind of socially prepared for it, because it is such a big change. I mean, at the end of the day, when you're in school, if you've had a bad day, you can go home and rant to your mum about it. But to kind of be in university, being this new environment, living with total strangers, is completely different. And I think I was really kind of, I think I was nervous about kind of transitioning to the UK system. And I think that's been one of my kind of biggest challenges, is that academic transition. But I was also just kind of excited and nervous to be kind of back in England, I'd grown up in Oxford as a kid. And so, to kind of be back here was, it was very different than I had remembered it. But at the same time, a lot of things are quite familiar.

Elizabeth Gillies 04:33

Yeah. So really nice there, Naomi that you talked about these conflicting emotions. You're excited to be here, but nervous at the same time. Sometimes that's quite confusing for people, how can these two things co-exist? But I think often in transitions they do, don't they? And so you said, you were academically prepared. What helped you? Did you always think that you would come to the UK? So, what helped in that preparation,

Naomi 05:09

I think it's in the sense that I'd always kind of knew I'd come back. When I moved as child, it was quite a sudden movement, I mean, no 11-year-old wants to leave all of their friends and go to a new country where they knew no one. And so, I think in the back of my mind, I always wanted to come back and always knew I was going to come back. I mean, that's part of the reason why I never lost my British accent, because 12-year-old me was like, 'I am coming back, I'm going to need this.' And so, I was really kind of, you know, prepping in certain ways to do that. I wasn't entirely prepared in the sense of when it came to filling out the college application for university applications, they're very different than in the States. And suddenly, I'm reading books, because that's kind of more of a focus rather than extracurriculars. But I think, especially because my degree is very specific. It's history and politics of the Americas. And so having my American kind of background and taking certain classes in school, I had definitely had a one up on some of my peers, because I had that background information. But at the same time, the type of essays that you write here are very, very different. And it was quite difficult to make that transition.

Elizabeth Gillies 06:24

Can I ask just because of my interest, how are they different now? I mean, what do you think? What's the difference?

Naomi 06:32

In American schools, you're preparing for these things called the AP exams, and they are very structured, it's like, my teacher would say, this is what you put in the first sentence, second sentence, third sentence. And it was very much like that, very direct and to the point. And so, coming here, the big difference is, it's a lot more kind of scholar based. And this could just be at the university versus like, A level, and what makes it better. But instead of using kind of facts as evidence, facts are assumed, and your evidence is different scholars, and you're critiquing and interacting with them. And especially since my first year was that COVID year, it was quite difficult to kind of understand that that's what I was kind of expected to do. Because I didn't have that opportunity to talk to my peers and talk to my teachers the same way.

Elizabeth Gillies 07:21

Yeah. And gosh, that must have been hard for you in that COVID time, coming to a place that was new, new place, new people, new everything and not being really able to kind of mix and talk with people, so...

Naomi 07:35

Oh, it was really hard. I remember I was a hall rep, that's why it's on my profile, at the time and trying to argue that in our seven, there'll be seven people living on a floor. And yet we were only allowed four people at a time in the kitchen and trying to say, 'well, if all seven of us are essentially living together using the same spaces, we should be able to sit together in the kitchen.' And yeah, try, I mean, I was quite fortunate the people on my floor I got along with really well, one of them, I still talk to regularly today. But a lot of people, if you didn't really kind of connect with those individuals, you didn't have the opportunity to go to a party or go to class even and get to know others.

Elizabeth Gillies 08:23

So, do you think one of the things that helped you was that kind of drive to be with other people and to make friends then kind of early on?

Naomi 08:29

Oh, definitely. And I think that's one of the benefits of the fact that I was in halls, I was so far from home, because I've seen some people who kind of maybe they grew up around London, maybe they even live at home now. And they don't really have the same experiences as someone who's been completely kind of isolated. Not truly because we have Wi Fi and I can still talk to my friends, family back home. But it really kind of pushed me, like I need to make that those extra efforts, because I can't go home on the weekend and just talk to people I've known for years.

Elizabeth Gillies 09:02

Yeah. So really quite out on a limb there, you've been and I guess it's good to have internet so that you could be, you know, zoom and whatever to be talking with family, but likely, especially in those COVID times, you wouldn't be seeing your family for a long time. So

Naomi 09:19

No, yeah, even kind of now. I came here in September, I'm not expecting to go back until May. And like, you're right, it does make such a difference having things like WhatsApp. I talked to my mom about when she kind of went travelling when she was about my age. And she's like, I didn't talk to anyone for about six months, because it was so expensive, making international phone calls. And like, I don't think I would have survived not being able to talk to people.

Elizabeth Gillies 09:46

I guess you use whatever's around,

Naomi 09:50

You adapt. But especially I think being at university, there's so much kind of different pressure on you, you know, you're working really hard academically, but you're also trying to succeed socially, you're in all these different societies, you're trying to work towards having a career, I mean, interning whilst at school, and having that kind of support system is so crucial to kind of maintaining your mental health and everything. And so, I'm just so fortunate that I have been able to kind of reach back and call back home whenever I need something.

Elizabeth Gillies 10:23

So it sounds there that you have been using quite a few strategies to help you be successful and thrive in this new environment. Like you've got your friendships and, and maybe even being far away from your family has propelled you into really kind of settling, you know, here. But also, it looks like you've got an eye on the future and be thinking about what do I want to do? So maybe you've kind of worked out the stuff that you want to do in the future and what you need to be able to, like maybe some skills or internships or experiences that's going to add to sort of your skill set for that future that you've envisioned? Yeah, yeah. So good for you. What are you wanting to do? What's kind of like in your in your future?

Naomi 11:13

I want to go to law school after this, and then kind of work as a lawyer for a few years and eventually go into American politics.

Elizabeth Gillies 11:23

We shall look forward to seeing you there. So, there's lots of good things that that's been helpful to you. What was maybe a surprise that kind of like, kind of made you kind of think, what am I going to do about that – was there anything?

Naomi 11:38

I think for me, kind of the biggest thing and I mean, I was a hooky kind of kid who was just like, 'Well, I'm gonna go away somewhere I've already been before, was really kind of the transition back to England, because even though I had lived here before, the things that you're exposed to, when you're an 11 year old, are completely different to being kind of an 18 year old in the same place. And I mean, like a big thing is kind of, I'm going out to the supermarket. And suddenly, I realise like, oh, staple kind of household goods that I would buy all the time in America, just don't exist. And I think that was kind of that's been quite a big shock for me or like the differences in prices. One of the big things is honey is quite reasonably priced here. And it's really expensive in America, at least where I'm from, versus maple syrup that use quite frequently in dishes, is really expensive here. And so that was kind of the big shock and then also, there was a point, kind of my first year when I'm walking around down the street with a couple of my friends, and then using a lot of like British slang terms, and there was a whole conversation where I didn't understand what they were saying. Because I just hadn't grown up with, those subtle language differences.

Elizabeth Gillies 12:54

And isn't that because it's linked back to that phrase that you use earlier about having to adapt? So, there's all the kind of shampoo or toiletries or food or something that's just not here, you know, so you have to learn new stuff and a new language, although we're all speaking English. So, there's lots of differences. It sounds like those differences. didn't faze you too much, though? So how did you get round? How did you manage with those?

Naomi 13:20

I mean, they haven't played faze me too much. I think the biggest thing is I've never been kind of shy about asking a question on something I don't understand. And so, they'd be talking about something, and especially with certain terms, you want to know what that means so you don't accidentally use it incorrectly. And I just be like, Well, what does this mean? And a lot of it, it's kind of the acceptance of this is the situation, this is life. I need to kind of figure out what new dishes am I going to make? How am I going to kind of settle into this environment? I think one of the big things that is quite shocking is because I have this accent, people don't automatically think, 'Oh, she's American,' which is fair. But it also means that people won't necessarily kind of pick up on, 'Oh this is why she's not understanding what's happening,' or, and I think that's kind of a big, there's a big kind of transition. And I've seen it to some other friends, when they've come from a country and they speak English so perfectly that when you ask for a correction on a word, you're kind of like, 'Oh, why would they not know that?' And it's like, oh, it just makes it a little bit harder, because you don't have that same sympathy. But it is what it is.

Elizabeth Gillies 14:40

And I think you're right, you know, when people hear you, they're not thinking you're American. And if they did here, maybe that American accent people maybe offer a bit more flexibility around that. Yeah. And I think you know, you're right now I mean, asking for help is, it's a huge skill, isn't it? You know, in in relation to your friends or family or people at university, you know, the lecturers or whatever, asking for help is a really good and we've got one of our podcasts which is just about asking for help. Because sometimes people see as a weakness, rather than a strength. You're right, this is life. It's got ups and downs. And you've got to kind of like navigate through. What about, if we're thinking a little bit about the

fundamentals? What are the fundamental things that you had to get to grips with? So, you already talked a little bit about food and shopping and kind of buying stuff, what else?

Naomi 15:37

I think a really big thing was that the sense of not being able to go home as frequently as many of your peers. I mean, I have a friend who lives on the East Coast of America, and I'm from the West Coast. So, for us to go home is completely different costs, I think it's, it's close to \$1,000 for me to go home, which is a lot of money. So that's why I'm here for so long. Lassos, he also comes from a bit more money, but he can go home at Christmas, he can go home at Easter, his family can come and see him. And I think that sense of not being able to see your family, going through those periods where you are just a bit lonely sometimes. Like I'm over here in the Christmas break, and everyone has rightly gone home to see their families. And you're like, 'Well, I'm just not going to be seeing people.' And I've been quite fortunate because I work at a theatre over the Christmas breaks and the breaks. And so, I get to see my coworkers every day. But it's still that sense of, you don't have that same support system, as other people do have. And so, I think that's the thing, I even before I came, I would like listen to people who've made similar transitions. And I'd be like, well, that's not going to affect me, or that's not going to stop me. And I don't say this to kind of deter anyone from making a similar move. But it's more that when that happens, you know that everyone goes through it. And it is you just get through it, and you come out the other side and you watch a bunch of Netflix and you don't feel so alone or you call your mom and catch up.

Elizabeth Gillies 17:11

Or you do as you did you get yourself a job. So, you get another you get another group of people that you can link up with.

Naomi 17:18

Exactly. And I mean, that's the thing that I really kind of advertise to people is to kind of have a job, have a work family that you can kind of be around during those periods because your friends are great, but they are going to go home. And if you're fortunate enough to be able to get a job, because I know visas are really hard.

Elizabeth Gillies 17:40

Yeah. So, a Fundamental is about kind of making sure you've got a good support system, not just solely within the university, because people are transient, they'll go home at breaks and stuff like that. So be doing other things. To keep you connected into something. I think having a job is great, if you can do it's a great thing. Good for you. Anything else that you think was about? Maybe you mentioned already as well about just adapting from an American system, kind of education system into that kind of British one? Whereas Yeah,

Naomi 18:12

It's quite an adaptation. I mean, especially there's, there's a very different culture in America around kind of the treatment of school, and then also kind of having school and then being in a bunch of societies and clubs and other kind of extra, and pieces of work, which I think is something that I've definitely taken on here, I think I'm in like six or seven societies, it's so many. And I very much recommend that

everyone join at least something. Because it is it's something fun to do, it means you get to meet a bunch of really cool, interesting people. But it's definitely kind of quite different having to balance all of these different things, on your plate. So, if you've come from a really intense work culture, when school gets to be quite high, remember, you can just skip that meeting or whatever. Be flexible.

Elizabeth Gillies 19:05

So how did you choose what you were going to do? Did you choose things that you already knew you're good at? Or did you choose things that you had no idea, you know, bagpipe playing or something, I don't know?

Naomi 19:18

It was kind of a mix. I had done mock trial's in high school. So, I joined the debate team when I came here, because I just wanted to keep up my public speaking. And then my, so that was kind of first year because everything was online and there's not many things you can really do online. And then my second year, everything opened up a lot more. And one, I had gone to this Brazilian jujitsu class, and I hated it, I really didn't like it. And I kind of came out of that. And as I was leaving, I saw something online about a salsa dancing taster class. And I thought, well, that could be fun. I'd done dancing when I was a kid. So, I was like, well try something new, best thing I've ever done. I've been dancing with the Salsa society for the past two years, I was there last night. And the teacher was just really funny. And I was like, Well, this is fantastic. And then some of the other ones. It's like the American society because I wanted to do something for Thanksgiving. And they happen to have posted somewhere they were having an event or, the Spanish and Latin American society to keep up by Spanish. And I think that that's the one thing that I really kind of liked doing is just trying a bunch of different things. The downside is that is if I enjoy it, I do not quit. And that's why I've been so busy. But I mean, even I think that's one of the best things about being in London, especially, there's just so much going on all the time. I have a friend who once a month, we'll go to a museum, and we'll kind of be there for like six hours chatting away, or I'll kind of see something off Tik Tok, of a really cool place around London to go see, and I'll just like, wander down there, because there's so kind of many different things to do and if you want a break from your studies, and just to be someone else for a few moments, then you can just go and do that.

Elizabeth Gillies 21:15

Sounds to me, Naomi that you've got a very nice balance of being serious about your studies, and being serious about having a good time and meeting people and making it a big experience.

Naomi 21:29

Yeah. And I think the biggest thing is that you really want to have a lot of those things, you're kind of first and second year, because third year is rough. I think, it's similar to kind of junior in high school where everyone says it's going to be bad. And you're like, 'Well, the last few years have been so easy. It can't be that bad.' And you come up to it and you're like, 'Oh, I understand now.' But having those fundamental things in place means that it's so much easier to handle because you see, like you can decree how often you see your friends because you have those tight connections by then. You can make that kind of active choice to say, 'oh, okay, this day, I'm going to go to the museum because I need a break.' And you know how to get there instead of having to spend ages trying to figure out how

to move around London. And it also means that you can remember the good thing before you go through the heavy exam period. And no, it's going to be better on the other side, and have everything kind of set up so that you have fun afterwards. And so, there's lots of time to kind of focus on studies as well.

Elizabeth Gillies 23:27

Yeah, so universities, it is about studying, but it's about lots of other things too. A bit about yourself, isn't it? Yeah. So, can we talk a little bit? So, there's this move coming up that you're going to go back to America? I don't know, if you started thinking about it, have you Naomi? Is it on your agenda, or are you just, you've got exams at the end of the year to finish off here.

Naomi 22:58

I mean, I've thought about it a little bit, it's mostly all those things in the back of your mind. Like, I would always tell myself that when I kind of moved back to America of the good, then I needed to learn how to do an American accent. Just because the amount of times I've been kind of at work and someone's like, picked up on the British accent. And you're like, I'm just trying to sell you a pizza, I don't want to tell you my whole life story. And my sister can do both. And I'm very envious of that fact. But even kind of the things of, oh, I need to go somewhere and I need to make new friends again. And I need to settle into new different clubs and societies and learn how to kind of start from scratch, essentially. And whilst I know I have all of those fundamental skills, and I've been able to practice them multiple times, it's always daunting to have to do anything for the first time and you get there and it's okay, but I always say like, I always hate first days, at a new job, or as a new internship or anything, because you look like a fool, you're rushing around, you don't know how to turn the computer on. And it looks really terrible. And then you come in the second day, and everything's amazing and you suddenly know how to do things. But it's always that kind of, the dread of the first day. And I think that's where it's kind of where I'll be walking down the street and suddenly go, oh, no, I need to do that again, or I need to find the nearest grocery store and all of that.

Elizabeth Gillies 24:25

And I think you're right, that newness, and knowing that it's that you're not going to be great that first day, to know that it's okay not to know all the things you need to know in that first day. And like you've so well, you've put it so well Naomi that you learn this stuff as you go along, you know, and having a kind of determined mind of knowing what to do that helps you sounds like a kind of recipe for your success. Cool. So, you've got that experience and knowledge about what makes you thrive, haven't you? And it's there for you on this next transition, and other ones yet to come. If you were just to kind of give us a few little things that are kind of you think, Well, you know, if you're going to be like me, and go abroad to go to university, what are your top three tips, what do you think? You might have already said them before, but just, we could end with that.

Naomi 25:30

I think the first one is to really do a bit of research, I didn't because I was cocky and was like, 'Oh, I've lived here before that's nothing.' So that you aren't thrown off by walking into a grocery store for the first time and not knowing what to buy. And generally, kind of getting a lay of the land and everything. And also especially, I mean, the US and UK are pretty similar in a lot of cultural things. But if you're coming

from a completely different country, I've met lots of friends, I live in quite an international halls. And I've met lots of friends when they got here and it was like, oh, I need to - 'something I've always done my entire life, but you don't do here because the plumbing is different.' Or you can drink the tap water or you can't or whatever it may be. And then I would say kind of be flexible. Because as I said, a lot of things are going to be thrown at you and just kind of being able to adjust, always kind of asking for help under that category of asking your teachers why you didn't do well on the essay and get their advice, because it's so valuable when it comes to the next one. And I think the last thing is just to have fun and enjoy it because I mean it is University as you said, it is about the work, but it's not just about the work. It's about growing as a person so that you come out as what I call a proper adult who can like be a functioning human being. And just kind of enjoy it because as we always say you remember your university years you remember your university friends, before life gets too serious and just kind of enjoy that.

Elizabeth Gillies 27:07

Do you know Naomi, it sounds like you've made the most a lot of living in London, more than most people who live in the city and you know, I live in London, so you're going to museums and having a job and the theatre and doing your studies and doing all these activities that your clubs that you belong to it sounds like you've had a busy and productive time. Thank you for sharing your wisdom with us today. I've really enjoyed it and reminded of your going to supermarkets and you look for your thing and where is it? It's not there and what do you buy instead? It takes a lot of time but that flexibility and adaptability to those small things and bigger things will help. Naomi good luck in the last bit of your time in London and I hope you'll come back lots. Thank you.

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 Naomi and had a glimpse into her successful busy planned time at university

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.

Podcast 6 Why it helps to ask – where we discuss the benefits and challenges of asking for help. We share a framework to help in transition.

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](#)

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