

A TIME TO THRIVE

# Successful Student Transitions

**Series 2 Episode 17  
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 people's personal stories. You will hear 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***

### About Our Guests:

Natasha is an international education and youth empowerment consultant fuelled by a passion to support and guide young people to achieve their full potential. In 2019 Natasha decided to leave full time work in international schools to set up [Natasha Winnard Consultancy \(NWC\)](#), in order to focus on providing a holistic personalized online service to support and guide mobile students and their families.

Natasha's consultancy work focuses on providing students with social, emotional, academic and transition support. Natasha has worked with many amazing young people for over 25 years as an international educator, guidance/pastoral care, college, university and career counsellor, mentor and volunteer in international schools and communities in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.

Natasha regularly contributes to articles to guide and support global families and educators in The International Educator (TIE) and on [her own blog](#).

## Transcript

### 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 they move through the educational process and then on to the world of work or further education, university, and independent living.

If students can learn how to thrive through these transitions, they will acquire invaluable skills that will support them through a lifetime of change and transition.

If you're a student facing some life transitions, or educators or parents supporting students through times of change then this podcast is for you.

We share insights and suggestions to help students thrive in a world where change is the only constant.

This content is also for you if you are an educator or parent supporting students through times of change and transition.

### Welcome to Episode 17 with Natasha Winnard

**In this episode you will meet Natasha Winnard. Natasha is an international educator, and youth empowerment consultant fuelled by her passion to support and guide young people to achieve their potential.**

Through her consultancy she supports and guides mobile students and their families.

Listen to this highly practical conversation and see what resonates for you.

Natasha shares her tips for getting prepared, starting strong and staying strong.

While her advice is targeted at international students it makes interesting listening for home-based students too. Some of Natasha's tips are as relevant to home-based students as they are to international students.

Also, her stories and advice will help home based students better understand the challenges faced by their international student colleagues – and this will hopefully help them to better support international students as well.

Parents and educators will find this interesting as well.

**Louise Wiles 02:31**

Hi. Hello, and welcome to this episode of Successful Student Transitions A Time to Thrive. I'm Louise Wiles, and I'm very excited to be here today with Natasha Winnard. Natasha is joining us from Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. And we've just been talking, it's carnival time as I record this, so she's in a city full of all that amazing visual images brings to my mind anyway, Carnival in Brazil. So, lovely to that you're joining us, Natasha, perhaps you could just give us a bit of background to you, I have said that you're in Brazil. But tell us a little bit more about the work that you do, how you've come to be doing the work that you do, and who you support.

**Natasha Winnard 03:21**

Ok thank you, Louise. It's lovely to be part of the podcast. I've been listening to it. And certainly, I know that the families I worked with around the world are getting some great tips. So, I've always worked in education, always with young people. I trained in the UK, to be an 11 to 18-year-old teacher. Started off teaching geography, A level, GCSE. And then after three years in the UK, I moved to my first international school position at International School Manila in the Philippines. And since then, I've worked with many amazing children, young people, and their families for about 25 years in a variety of roles. International educator, 3 to 18 sort of pastoral leader, guidance counsellor, college, university and career counsellor, mentor, and volunteer. I've worked in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. So quite a lot of experience in different parts of the world in different roles, in sort of British, International American, international schools. And in 2019, just before the pandemic, I decided to leave full time work in international schools and set up my own consultancy, Natasha Winnard Consultancy. The timing was perfect in hindsight with the pandemic because everyone was going online. And today, my consultancy focuses on providing holistic, personalized, online services to support and guide mobile students and their families. So, I've worked very hard to build a relationship and I provide social, emotional, academic university careers and transition support. So very varied, work with students all over the world.

**Louise Wiles 05:30**

Fantastic, right well, wow, what a range of experience you have had, in so many different locations as well. So perfect for this podcast. And I have a feeling that we're gonna have to have you back multiple times with that experience and that ranges of expertise. But today, we're particularly focusing on teens, students in their late teens who are moving on to higher education, and often higher education in another location away from home. So, I'd love to draw on your experience of working with those students. And to start with, through your work with students, what kind of challenges do you see them facing as they contemplate or start to embark on this move to studying abroad away from their home location?

**Natasha Winnard 06:23**

Okay, yeah, I mean, the challenges often vary depending on previous experience, but there are some common themes that, you know, I've supported students with, observed over the years. I think the first one, and especially at this time of the year, I've been working with quite a few students recently, climate is a challenge. You know, if students have perhaps been living in a warm country, a warm climate prior to going to university. If they go to the UK, the East Coast of the US, the Netherlands, Canada, you know, people warn them about the weather, but it can be a real, real shock to the system. And especially challenging if they're in a northern hemisphere University, and they go back to university, January, February, maybe after a family holiday in a warm location. You know, they struggle with the lack of daylight hours. You know, it can be a bit of a shock to the system when it gets dark between three and four in the afternoon. And I often will check in with students that I've worked with, for university applications at this time of the year, because I know that that is a real challenge. And you know, many of them need some support going through those six to eight weeks, when the weather can be particularly bad. Yeah,

**Louise Wiles 08:06**

And actually, it kind of coincides with that settling phase as well, which adds, I guess, another dimension to settling in. I mean, it's tough enough, being a Brit living in the UK, supposedly used to winter, I still, I struggle, you know, dark nights dark at four o'clock, we're now talking in February, it's beginning to get lighter. And that makes such a difference to life. And I guess, also for the international student who comes from us. So, if we're talking about moving perhaps from the southern hemisphere, where the long summer holiday is the Christmas period, they kind of miss out on that, they just they miss summer, both ways. Yeah.

**Natasha Winnard 08:48**

And also you know, that can be a great time to catch up with friends that are perhaps staying in the host country. That's a classic example here in Brazil, you know, a number of international school students will stay in Brazil for their undergraduate years. So, they will have their holidays until the beginning of February, whereas those friends of theirs that have gone off to the US, Canada, Europe are having to leave pretty much you know, the sixth of January, when all the fun and the weather's good.

Another challenge, again, that can really impact the transition phase is a late start to University because of visa issues. You know, if students are waiting for A level or IB results in July, to confirm University places, then it can potentially delay the processing of visas. And it can make it harder to settle if, because of a visa issue, students miss those first few weeks, which we know is so important, as far as connecting with new friends, you know, joining societies, etc. So, a late start can be a challenge sometimes for international students who are needing visas to study in in, you know, international locations.

**Louise Wiles 10:15**

Yeah, that's a one I've heard quite a few comments about recently. And actually, Ben, who is in Episode 12 of The Student Voices, he talks about that, but that's in relation to work experience, but still, you know, definitely a valid issue for many people.

**Natasha Winnard 10:33**

Another challenge can be accommodation. I mean, some international students have, that I've worked with have missed accommodation deadlines. And they've had problems renting in the private market because of a lack of a bank account. And this has been certainly a challenge that quite a lot of students that I've worked with this year have faced, I mean, I know of a family who, whose son has been a in different Airbnbs in Holland, at least for the first 8 to 10 weeks of the start of the semester. And I think certainly accommodation is becoming increasingly challenging in places like Holland, because we know certainly with Brexit, that a lot of students that perhaps would have gone to the UK, from Europe, are now staying in Europe, mainland Europe. And so, you know, the challenges for accommodation have proved to be difficult, especially in the last couple of years. And again, we know that that can really impact a transition. You know, if you're spending, you know, one week sleeping on somebody's floor and another week in an Airb&b, you just can't settle. We know that as adults. I know that when I've moved around the world, and I've not necessarily settled in my accommodation for the first six months, it can really hit you hard.

**Louise Wiles 12:14**

I guess it depends on the type of higher education institution you're going to, but I mean, here in the UK, universities tend to provide accommodation, sort of in University Residences, some of them are private, some are owned by the university. So, in that sense, it's slightly different, because they do have

a mind for, or an awareness of, the challenge for international students and support that might mean I help for those traveling around the world.

**Natasha Winnard 12:40**

I have had students that are in the UK, and, you know, for whatever reason, have missed deadlines. And it's proved to be really difficult.

**Louise Wiles 12:50**

Yeah, I'd say that's probably a real important highlight to any student listening here, look for the deadlines and make sure you make them because you make your life a whole load more simpler and straightforward.

**Natasha Winnard 13:02**

And I think there are sometimes some international students in some parts of the world and cultures that are quite used to sort of navigating themselves around missing deadlines. But the reality is that when you go to university, for example, in the UK, a deadline is a deadline. There's no cultural accommodation there.

**Louise Wiles 13:21**

Yeah. No, that's very true. Very true. Yeah.

**Natasha Winnard 13:25**

Another point. Another challenge can sometimes be maturity. You know, sometimes international students find the age equivalent students from a host country, sometimes a little bit immature. And that can be mainly due to very different life experiences. You know, I've worked with a number of students that have gone off to university and actually found that their core friends are post grads, because, you know, their life experiences, perhaps have meant that they have been used to socialising with people from different ages, you know, the extended family, older cousins, aunties and uncles have always been very much part of their social network. And, you know, sometimes they can go to a university, and a lot of the students, it's their first experience away from home, and therefore, their maturity is just different. And so, it can be sometimes hard to find those like-minded friends.

**Louise Wiles 14:26**

That's a that's a really interesting point. And I think it's one that in the UK, I've heard from students who have perhaps had a year off and gone to university and find that, you know, there can almost be a year and a half, almost two years age difference, you know, depending on birth dates and academic years that kids were in, so it can Yeah, that's a real challenge. I would say, that's where probably the societies and that the social activities come in, because through those you can meet people from across the different years.

**Natasha Winnard 15:03**

This, this is an interesting one, but it's very real. One of the challenges can sometimes be getting around, you know, international students who've grown up in countries where there are high security risks, or poor infrastructure may not actually be used to walking in towns and cities. Or even you know, riding a bike. I remember a couple of years ago, touching base with a former student, he went off to the US to university from Sudan, and, you know, checked in with him about week three, and he just said, 'God, miss, my legs are killing me. I'm using muscles that I've never ever used before.' And, you know, I didn't expect this at all, you know, I was expecting him to say that, you know, he was struggling with, you know, possibly the academic work or whatever. But he said, 'No, it was my legs.' And, you know, that is a reality for some students that are coming from cultures, cities, where they're being driven around a lot. Obviously, you have sport at school and what have you, but the actual act of walking in a

street, you know, probably for two or three hours a day, you know, between university lectures can be quite a challenge.

**Louise Wiles 16:26**

That's a really interesting one and one I hadn't thought about. But yeah, I can totally understand how that can be.

**Natasha Winnard 16:31**

And then then the students and I chatted about, you know, maybe getting a bike and he's like, Well, I've never ridden a bike. So, we had to get through the whole process, you know, trying to understand, you know, how to ride a bike. And then the final challenge. It's one of dialects, you know, many international students are often multilingual. But sometimes varying dialects can make it very hard for them to understand staff and other students. You know, I know of a Bolivian student who went to university in the US. And she found it so difficult at the beginning to understand people, that she actually spoke to her Dad and said, 'Could you just check that my international school is teaching English well, for my siblings, because I don't think I'd been taught English properly.' And again, when you're transitioning those little things, you know, you could be in an international school environment, and you're understanding everything, you've got used to the International School community. And then all of a sudden, you know, you hear a dialect. And certainly, I know, you know, in the UK, you know, there are lots of different dialects, you go to university, Newcastle, Birmingham, Portsmouth, you know, there are very clear differences for somebody who may be a very good English language speaker, but is going to struggle possibly in a lecture. So, there's some of the sort of challenges that, you know, are quite specific to international students. And, you know, I've come across certainly in the last two or three years.

**Louise Wiles 18:12**

Fantastic. Well, thank you for sharing those. And they are ones that I certainly have heard people talk about, not so much the getting around and the dialect but, it's interesting, because I was watching a programme, I won't say what programme it was, last night, it was a Portuguese guy working on a cruise ship. And he was, to listen to him he sounded as fluent as anything in English, but he was really struggling with the kind of language of instruction and understanding you know, the words and how they related to what he was required to do for the tasks required. So, I can totally see how that can be a challenge. And I guess that's a message for all of us, you know, in our own national countries to be really aware, as educators as well, you know, of a challenge for students in that respect. Yeah. Great. So, I can see, my next question moving on was going to be around know, what can students do to better prepare? So, I think there are some tips from what we've just just discussed in terms of the challenges about preparation, and timelines, perhaps and being as clear as you can around those issues. But what else have you observed students doing or not doing? That has helped them to prepare well?

**Natasha Winnard 19:30**

Well, as far as climate, you know, just reminding students to maximise daylight hours, you know, maximise winter sun hours, I was talking to a student the other day in London, and she said that her mom had given her a sunlamp for Christmas so that she could get her vitamin D, you know, maybe supplements vitamin D supplements, make sure your diet is rich in you know, eggs, milk, oranges, that sort of thing. Another student I spoke to She's joined the surf club society, so that she can get a trip in February in the sun

**Natasha Winnard 20:11**



So be quite intentional in making sure that you manage climate. The visa issue, I would really recommend understanding the visa process as part of your research process. That's important. You know and booking appointments in advance as much as you can. I mean, some countries will say, you know, until you've got a confirmed letter from a university, you can't apply for a visa, but some countries you can book an appointment and maybe cancel it if you can't make it. Accommodation. Yes. meet all deadlines. That's key. And keep an eye on those emails. I mean, often, accommodation, deadline, emails come through, while you're in your final phase of preparing for A level's or AP'S or IBS. So, you take your eye off your emails, and that's where I've had a few students, despite being reminded have you know missed out on deadlines. And, you know, researching accommodation, especially for your international students is as important as researching the course and the university. Because as you said, not all universities will be able to provide accommodation opportunities for first years, for example.

**Louise Wiles 21:33**

Yeah. And also, some more provides accommodation for international students that they tend to put international students together. So yeah, that's a choice, you can choose that that's what you want to do or not. But you know, it can help in some ways, and it depends on preference, I guess, but just being aware of the difference. And I think most universities, if you search International, they'll have an area of their website that's dedicated to international students and the support they provide, including mentors, well certainly in the UK,

**Natasha Winnard 22:07**

Many of the international universities around the world, you know, very active now on social media, you know, they have their Instagram accounts, where they've got students talking about accommodation, you know, so it's very much, you know, staying connected with university, social media. Maturity, I mean, you did mention the idea of, you know, reaching out to clubs, but also, you know, you can reach out to your school counsellor, your university admissions person, your alumni team at school, and they can often connect you with former students, which is a really great way, you know, you arrive, let's imagine you arrive at the University of Toronto, you know, the chances are, there's going to be somebody from your school that is there. And, you know, I think sometimes, you know, teachers or parents will say, 'Oh, you know, connect with so and so's daughter', and you tend not to, but you should, because all of a sudden, that's a group of friends that are a little bit older, and that might, you know, help that maturity issue. And also, you know, many universities now will offer opportunities to connect with students through their websites, through social media, you know, the more friends that you can make prior to going across the age range, you know, the better?

**Louise Wiles 23:33**

Yeah, yeah, definitely. And they do tend to set up into Instagram groups, I think, yeah, based on interests or accommodation, or subjects. So yeah.

**Natasha Winnard 23:45**

And getting around, I mean, you know, it's, you know, many school trips from international schools, to, maybe the US or Western Europe, will focus very much on giving students the opportunities to walk, to ride a bike, to use the bus or a train. So, I think if you know that, that's something that you're not very good at, then it's certainly important to try and practice as much as you can in your holidays, or, you know, get there a little bit earlier if your visa allows, and, you know, get used to these sorts of practical issues. And then dialect, you know, the issue is very much, you know, creating as wide and as diverse friendship group as you can. So, you're quickly listening to as many dialects as possible. You know, we all know that when you're learning new languages in different countries, the more exposure, the better.

**Louise Wiles 24:40**

And never be afraid to ask, I think, as well, people always very willing to help. Yeah.

**Natasha Winnard 24:49**

Or slow down please.

**Louise Wiles 24:50**

One thought, actually, one great thing in the UK, and I think as a result of COVID, you know, because suddenly, lectures had to be recorded during COVID, universities have continued to record all lectures. So, that's one big advantage now, even though you might attend the lecture, in person, you will always be able to listen back again, as well. So not quite the pressure there perhaps used to be in that sense.

**Natasha Winnard 25:17**

But also, I mean, you know, that is a fantastic strategy that universities are offering, but that also, you know, I was talking to a student, in the UK, a Greek student, and he's very much relying on those lectures to kind of go over them because he misses a few things. But again, that adds time, that may be taken from, you know, your socialising. So, you know, there's challenges there, there's lots of strategies, but it's sort of prioritising what you need when you need it to help you with that transition.

**Louise Wiles 25:48**

Very true. And, one thought, when you were talking about accommodation, I don't know how this applies to universities in the States, but in the UK, you choose between having accommodation that provides food for you catered, or non-catered. So perhaps having when making that accommodation choice thinking through the logistics, you know, do you want to be cooking for yourself? because that will mean you are having to shop for yourself. There's a whole new experience, I guess a shopping in a different country with different foods and will you be able to buy what you need and all those things. They're really thinking carefully about that choice to

**Natasha Winnard 26:29**

Absolutely. And, you know, managing a budget in a different currency, you know, that adds to that challenge?

**Louise Wiles 26:37**

Yeah, very true. Very true. Great. Okay. So, some lovely practical tips there, as you as people prepare. So, as parents, you know, I always think about the parents who are having to let their young people go and travel to some far away country and start life independently. What do you think parents can do to support that transition, because it can be, as a parent myself, I know, it can be very tempting to micromanage. Manage the process for the for your child. Not always the best idea, though. So, what have you seen that parents have done or not done, that it's been helpful or not helpful.

**Natasha Winnard 27:21**

Lots and lots of things. And also, you know, I think it's worth mentioning that, you know, often parents are a lot better at this than they think they are, you know. There's often this fear that it's not going to be great. But, you know, we need to remember that when our children go to university, or college or whatever, you know, you've been a parent for 18 years, and there's been a lot of preparation that you've been doing without realising it. But I mean, you know, there are the sort of three stages within this, there's the sort of getting prepared, there's the starting strong, and the staying strong. You know, I think, as far as getting prepared, you know, talk through the 'what if's', you know, make a habit of talking through scenarios, you know, how will you get clean laundry, if your machine breaks? You know, what, if you lose your wallet or your phone? you know if our children develop good answers to these kinds of hypotheticals, then when they go off to university, they're going to be more confident handling real world problems that arise at university, and they may feel less anxious. So, I think it's really important in that sort of preparation phase, whether it's the year before, the few months before,

the few weeks before, you know, parents talking through the 'what if's' over meals. You know, that's an important one. I was talking to a parent the other day about, you know, what did you do? That's worked. And one of the things that she mentioned is this idea of, you know, starting strong, and she said, You know, I'm not joking, but investing money in the most comfortable bedding possible. Quality sleep is money well spent. We know that quality sleep is so important for wellbeing. You know, and often students can struggle with sleeping in a new environment, maybe there's noise next door. We know that student accommodation is rarely luxurious. So, it is important to take the plunge and make a nest for our children, you know, extra cushions, extra bedding so that their bed is like their sofa. I mean, I know how often my son relaxes on our sofa and how that impacts his well-being. And, you know, certainly students and parents that are willing to invest that little bit more money in that bedding is money well spent.

**Louise Wiles 30:14**

Yeah, no, I definitely agree. And I think in setting up the room as a comfortable welcoming space, because it's kind of home isn't it? Particularly, when you don't have a home in the country, it is your very important home. So also photographs and yeah, perhaps some money for a few pot plants and anything that makes it feel comfortable.

**Natasha Winnard 30:34**

And especially, you know, you mentioned that, you know, often international students don't have homes in their country and you know, some of their friends will be going home for weekends and so their bedroom will become their weekend base as well. So that is really important. And also, I think how parents can support it at this sort of staying strong phase, is double check support. Universities are usually pretty good at making sure that students are given plenty of support in the first term the first semester, but we should as parents, just double check, you know that our child is registered with a doctor. And at least that they know where to find University support services. That's important. And I often say this to students, you know, when you're researching universities don't just focus on the course, focus on the support services as well. You know, what sort of counselling services? What sort of transition support services? You know, what sort of support will they be able to give you, if things are a little bit more challenging, then you think, you know, and physically knowing where those buildings are

**Louise Wiles 31:49**

Yes, finding them. And going and perhaps introducing yourself as well, can be helpful. And just asking for any guidance, initially, and overview of support services, so that you've spoken to someone, you've got a face that you could put to a name, and then you know where to go, if you need that support.

**Natasha Winnard 32:09**

And I think as a parent, you know, when you, your student, your child is doing that sort of research, and it's important to ask those sorts of questions. You know, what, what sort of support are they going to be able to give you? How close is the gym to you? If that's what you want to do for exercise, not just asking about, you know, the rankings or the employability post-graduation, which, as parents, we tend to have a little bit, you know, we tend to do that a little bit more than we should, perhaps.

**Louise Wiles 32:40**

Yes, yes. And it is the complete experience that is so important, and that feeling comfortable and unsupported. And some universities do a lot better than others.

**Natasha Winnard 32:55**

Absolutely. And that's why that research process is so important. Especially if you know you are going to need a little bit of support. If you've been somebody in the past that has maybe struggled with a with a transition.

**Louise Wiles 33:09**

That's great advice. And the really important and I love the 'what if' scenario. So that's a great idea to think about those different 'what if's' and talk those through because that builds confidence. And, you know, immediately means your child has a good idea about what they'll do when an emergency strikes of some kind. So, let's move on to arrivals. So, students arrive and that they're settling in. Do you have any advice that you can share with them specifically about that sort of settling in phase that early, early sort of few weeks and months?

**Natasha Winnard 33:51**

Yeah, I mean, I think with international students, we find that they've successfully transitioned before, and they can do it again. You know, many students that go to university overseas have already moved countries, homes, schools, made new friends, many times. And it's just that reminder that you've been there. You've done that, and you can do it again, with support, you'll be fine. And if you're not, we know how to navigate that.

**Louise Wiles 34:21**

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And I'd encourage anyone listening to go back and listen to Toby, I think Toby's episode 13 or 14, not sure. But he was an international who has lived abroad and went to university in the UK. And he says that that previous transition experience has been really, really helpful for his transition to university. In fact, the transition to the university is quite easy in comparison to some of those international moves, he found, just because of the fact that you're surrounded with people your age, and now from a social perspective, he found it quite easy to fit in. But it's different for everybody. But yeah, drawing on those experiences, definitely.

**Natasha Winnard 35:00**

There's often a skill set there that you can draw on.

**Louise Wiles 33:58**

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Without a doubt,

**Natasha Winnard 34:01**

And as we've said already, join societies and be quite strategic in the societies you join. If you're a French speaker, the French society, the Afghan society, the American Football Club, the Argentine Tango society. Early days, connecting with students that have had similar experiences before university can really help, especially if you need to be hearing a familiar language, or you want to share food from home, wherever home was before you moved to university. It's joining societies that interest you, but also being a little bit intentional in those first few weeks and months, as far as connecting with like-minded people. To give you that little bit of extra support.

**Louise Wiles 35:50**

Yeah, that's a really good idea.

**Natasha Winnard 36:00**

And, you know, watch your sleep? Again? I mean, sleep is one of my big mantras with many of the students I work with. I know so many students that once they get overtired it all is very overwhelming, as it is for us all, you know. And you know, in those first few weeks, days, months, you're trying to do everything you're trying to maximise all the opportunities, and you can very, very quickly get overtired. And then the little things become the big things. And then it can, you know, you we know about, obviously, the, the cycle of transition, but that's when that dip can really hit hard. If you're not sleeping well.

**Louise Wiles 36:37**

Yeah, no, I absolutely agree with that. And I think, yeah, sleep is the first thing to go. Because, you know, if you're partying and socialising, particularly those first crazy weeks of freshers when you feel, perhaps you have to get as involved as much as possible. And then lectures kick in. And it seems to be that first year, students often get that 8:30 9:30 slot for lectures. So that can really do serious damage to your sleep. If you're up partying late, and up early for lectures, there's not much time for sleep. So yeah, definitely. I've seen that with students that they just become, like exhausted.

**Natasha Winnard 37:22**

And also, if you're in your home country, then chances are you can go home for a weekend and sleep from sort of Friday night to Sunday morning. But you know, international students might not necessarily have that ease of option if they're in a noisy hall of residence at weekends. That is important. And also, I think make new friendships, whilst also keeping old ones. The chances are, your old friends are going to be scattered all over the world, facing similar challenges if they're also going off to university that year. And it's worth staying as connected as you can to support each other through that time. I know of groups of students that in those first few days and weeks have weekly zoom chats. It can be a bit challenging when you're in different time zones. But it can be nice to see a familiar face, especially at weekends. And, again, being quite intentional in connecting with people at weekends, because that can be hard for students, especially if you've got universities where home students will go home for weekends.

**Louise Wiles 38:30**

Yeah. And I'm noticing that with my kids that, yeah, going home is a much more frequent occurrence than it was when I was at university, you know, for a whole range of reasons. It's just easier to do. And yeah, so you do get those times when people, reading weeks, for example, halfway through time in the UK, and everyone disappears home. So yeah, being aware that that could happen. And that connection met with past friends, even for people who are new, if you're listening, and you've only moved within your own country. Still, that connection back to your home friends and network is so important to keep that.

**Natasha Winnard 39:12**

Oh, absolutely, and I think sometimes parents can sort of encourage their children focus on the new friends, you're not going to settle if you keep focusing on your old friends. But actually, I think the two together is crucial, really important.

**Louise Wiles 39:30**

Yeah, definitely. Because university is actually just for three years, life continues around it as well, you've got holidays, you're not always there. So really important to maintain all of that.

**Natasha Winnard 39:42**

And also, I think modelling to our children that it takes effort to maximise a friendship group, especially the international friendship groups that many international students have. You've got to put a little bit of

time into that. And good friends will recognise that in those early days, it might be a bit hit and miss because everybody's got different time commitments and time zones. But I think to try and make that commitment to old friends is good to support yourself and each other through those early days.

**Louise Wiles 40:17**

Yeah, yeah. And to know that just because you're moving location doesn't mean your whole life is moving and the rest just gets forgotten each time I move. Great. So, anything else to add? We've covered a lot of ground in this conversation. Have you got any other points to share about the settling in.

**Natasha Winnard 40:37**

If things start to go not to plan and if students are really struggling in those first few weeks. I think go back to the basics, always sleeping eating well exercise. You know, I think with all students, all of us, you know, if everyone was struggling, you know, just remind ourselves, are we doing those basic well-being things? I think also if you are struggling in those first few days and weeks and months, maybe, you know, prioritise the stuff that you enjoy doing. You know, I had a student who was at school in Nairobi, a Spanish student, she ended up going to Barcelona for university. And she maximised her time in bookshops reading books, because she could access Spanish language books that she wasn't able to access quite so easily in Nairobi. So, in those first few weeks, when it was hard, she was doing that. And that helped her. A student who lived in Angola for six years. One of the reasons she chose to go to the University of Amsterdam was because she wanted to have access to museums that she hadn't really had in Angola. So, you know, during those tough times, she was maximising the museum's. And the Sudanese student I worked with who went to UBC to Vancouver, you know, one of the reasons he wanted to go to Vancouver was because there was open spaces, so walking in the parks. So, you know, prioritise the stuff that you enjoy doing if it's tough. And then just the final point, you know, it is hard, in a new setting. We all know this. And it's hard for kids, but it's important to push ourselves to make connections. Even if it means going into a local coffee shop alone, making eye contact with the barista, saying good morning, or even spending a little bit longer in your university accommodation laundry room, just so there's an opportunity to meet somebody. You know, we've got that's the one thing we've got to push hard to try and do make those connections. And we, you know, international students know that from moving schools, but it's worth reminding them that that's important.

**Louise Wiles 43:23**

Yeah. And remembering that everyone is feeling the same way in that first term, first few weeks. So not to feel shy, because I think if you start a conversation with someone, pretty certain the majority of people will continue it and want to know more about you.

**Natasha Winnard 43:31**

And also, I think one of the students I was listening to on your podcast mentioned this, it takes a while to develop, like, lifelong friendships. It could be that in that first six months, the people that you meet, are not necessarily going to be friends in the second semester or second term, but they might be, and it's just sort of being patient that, you know, it will all come together, it might just not happen quite so quickly. And if a friend at another university has already got great friends, you know, don't worry, you will as well

**Louise Wiles 44:08**

Yeah, it all happens in different sort of phases. And at different paces, I think, but for different people. But most people get there in the end, and that's the thing, it's not to panic about it. But I totally understand how you can feel that you need to panic because friendship, that connection is so important, so important.

**Natasha Winnard 44:30**

Hence why, you know, staying connected with those old friends through that transition phase is a good strategy.

**Louise Wiles 44:38**

And speaking to your family and your parents, and yeah, all important stuff. Brilliant. Well, I think we've covered a huge amount of ground there and some fantastic, lovely little snippets of stories and ideas and approaches. So, thank you so much for sharing all your experience, that's been really helpful. Thank you, Natasha.

**Natasha Winnard 44:58**

Thank you, Louise. And I hope this sort of guides and support some students and families. But I very much appreciate the opportunity. There's lots of examples there that I'm very, very keen to share with as many people as possible so that the transition is a healthy and happy one.

**Louise Wiles 45:12**

Brilliant. Well, thank you very much..

Not at all. Thank you

## Further Listening and Reading

Thank you for listening. Please do reach out to Natasha if you wish to learn more about her work. See her bio at the front of this transcript.

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

You might want to listen to all the past episodes, but the following ones are particularly relevant to this conversation:

**Podcast Episode 14 – Voices in Transition – Toby** where we chat about his move to university in the first year, what he learned about transition and how previous international moves helped him to settle in quickly

**Podcast Episode 12 – Voices in Transition – Ben**, where we talk about his move to university and then his move to Madrid where he went to work during his year out. Ben shares the challenges and what he learned.

**Podcast Episode 9 – Nurturing Supportive Relationships** – we discuss ideas for developing new friendships in the early weeks and months of university life.

**Podcast Episode 6 – Why it Helps to Ask** – we often feel embarrassed to ask, but, most people want to help. This episode is designed to inspire you to reach out and ask for help.

In addition, go to Natasha Winnard's website to read her latest blog posts at [natashawinnard.com](http://natashawinnard.com).

Also, take a look at these articles:

*Three Themes for Schools and Universities to support international student transition across cultures. CIS Perspectives* [HERE](#)

*Getting Prepared: Developing Skills for Student Wellbeing Before Going to University, The International Educator* [HERE](#)

*What's the Rush, The International Educator* [HERE](#)

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