

A TIME TO THRIVE

Successful Student Transitions

**Series 2 Episode 18
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 to 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 Guest: Fabienne Vailes

Fabienne is driven by the question - how can we change the way we educate and parent our children and young people so that ALL can flourish and become curious lifelong, life-deep, life-wide learners?

Fabienne is an advocate of a new systemic approach to education which empowers and puts children and young people at the centre of all decisions and choices, involves all the key players in their lives (parents, grandparents, teachers, friends) and stops focusing on attainment and exam results as a sign of intelligence.

She is also a supporter of a nurturing educational system for learners and staff, which enables educators to share their passion for their subjects and fields whilst contributing into young people's lives by empowering them to flourish, develop the skills, knowledge, and curiosity required to become the fulfilled citizens and leaders of tomorrow with a flourishing and meaningful life.



Fabienne loves to connect with others and create a network of like-minded individuals who all want to see human prosperity in a flourishing web of life through an array of wealth: human, social, ecological, cultural and physical from which all values flow.

You can learn more about Fabienne and her work [HERE](#)

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 18 with Fabienne Vailes

Hello and welcome to Episode 18 where I am delighted to introduce you to Fabienne Vailes.

Fabienne is a UK expert on emotional and mental well-being within the education sector. As an educational expert with over 20 years' experience in the sector, Fabienne is on a mission to change the face of education_ – embedding well-being into the curriculum to create an environment where both students and staff flourish.

Fabienne is also the author of the book Flourishing Education and podcast of the same name, and co-author of How to Grow a Grown Up.

As you listen to our conversation, I hope that the content in relation to well-being will be helpful to you as a student, a parent or educator.

You'll hear Fabienne talk about what her recent research has taught her about the difference between students who flourish and those who are in more of a survival mindset.

Fabienne shares her model of well-being that draws on the analogy of nature, in particular the garden of life - I wonder how this will resonate for you?

She then shares the five healths that contribute to well-being: cognitive, emotional, physical, social and spiritual - what questions do these five elements of health encourage you to ask about your own wellbeing?

One interesting finding that came from her research with students was that flourishing students tended to be more culturally agile, this meant they were more open to new experiences, curious, flexible and

resilient. They also differed from people in survival in the way they used language to describe their experiences. Listen out for this fascinating description.

We also discussed how Fabiennes' research and findings linked to the transition cycle and the ups and downs that occur for everyone in times of change and transition.

We hope you enjoy listening to this conversation - but most importantly, find some nuggets to take away and apply to your life.

Louise Wiles 03:50

Hello, and welcome to this next edition of Voices in Transition. And I'm very excited to be welcoming to the conversation today. Fabienne Vailes. It's lovely that you're here. And I know that you're going to share some really interesting content on transitions and how students how they're challenged by transition, but also how they can better cope with and manage themselves through times of transition. So before we get into the conversation, perhaps you could just tell everyone a little bit about yourself, your involvement in education and and your current interests.

Fabienne Vailes 04:28

Yeah, wonderful. So delight, a delight to be here with you. I'm really, really excited. So I'm Fabianne Vailes. I guess I'm an educator, and author and podcaster. I created a or I'm the founder of a business called Flourishing Education. And my work really is where my passion is because I've been a teacher all my life. And where I'm moving to is more around researching. So researching how individuals and communities and the planet can all flourish, and how we can make that happen.

Louise Wiles 05:09

Fantastic. Well, I think that's a million dollar question. For us all, isn't it? So very pertinent. And I think one of the experiences that you've had in education, has been working at a university, as Director of a department, I don't know how much detail you want to give about that. But I know through that role, you've seen students transitioning into university. And you've seen those who thrive through the experience and those who have really struggled. And so I just wanted to start there, because this podcast at the moment is really focused on that age group, that cohort of young person moving from full time formal education into some higher education. I'd love to hear your observations, your experience of their experiences and what you learned as a result.

Fabienne Vailes 06:02

Yes. Okay. Wonderful. So in fact, this is the returning to the university that I started my research. So it has a very special place in my heart, for sure. So, yes, I went back to teaching at the university in 2014. And to say that I was horrified by what I came back to is an understatement. So I had about nine year gap. So what's perhaps relevant for for your listeners, and for you here is that my career has been quite unique in a sense that I have been teaching languages across all levels, in partly in France, I've also taught in Spain, but mainly in England, and I've taught across all levels. So I've actually managed to teach languages in, because I'm a language teacher, in nurseries, in primary schools and secondary schools and further education and Adult Education and then University. And so I taught in a university for about eight years, then left, then, you know, sort of set up my own business, my own language

school, and came back in 2014, after sort of nine year almost 10 year gap. So that I think is really relevant because when I re-entered, I often describe my feeling as a little bit like a frog that has been put in a pan of boiling water, and I just wanted to jump out. And what I found really interesting as well was like the response of my colleagues who had stayed, and that were not as shocked, I guess, by what they were seeing. So the young people in front of me seemed to be far more anxious, and far more, or reporting feeling lower levels of subjective well being, and reporting finding the academic work much more challenging than their peers. Not all of them, of course, because we don't want to over generalise, but I guess that's what made me really react and made me explore - why is it that some students do brilliantly at university and flourish? And why others languish, or what now I call being in survival? And what are the key differences to that response to the environment for each individual.

Louise Wiles 08:39

Okay, so brilliant. So I'm going to ask you to unpack that and share a bit about your research, you've done a lot of research into this question. And I think it'd be really helpful for parents listening to this podcast, educators preparing students, young people for that jump to university, but also students themselves to understand what's the difference between those that do flourish and those that struggle?.

Fabienne Vailes 09:03

So all of my work is about not generalising. So, I am completely against standardising or suggesting that there is a one size fits all, or that there is a magic one. So I'll preface everything that I'm about to say with that, because I think it's really important. And so what happens with my research is that first of all I fell into it, is what I like to say, so I am curious and I like asking questions, asking loads of questions. And then I started my research with 10 interviews with students. And then it was followed by further funding from the university and another 13 interviews with students. So my model is based on 23 interviews, in depth interviews, with students. And the model that emerged from those conversations is called, is what I call the Flourishing Model. And basically it taps into a field that is the field of ecology. So it's moving away from the notion that we are, as humans, a cog in an engine, you know, so it's moving away from the more mechanistic, Newtonian, sort of deep Cartesian approach that says we are machines and you need to look at parts in isolation. And the model is basically based on the flower. So the analogy or the metaphor that I use is, we are all our unique ecosystem within bigger ecosystems. So, unique, I like to use the metaphor of the garden. And so I say, to help parents or educators understand, well, I think we all educators, so, for me, educators are the parents, the grandparents, the adults in the life of the children, including the teachers, right, all of us are educators. And so the analogy of the garden called life means that we are all a unique ecosystem in this garden called life. And it's important that we understand who that is, what that ecosystem is. So you know, if you have, for example, an orchid, or a lily, or a climbing Ivy, then they will have different needs and different requirements. And so it's our role as the adults the educators to be the nurturer, the gardeners who support the ecosystem. And so the model, to get back to the model, means that students flourish, so you can tell if a student is flourishing, I guess, as there's a way that you can see if a plant is doing well in an environment or not, right. So what was really interesting emerging from the conversations from the students, flourishing students will use different language for example. So a flourishing students, you will hear say things like, I'm finding it difficult, but I'm doing my best. You know, they may have them ask for help, or as a languishing, or students who is more in survival, will say, it's too difficult, I can't do

it. Sometimes they'll say, do it for me with a please or No, please, depending on the individual. So you can see it in their language. But through my research, what emerges is flourishing model which is literally a plant, like the image of a plant. So at the bottom and the roots and the things we don't see because they're grounded in the environment, our values, past experiences, beliefs, those determining then the stem, which is the mindset, so flourishing students will tend to have more of a growth mindset which taps into Carol Dweck 's work in the US. Whereas a more languishing student will be will have more of a fixed mindset. And we can talk about that a bit more if you want. And then two leaves, life skills and learning skills, what I've called learning skills, and again, we can unpack that if you want to. And then five healths. So when I first went into my research, what people were talking about was mental health. But actually, what I discovered through the interviews with the students is that it's much more holistic than that. And it's not just mental health. So it's cognitive, well I call cognitive health. So you know, the equivalent of mental health is how we like our thinking, its emotional health, how we handle our emotions, and our feelings. Physical health. So flourishing students will take care of their, what they eat, their sleep, you know, all the things that we often talk about in terms of physical health, and how we look after that. And then there's the social health. So we know that we are social animals, and we need to be connected to others, and to have a sense of belonging. So those are the parts, and students who languish or in survival, are likely to feel isolated, for example. And then the final one is what I've labelled spiritual health, which is probably the one that is the least discussed in education, for sure. And the spiritual health is more either feeling that we are part of something bigger. So some people will mention words like gods or, or other other words to describe that, or having a clear sense of purpose. So knowing what, I'll give you an example, out of the 23 interviews, the student who actually had the highest score, in terms of flourishing, was a medical student who'd wanted to be a doctor since they were seven. So that's the five healths. And then there's five other traits, which, in the second edition of the book, the flourishing students have now called cultural agility. So linked it the work of Paula Caliguirri. And so it's students who are flourishing tend to be open, curious, flexible, resilient, and I've mentioned the language bit. So you can see that through some of the things they're saying in the language. And the opposite is true of a more languishing students who will not be as curious and not as open and not as flexible and resilient. And all of that then gives you a much more holistic approach. And a very, you know, my encouragement is for parents to view their their young people, the people in front of them with sheer curiosity. So it's like, what plants, tree, shrub do you have in front of you? And how do we provide the best nurturing environment for those ecosystems to flourish where they are?

Louise Wiles 16:36

Wow. That is a very comprehensive model, which I think gives so many, some of it links to some of the stuff we've done in previous podcasts. But it gives a very, as you said, holistic, yeah, it kind of adds it all together, and presents it as a whole, which is lovely. So let's get back to the first part of it, which is about the roots, the values and beliefs and the past experience. And I think I kind of link perhaps that a bit to the why as well, because thinking about students and that move to uni. Often it's a well, this is the next step. And that's about as much thinking perhaps, this is the next step, and what do my A levels or my IB, what does that lead me to perhaps take as the next step? Without thinking much more about it than that? And I know in past conversations with you, you've had that issue with students who just don't have that intrinsic motivation. So what did you learn about supporting students that you could share

with them now, that would help them to really kind of hone in on that, and to ensure that they are approaching university with the best approach in that sense.

Fabienne Vailes 17:52

So I think our system, and by system, I mean, our education system, the way we funnel all our children, is that we are encouraged to hop on the hamster wheel, and to just go. So like the way things work in England is, you know, it starts with the SATs, and then it's the GCSEs. And then there's A levels and then it's the Holy Grail that university is. So to give you a little bit of data for people to wrap their head around that. Nowadays, it's about one in two who go to a higher education institution, not just university, but you know, post 16, FE. And then you know, those qualifications. So one in two is massive, right in terms of what happens with young people and one in four will get a first when they finish their degree. So this is a result of the drive for education, education, education. So Blair's push for university, we all go to university. And whilst I don't have a problem with our young people being educated, I think part of the issue that we see in higher education is that one in two students go to university not because they want to be there, but actually because they think they have to be there, or they have been told they have to be there. And I think that is a massive issue. Because I'll give you an example. I had a tutee who, in year one, I kept having to call her into my office to discuss her lack of attendance in the lectures. And the response was, 'Well, I'm not really enjoying my course'. And so I scratched below the surface and started asking questions. And turns out that this girl wanted to do photography, and she was there doing French and Drama. And when I asked, 'Why are you here, if you wanted to do photography?' her response was, 'Well, my teacher in sixth form, because I was good at French said that I should do a degree in French and my parents encouraged me to do the same.' And I just couldn't help say to her, 'Well, do you really want to be here, because you're getting in debt?' you know, it's 9000 pounds over 9000 pounds a year to do something that you don't want to do? Because you believe you need this bit of paper that says, you have a degree? Don't you think that perhaps you should go and explore what you really want to do?'. So eventually, which is great for this young person in particular, and it happened in year one, she chose to leave and did go and do photography and explore what she wanted. But I have had students in final year who have told me I wish I had not done a degree in languages, but it's too late for me now. So I guess to go back to your question, I think perhaps the question we should be asking, and when people ask me what my thoughts are on going to university or not going to university, I would say, yes, go to university, of course, you know, like, if you want to be a doctor and architects like all of those things. Currently, that's the pathway. And we want doctors to understand and be educated and to know how the body works, and all of those things, right? But it's not for everybody. So you don't have to go to university, if you're not sure, that's where you want to go, you can wait. And I would highly recommend to be honest, a gap year. I think it's really good for young people to have a break from schooling, and to go and explore the world of work, like working in an environment and exploring, you know, the obviously currently, earning money and what you do with that money and all of those things. I think it's, in my experience, a lot of young people who arrive either with that really high intrinsic motivation, I want to do this degree, because like the second person who is the most flourishing was a young person doing a degree in languages because they always wanted to be an interpreter. So again, you know, like that intrinsic motivation, that big why? I think that really helps. Because when you experience the peaks and we'll talk about that in terms of the transition, but what I call peaks and valleys now, in one of our books, *How to Grow a Grown Up* I've drawn a diagram

like waves ups and down, it's much easier to navigate those ups and downs when you have a big why, than when you don't know why you're doing, what you're doing.

Louise Wiles 23:00

Yeah, And I'd say, I suppose the challenge I always think you perhaps have at 18/19, in identifying that why, is you probably actually don't really know. I mean, the world is massive, and there are so many different opportunities and you perhaps haven't come across those. So the other thing I always think is it's about interest as well. You know, if you really don't have a genuine interest in the subject, you're thinking about studying, then don't study it, because it's not going to work. And it's interesting, it's my daughter's first year uni and quite a lot of kids have left in the first year because they've chosen the wrong courses. And they've realised very early on that it this isn't what they wanted, the university experience fine, but the actual course, no. And they begin to rethink and come back the next year. And I think you're at a very young, very young often. So it's time to evolve and grow and do other things and come back education, it doesn't have to just be now either, does it? That's the other thing for me. Education can be life-long. You can do a degree at any point in your life, you don't have to do it right now. So I think yeah, so thinking about your why. But also, if you can find your why great. If you have that there, and you really feel passionate about it. That's great. And your 'why' might be about the university experience as well. And the growth that produces itself. So that's a good 'why' too, but make sure the subject you're doing is one of interest. Okay, so one of the things I'm interested to talk a little bit more about with you is, you mentioned those who are in survival and those who were thriving. So I'm just really interested to talk a bit more about what you mean by survival. And what you think might contribute to that survival mindset? And how if people recognise that they might be in it, they can start to shift themselves from that.

Fabienne Gillies 24:52

Yeah. So again, I'm going to preface everything I'm going to say with something. So my work is in what I call the field of, of salutogenic well-being, as opposed to pathogenic well-being, and so pathogenic, and I'll explain that, because it's technical terminology, but I really want to preface that. So I'm not a mental health expert, in the sense that I'm not a professional who helps people who suffer from mental ill health. That's not what I do. And that's what we call the pathogenic. So how do we cope when we suffer from an illness, and in this case, of mental ill health? That's absolutely not where my research is, My research is in what I call salutogenic, which is this idea or notion that we all have innate well-being. And that we can do things to look after it. Okay. So because of that, when I talk about survival. So I was gonna say that earlier on in the conversation, and I'll say it here, is, you know, well-being or flourishing or languishing, or flourishing and survival, it's not fixed. It's like the growth mindset and the fixed mindset. So it fluctuates, and it can fluctuate from one minute to the next. Imagine, we're having this conversation, I've got my cup, here, it's empty, but if it was fallen, I flicked it on my laptop, that would definitely determine how I feel, and then I would probably be much more languishing or in survival than, than flourishing. So again, you know, in the same way that my work is not about pigeon holing people into things and fixed, and it's much more about processes and emergence. And so I really want people to hear that, because it is about the ups and downs of life and, and our response to life events. So flourishing will differ depending on how we're experiencing those ups and downs. But there are, you know, obviously, clearly, you can see when someone is in survival or is languishing. And the way you

see that is, so survival is what we call stress response, right? So, being in survival means that people are feeling stressed out, or they're feeling, you know, whatever you want to give a word to describe that. But it's this, ok there's a situation and event that is triggering in me a response. And that response may be either emotional, so it might be linked to the way you know, the emotions I feel. It might be linked to the way I think, or it might be what I believe about this situation and what it says about me, And what I see with the more languishing, or students in survival is that they can be either in the fight or the flight or the freeze response, and you know also the fawn. And, it's about understanding okay, what is our response to those events? Or do we do we have tools and resources that enable us to respond to the cultural, the ecological, the economic, the social conditions that enable us to handle those ups and downs much more effectively, I guess. So, it's what is our response to what I call life? And living? Do we add a narrative to those life events? And do we view it as you know, it's happening to me, and I'm a victim of this event? Or do we view it as some of the flourishing students will talk about, it's happening for me, and in this, there is something that I can learn from this life event? And that would be two different approaches that you would see from the students.

Louise Wiles 29:21

Yeah. So as you're saying that I'm just thinking of the sort of the transition cycle that you mentioned earlier. So I guess, perhaps one thing to say about it is that survival mindsets or falling into that survival place of survival, feeling that your surviving goes with that cycle that when you're hitting a low, you perhaps feel more under threat, and that kind of triggers all these thoughts and incidences. And I think, we've, in previous episodes, we've done quite a bit on the transition cycle. And I just think it's really important to highlight here that that's natural. And so understanding that might happen, is really helpful. Before you do anything to cope with it, which is knowing and recognizing - Okay, this is likely to happen, sometimes I'm going to feel that I'm just surviving sometimes, and other days, I'm going to be having the best day ever, for all the reasons. So, then that leads me into the sort of the petals on the flower. So the five healths as you call them. So I'm just thinking there about the physical health one, in particular. So for students, I mean, what did you see, in that sense with students? The impact of the way they were living their lives? What kind of impact did you see that having on health?

Fabienne Vailes 30:46

Yeah, also 100%. So one of the students who was more languishing in the data set, and I interviewed, told me that he gamed a lot until late at night, so very poor sleep, a lot of use of cannabis. And I think those are, if you look at the research, you know, that sleep or lack of sleep is a huge contributing factor to our well being issues. And so I think, I guess what I saw the most in terms of the lifestyle in young people is this idea, I guess, in the UK, that we send our children to have fun at university, right? It's like the partying time and all of those things. And how, you know, some students would go on, on benders for weeks, like just literally, hardly no sleep for one week. And that's because it's part of the culture, right? The university. So it's almost like a, what's the word I want to use it? It's a passage, right, it's a rite of passage that you have to go to university and drink and a lot of those students even if they don't want to go out may have FOMO, fear of missing out, so they do go out because they want to be with the others, or they see the others on social media posting, having fun, and then they feel like they're missing out. And that, those key things, I would say are the biggest contributing factors is sleep and lack of sleep. But then there's also the other element. So, you know, our children arriving at university,

we had young people who didn't know how to navigate the city because they'd never taken the bus. So they they'd been ferried around and driven by their parents so they didn't know how to read a timetable for the bus or to go from A to B. They don't know how to cook, so they they'll go and live on pot noodles. You know, obviously like the healthy diets and the veg, the fruits all the foods we know, or like the food we eat right is also the nutrients are really important. So all those are compounding effects. And, the fact that they then you know, sleep so to their sleep pattern will be different then if they're sleeping during the today, then you won't be tired in the in the evening, and then it gets into a real cycle. And I had a lot of conversations with colleagues who are in neuroscience. And we often talked about what is the first that comes? Is it the sleep that is disrupted that then affects their mental health and and leads to mental ill health? Or is it the other way around? And I don't think we quite know if it's like, it's a little bit like chicken and egg, but those are probably the biggest contributing factors. So because we have a tendency in our society to commodify things, we just think that we can just get rid of sleep, that we can get about four hours sleep. And most definitely in the interviews and more languishing students, which would be students who were gaming or going out a lot, or using a lot of cannabis or other drugs. And that would have an impact also, because that then impacts your socialising and your sense of connection to others.

Louise Wiles 34:57

Yeah, yeah. So that then impacts the social petal. One of the five petals. And also, I guess, from a cognitive perspective, as well, because if you're tired, you're not going to engage in any studying, and so then you get into that downward spiral of not attending the lectures, getting behind, and it's so difficult to get your head around catching up. Yeah. So those are all the things that kind of can unfold, if we get that basic health things round the wrong way. And it's not to say that we're saying don't go out and have fun. Have fun, but just be aware of the impact that that fun might have, and make sure that you have some calm time to catch up and to live life normally. I think this is often the first year challenge, as well, isn't it when you're in the residences in the halls in university, it can be this hedonistic time. I think once you move out perhaps into your house, and you're not surrounded by quite so many people? I don't know. Did you see that trend with people? Did you see it calm down in year two? And three?

Fabienne Vailes 36:07

Um, yeah, I mean, I think perhaps also, it's like with maturity, right. I think there's also that sort of, as again, it's not an either or, it's and and and. And so I think there's more maturity, there's also the impact of like, the cost of going out every single night, that would have an impact. And so young people are less able to spend the money. And also, then they're more secure in their friendships. So that means that, you know, they've created their groups of friends. And then, also, the truth is for the majority of universities year one means that none of your grades count towards your degree classifications. So you can take more risks in the sense that you can, you can have grades that are not so great, and you're not worried that is going to affect what degree classification you get at the end of the of your degree. Whereas from year two, that changes, and I think that also has an impact on how many young people will, not all of them, but the majority of them will, you know, suddenly settle, and start knuckling down a bit more and thinking, 'right, okay, I'm here to achieve something.' And so all those are like, contributing factors, right? It's very again, systemic.

Louise Wiles 37:37

Yeah. And so let's just one final question about the model, which, I'm just very conscious of time, but you talked about the five traits of cultural agility, the research that you've found, and that you found an interesting difference between those that were flourishing and surviving didn't you in relation to cultural agility. Can you just explain a bit about what you found. And and what you mean by cultural agility?

Fabienne Vailes 38:03

Yeah, of course. So I guess that comes from my background, because my background is in linguistics and in cultural agility. Perhaps because I've lived in foreign countries and being French living in the UK, I've always been really interested in the differences in our thinking, etc. So what I noticed, and also because the research started with many linguists, so perhaps that's why in a way, I was privileged to see that how the young people who are more flourishing were more culturally agile, and by that I mean, they're able to go beyond the manifested, they're able to go beyond what they see is happening in their environments, and, you know, question things. So they're asking deeper questions, go deeper into things. This is happening because, that's what I call cultural agility the ability to, you know, so for those for people who are interested, cultural agility is linked to the cultural iceberg. And, you know, looking at the deeper reasons for things. And so what I'm seeing in flourishing students is that they are asking questions. So they're curious, and they're much more flexible in the sense that they not saying, Well, this is how it has to happen. And they understand that, we were talking about this sort of the up and down. So the other thing that I talk a lot about when you talk about cultural agility, and when you start being introduced to a new culture, that's a foreign culture, you enter initially, you have a high, which is all exciting. And then you go, you then go down, and you start noticing all the things that you don't like about the culture, the new culture, and it doesn't have to be just a foreign culture, it can actually be you know, for me, moving from your sixth form, or during A levels, to moving to university, it is like entering a new culture. If nothing else, because actually, academic writing is like learning a foreign language, you have to learn the way to write in a certain way or to work in a certain way. Because at university, we want you to do deeper dives into subjects and not stay at surface level, which really GCSE and to some extent A level's encourage you to do. And that will create culture shock, you know, it will generate a, 'oh, my goodness, well, I've done this.' And I think it's more challenging for those students who have been more game playing. And they've been navigating the system and learning to 'play' the system in their GCSEs and A levels. And by that, I mean, they understand that GCSE's and A levels are a game to play and there are rules, and you learn the rules of the game, and you just ace at that game. At university, it's different game, different rules. And so therefore, that can create a bit of an issue for young people, particularly if they're not flexible, open or resilient.

Louise Wiles 41:34

Well, you reminded me how much there is to unpack about that. And, yeah, I can definitely relate to that flexibility of thinking and approach, particularly when you know, if you've been at a school that has handed it to you on a plate. And you followed the procedure and the process to get your A levels and you know those two years are such JAM PACKED years because it is A level's, but then it's university applications and all that that goes with that. And there isn't a lot of time for individuality and, flexibility really, because your time is just if you've got a few bits of co-curricular activity going in there, that's it

really, isn't it? So I think that would be something I would say to students listening, you know, building flexibility of mindset and the growth mindset, fixed mindset that comes into that whole conversation too. But being prepared to be flexible in the way that you socialise and the way that you work and react to work. And the way that you react to the experience, to recognise that it's going to be a period of highs and lows and not just a flatline. I think, is it you who talks about a flat line, if you have a flat line in life, you'll be dead. Fantastic. Fabianne, is there anything else that you feel you want to share before we finish, anything I haven't asked you about that you really feel was an important thing?

Fabienne Vailes 43:08

The one last point I would reiterate it like is going back to my analogy of the of the garden called life, is that the way you do well being will be linked to who you are as an individual. And so it's really important part of the work I do with young people and with parents is what I call that inner-standing. It's like 'Do you know who you are in this garden called life?' Do you know what your values are, and what your unique gifts and fragrances are, if you don't, then you're going to find it really difficult to be grounded and anchored. And you might find yourself being really taken or pushed into different environments that may not be very conducive to your well being. So I think starting with that, like knowing who we are in this garden called life, what are your gifts and fragrances, and how we uniquely contribute to the beautiful biodiversity of that garden? That is key. From there on, then you can be of service and do all of the other things. But I would really recommend that people spend enough time looking at what their values are, and their strengths, and know also, you were talking about your daughter and her peers who left in year one, know that it's okay to take yourself out of an environment that you view as toxic because it doesn't meet your needs. You don't have to stay in a soil that is toxic for you as an individual. That's really important.

Louise Wiles 45:01

Fantastic. I think that is such an important point. And I suppose I would also add that the the university experience is also about finding and understanding yourself. So it's reflecting as you go as well. And yeah, being strong enough to say, 'Yeah, this isn't working for me,' whatever it is, social situations, work situations, whatever, but also recognising what does work for you, what you enjoy. And as Fabianne said, You know what your strengths are, and what's most important to you. Brilliant. Well, I think that's a lovely note to finish the conversation on, I will put links to Fabienne's, books, Flourishing Education, and How to Grow Grown Up in the transcript, anything else you want to direct people to, your podcast?

Fabienne Vailes 45:45

Yeah the podcast, Flourishing Education. So if you put the link there, and also if people want to have a go at doing the, the flourishing assessment, the flower, the head of the flower, is available for free on the website, as well. So they can do the online assessments and see where they are. In terms of those five healths. And I found in the past, that's been such a good entry point for people to have a conversation around their flourishing, languishing and what they can do, because it visually gives you a pro rata visual of how your petals are doing. And something to focus on in terms of okay, I might focus on my physical health and what are the one or two things I can start doing differently that would help me improve that.

Louise Wiles 46:40

Brilliant, great, okay, so I will put links to that. Definitely. So fantastic. Thank you so much for your time today, Fabianne. Really interesting. Thank you.

Fabienne Vailes 46:50

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Further Listening and Reading

Thank you for listening. Please do reach out to Fabienne 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:

Episode One: Beat the Transition Blues where we talk about the process of uncertainty that comes with change and transition and how you can best support yourself or loved ones through it.

Episode Two: Riding the Waves of Change -where we go into more detail about the experience of change and how best to cope with the highs and lows that can come with it.

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

Student Voices Episodes 11 – 15 students share their stories of transition and give tips and advice for new students.

To learn more about the work that Fabienne does, access her podcast and take the assessment she mentions in the conversation go to www.flourishingeducation.co.uk

Thank you so much for listening today.

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