

A T I M E T O T H R I V I N G

# Successful Student Transitions

**Fundamentals for Well-being**  
*Dynamics for THRIVING*  
*through change*

**Episode 29**

**Coping with Relationship Challenge**

# 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 Three: Fundamentals for Well-being – Dynamics for thriving through change and transition.**

This is the full transcript with links to associated episodes.

You can also access the show notes, resources and worksheets mentioned in the podcasts 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***

## Introduction

*“And I think sometimes, you know, if you put up with a lot of this stuff, you can start to feel really resentful, you know, and that can actually then make the relationship worse, you know, you're holding on to things and then there can be lots of arguments over really small things.” Elizabeth Gillies*

Hello and a warm welcome to Successful Student Transitions, perhaps you're facing a big life change, moving to university, a year abroad, a work placement or out into the world of work, Times of change like these can be both exciting and challenging. Our aim is to support you as you step out, find your new gear and thrive in this next stage of your life.

As you may have guessed from the short excerpt, today, we are talking about what to do when relationships go wrong. As you move on to the next stage in your life, you will meet new people, form new relationships, many will be healthy and happy experiences, but things don't always run smoothly. What do you do then? How do you cope and manage relationship challenge and break down? Listen on as we share some strategies for coping with relationship challenge.

**Elizabeth Gillies 00:03**

So welcome to the second relationship podcast in our Fundamental Series. And in this podcast, we're going to be talking about talking about when there are challenges in relationships. So, things like conflict, maybe when a relationship feels one sided feelings of discomfort, when relationships end. In this transition from school, or, or when you're making new friends, you're making new connections, you're going to meet lots of new people. And the reality is, is that some of these will work out, and some of them won't, as we've talked about before. And I'm sure you've all heard some, maybe good and not so good experiences of this happening in the past. So, we want to kind of talk to you a little bit more about it as, as you're a young adult. And remember what we talked about before about students reporting, it can take a whole year, Louise said this in the last one, sometimes it takes students a whole year to develop friendships when they start university, some are built, and some don't make it to that deeper level. You might have those strong ties, but maybe a lot of kind of weaker ties to. And if you're starting work, again, it might take you some time to make those relationships develop because you're busy kind of doing work and stuff, but it's a great place to forge relationship. So, this podcast is relevant to all kinds of relationships, friends, close friends, and romantic relationships. And you might want to listen to the previous one when we discussed about the importance of how to make and nurture relationships. And this is especially important when you're settling in at university or work when you're building this new network for you. And we're also going to be talking back about the well-being bucket metaphor, when we're talking about relationship. It's about your bucket and knowing that other people have buckets too. So, it's not just all about you. It's about, that reciprocal nature of relationships. So here we are, we're going to start talking about discussing challenge in relationships.

The first thing I'd say it's important to know that friendships can change. And you likely know that for yourself. You know, there are times that friendships, you've known friendships that add to your well-being, and you can add to their bucket as well. So, there are times when you're filling up your bucket, and they're filling up yours. But there's also times when those kind of relationships are draining from your bucket. And there's not that feeling of sort of give and take. And actually, there's a number of reasons why kind of friendships, these issues might arise. So, let's think about why kind of relationship challenges are there. You know, if relationships are important to you, and it's something you hold strongly and really value as they often are in young adults, when you're starting out in new places that friendships important. Then if there are difficulties, you can feel it really quite keenly. It's that double sided coin I think we've talked about before. One side of the coin is about the good stuff. Things are important you, like having a set of really good friends. And the other side of the same coin is the challenging stuff. Maybe when there are issues in relationships and friendships. And because they're one side and the other side of a coin, they're both linked. So, if friendships are kind of really important to you, and there's some difficulties, it's going to be causing you a lot of anxiety. So, we also have to think about, you know, this might be even more true when you've left your friendships and, and they're behind you and in you're in school, and you're forging out and making new ones and in any transition. So, if there's a challenge there, especially in the early days, it might be quite tricky.

**Louise Wiles 05:29**

Yeah, indeed. And, you know, I guess you have to think about the context in which you're living, your environment, because it might be the first time that you're house sharing, living closely with other people your age. And you know, issues can arise that relate to tasks that you've not had to do before,

you know: How do you work together as a group to pay bills? How do you divvy up the household tasks and make sure that everyone washes up their pots and pans. And all take the different responsibilities. And people might have different ideas about that. And you've got to negotiate as a group, how you're going to work together. And that can be a real challenge.

**Elizabeth Gillies 06:13**

And there will also likely be a change in your family relationships. So, imagine at your university or going away to work somewhere, you're away from home, I'm sure there's going to be less or different contact with your family, which could also cause some conflict, being away from home with all that independence that brings and then you're away for prolonged periods. And then on holidays, or extended periods, like maybe over the summer, if you're a university student, you might come back home, and you might have changed, but things at home won't have changed. And that could be a kind of source of challenge. And if we think back to one of the students that we interviewed, she talked about that as well, about having to renegotiate that entry back into home, again, from being very independent to being mindful of you're back in your family's house again.

**Louise Wiles 07:13**

Yeah, yeah, I think that was Raphie wasn't it? We'll put a link in the transcript for that. And I think also, you know, when you're moving to a new place, new context, you've got new responsibilities, you know, for yourself that you haven't had before. And probably different nature of relationships as well. And so, when those challenges arise in those relationships, it's often quite difficult to face them, and probably quite tempting to avoid them, really. How do you approach somebody who's upsetting you? For perhaps one of the reasons, I mentioned before, you're in your accommodation and you're sharing responsibilities and tasks, and they're not pulling their weight. How do you approach them and talk about that in a way that's not going to damage hopefully the environment for everyone. And so, you worry about that, you don't know how to raise the issue, and then you start to overthink it, and you know, it grows, grows in its size and becomes something it probably wasn't in the first place. So, and that's all totally understandable because it's all new to you. And also, I suppose, you know, if you've had a fairly smooth experience of relationships, perhaps if you've been at school, and you've had some of the best friends for a long time, you might not think that conflicts and disagreements are expected in relationships, you know, it may not have been part of the pattern of the relationships before, or there might have been some avoidance about it in the past. And so, you simply steer clear of those situations.

**Elizabeth Gillies 08:58**

Yeah, I think that's right. And, you know, we're going to talk about skills today as well. And it's like, you do need a skill set to kind of think about, how am I going to do this? And if you've never observed other people resolving, we're going to use this word today, repairing issues, working through things, and finding that when you do that there can be greater connection. If you've never had that experience that might be really difficult for you to be brave enough and just say, can I talk about something that was really an issue for me here. Or maybe you've had an experience that when you did do it, it didn't end well. So that can get in the way of you kind of trying to restore and do it again. And if we were going back talking from last time as well. What if you're somebody that always puts everybody else's needs before them? What if you're what people call a people pleaser? You might say, 'well, I can't even talk

about any of these difficult things, It's all too hard' - that might also get in the way of you challenging things. And you know, and then issues continue.

**Louise Wiles 10:16**

Yeah. And I also think another thing to notice that when relationships change, this is a transition in itself. So, you're transitioning to a new environment, but then the relationship development and new experiences is a transition, and then when things go wrong. That's another transition. So, we refer you back at this stage to Episode one where we talked about the transition cycle. But just to note here, that often, you'll feel that mix of feelings. And it can feel challenging and uncomfortable. And it's a time to reflect and act in line with what's important to you. So, we talked about values in the previous episodes and understanding what's important to you in the relationship i.e., your values for relationships. So perhaps, think about those and think about how this issue is perhaps contravening those values. And that would probably explain why you're feeling as you do.

**Elizabeth Gillies 11:15**

So, a little bit of kind of inward thinking there, reflection isn't Louise, and some skills we're going to talk about as well about how you actually kind of bring these things up, if you've never been able to do that before. But it might be worth thinking now about just noticing what might be holding you back from raising and kind of challenging when things aren't going well in your relationship. It could be one of those things, it may even be something else, you know, on top of that. But having some insight about why you're not, you know, speaking up for yourself, or why you're not wanting to kind of raise an issue and work towards repair, it could be a useful thing to think about.

So, after you've done that, we're going to think about, well, what are healthy relationships? And what are unhealthy relationships. And in the last podcast, we talked a lot about, you know, when you're making new relationships the things that you have to think about and know about. Louise just mentioned that word 'values', know what you value in a relationship, know what fits you well, know what feels good for you. And in the previous podcast, we talked about, you know, those signs of autonomy, empathy, authenticity, generosity, affection, you'll be open to sharing difficulties and vulnerabilities. So, if you feel you can't be yourself, that you can't make your own choices, that you feel that connection isn't there with warmth and understanding if you feel your needs are being ignored, if you feel your vulnerabilities are being exploited, if you feel excluded, so it's almost like the opposite of all those healthy relationships it sounds like a time to act. And other common difficulties often include somebody lies to you, if people share confidential information. Remember, we talked about presence the last time so it's about just not being there for you and put downs, if there's unreliability, disregarding your feelings, you know, I say put downs instead of pushups. You know, be aware, if you're feeling uncomfortable, or not safe in a relationship, you might feel controlled, someone's possessive or demanding. They want to keep you from mixing with others. And you're always feeling that Am I going to be accepted for who I am? There might be lots of replaying of situations, you know, what they've said, what you said, and you're kind of trying to make sense of it. So those are signs of unhealthy relationships. And you've got to think about what's the cost of being in a relationship like this? Or, what's the cost of this relationship remaining in this state? I'm sure we've all found ourselves at one time or other in a bit of a relationship, maybe and, and I know for me if I ever feel like my needs are, or my voice is shut down, I kind of thing where's the space for me in this relationship? What's the what's

the cost for you in when you kind of noticed that maybe this is not the best relationship for you, Louise, have you?

**Louise Wiles 14:51**

Yeah, I think, yeah, it's about that space for you. It's about feeling that you've been heard and that your contributions are appreciated, I think probably to a relationship and, oh, that there's an equality. I don't mean total equality. But there's a kind of evenness if you like to the contribution you're making and the other person's making, that you're not doing all the running all the time. And that you're heard? Yeah, certainly for me, there's been times when I've realized, I'm not I'm not being heard. And that that's a death knell. I mean, definitely talk it through and everything. But, you know, when somebody isn't able to be interested, actually, I think would be more the point in actually hearing you and then wanting to hear what you have to say about things. Then that doesn't bode well, I think, for the relationship. And I think also, there's this kind of security around relationships. Yeah, I mean, I think a relationship provides you with a sense of safety. I think that's how it should be. And if you're not feeling safe in the relationship, whether it's a romantic one or a good friendship, then yeah, that's definitely a challenge.

**Elizabeth Gillies 16:13**

It's a signal that it isn't working. And I think sometimes, you know, if you put up with a lot of this stuff, you can start to feel really resentful, you know, and that can actually then make the relationship worse, you know, you're holding on to things and then there can be lots of arguments over really small things. And you're not addressing the bigger thing, the main issue of stuff. So, it can feel really well, all those opposites of a healthy relationship and feel really messy and feel like you were saying Louise, kind of unsafe.

So, let's think first about repairing and restoring a fracture or a challenge in a relationship and like we were talking about, relationships are a process. So, repair is also a process. So, it's much more than an apology, 'I'm sorry, I did that.' And I kind of like a lot of the restorative practice work around this where there's a joint conversation or where someone has the kind of courage and bravery and challenge. And often if there's difficulties on both sides, it takes a little bit of somebody stepping out and saying, 'I'm going to say what's going on here'. And starting the conversation about it with the opener, like, for instance, 'you know, I've been feeling left out, I'd like to talk about it, because I really value the friendship.' So, you notice what I'm kind of saying there, notice the 'I' message. Like, I'm taking responsibility for my feelings, much better than, 'you are excluding me', which is likely going to end up with: 'no, I'm not' and somebody being very defensive. So, taking those, people talk about those I messages, I'm sure you've heard them before - 'I'm feeling this', 'I've been wondering about this', 'I'm noticing this has been happening', but also about, why you want to talk, 'because I value the friendship, I value, the times that we've we spend together when we've been doing X, Y and Z'. So, it's a third clear message, there's an issue, and I want to do something about it, because it's really important. So, questions from a restorative approach would be when you're going into talking about it, you know, what's the difficulty? You know, here? What is our issue? What's been happening? Who has been affected? And how? So, you might say, 'well, when I've been feeling a little bit, kind of like left out, and I wasn't invited to that party that everybody else was, I was feeling really lonely. And I was thinking, Have I done something wrong? And I've started to think about, you know, is this a friendship worth saving? And then maybe I've gone off with other people'. So, you can think about what's the difficulty who has

been affected, and how. And also be thinking about what roles each of you have played in it. So, you might take some responsibility. So, you know, 'and of course, when you came back from that party, I never even asked you how it had gone, or I snapped at you or, you know, I did this thing.' So obviously, that's going to add to that tricky, dynamic. And importantly, be thinking about when you've heard the story and you've kind of seen what's been happening, and that kind of dance of stuff that sometimes goes on. You know, what needs to happen to make repairs in the relationship for things to move forward, what do you want me to do? What could you do? What can I do? You know, thinking about, you know, this is an important thing, if you agree that. And then monitor how that's going to go.

**Louise Wiles 20:15**

I think you know, you need to know that for the plan to work, it takes time to return to sort of that healthy relationship, I guess. If you think about the time and investment it takes to create a relationship in the first place, referring back to the other episode where we talked about that 36 hours, three hour blocks of intense time. If a relationship is challenged, and needing to set some new, and have conversations, and create some sort of new ways of thinking about it, that's going to probably take time and effort to on both sides. Yeah, so really important that it may take time to repair the relationship, it may not be an overnight thing.

**Elizabeth Gillies 21:04**

And kind of you're getting back to settled again, if we're going to use that transition cycle, talk about the transitions of these things. So there has been that upset. So, you need to get back to settled and it might take a bit of time to do that.

But what about when you feel that a friendship or relationship is finished? And it's not good for you? You know, what do you do about it? How do you end it. And for some of them, to be perfectly honest, you might just have to walk away to protect yourself. It's important for you to know that in certain circumstances, especially if you're feeling unsafe, or if you know that this has been quite a controlling kind of relationship you've been in, to know that that is a really healthy choice that you can make, you can walk away from it.

And in other situations, it's helpful for you and the other person involved to have a good goodbye. Now, you've heard this from us before, so it's not a new thing. And just like we talked about the transition cycle, and Episode Two, endings can be tricky. And likely, you'll all know that term ghosting, you know, when a friend or a partner ends all communication, there are no calls, no responses to your contact, the relationship has ended without any opportunity to discuss or make repairs. And what it can do is like leave the person who's been ghosted, feeling rejected, confused, with lots of questions about, 'Oh, what have I done, what have I said?' really a lot of self-doubt, not knowing what's happening. And it's certainly not a good ending. And we know that social rejection is painful. Because research indicates that the pain regions in your brain are the same for both physical pain and for social exclusion. So, being rejected is the same as having really bad physical pain. It hurts. So, ghosting, you know, you can look at some of the reasons why people might ghost on you. Ghosting can often be about people making negative predictions about 'oh I'm going to feel so uncomfortable about building this connection, and I'm not going to be able to handle it, and I'm never going to do it well, and it must just be so difficult. So, it could be about people avoiding discomfort, about talking about their own emotions. And ghosting



also might happen if the person who has ghosted you might be thinking off into the future and be thinking, 'well, actually, this relationship isn't going anywhere, this isn't the person for me, this is not a long term relationship.' So, it's again, leaving instead of communication. And both scenarios can give you information about that other person, that they might be someone who's never been able to repair or resolve things, they might find it really hard to talk about their own emotions, for all those reasons we talked about initially in the podcast. They've not had a good experience, or they might not know how to talk about their emotions, or they might not have observed people repairing and things being better as a result of it. So, you have to know that if you've been ghosted, sometimes it's not about you. It's about the other person. But of course, we're also going to be thinking about there might be an 'I' in there, there might be something about you as well. But if people can't end things well, that that can be an issue and you think about how you restore relationships with somebody any way if they kind of behave like that. So, the advice about ending relationships takes us back about what healthy relationships look like: to be honest, to be authentic, to explain how you feel, even though that might be hard in the short term, for you to express your thoughts and feelings, to actually tolerate that bit of discomfort. You might feel it can be difficult to say those things to that other person or other people. But of course, if you do it with those good friendship skills, with empathy, with kindness, then hopefully it'll bring closure and healing in the longer term. And not people then texting 'Why won't you talk to me? Why have you been ghosted?' You know, you want to try and make a good clear goodbye. With endings completed. It's tricky to do, but it's a healthy way to do it. So, in terms of goodbyes, you know, one of the things that we've shared with you before is that RAFT framework, the 'repair' the 'affirmation', the 'farewell', the 'think ahead'. And we've shared that in relation to you leaving school in particular, but of course, it could be about leaving university or leaving your work, or it's also about how you leave relationships. And Louise is going to talk through her kind of thoughts about how you might use RAFT creatively in this process.

**Louise Wiles 26:42**

Yeah, so as you're having that authentic and honest conversations this perhaps gives you a bit of a framework for how you might approach it. And the R, the first R is for repair or reconciliation and it's all about, you know, how to mend, and I suppose if you're breaking up, you're not really mending. But you are kind of, hopefully setting, perhaps a solid foundation for understanding for why, what's happening is happening. So, it's that explanation in a way that is clear. That helps the other person to understand why you are where you are. And okay, you're not repairing the relationship in the sense of getting back together again, but you are reconciling them to the situation and helping them to understand your side of it, and why you're feeling as you are. And then also, you know, it's important for you to repair yourself, because it's not a pleasant thing to do. So, it's important to give yourself time, and the inner compassion around the whole situation, to know that I'm ending this in the best way I possibly can, okay, yes, I recognise it's hurting someone else, perhaps. But I am being honest and authentic in this and doing it in the kindest way I can. So, there's that inner compassion and self-compassion around the situation too. And then the affirmation is the A in RAFT, you know, and that's about confirming and affirming what was and what was a value, I think in the relationship to you. Because of course, there will have been something of value. And the reason for you to have been friends or for the relationship to be to have happened. So, something that you cared about, and you want to make that person aware that that was the case. And that you've valued that even though there is now going to be a change to the relationship. But knowing this is about the importance of making a good ending for both of you. And

Farewells. You know, being honest here, you know, this is goodbye. You know, there's not going to be, you're not going to come back to this, this is the end. So being clear about that. But also recognising that it's painful for both of you, and emotionally challenging for both of you. So, knowing that personally for yourself, and recognising that you're not going to feel great in the next few days and weeks, perhaps months, sometimes depending on the relationship. It takes time to heal. It's time to heal, whether you're the one ending it or the one on the receiving end of being ended. It takes time. It does get better. I can honestly tell you that, it does get better, but it takes time. And also, this farewell gives you the opportunity to wish well for the future and to end on a good, good understanding. And then finally Thinking ahead, so the T stands for Think ahead. You know, there will be new relationships. So, take some time to remind yourself about what new qualities and aspects of a relationship are healthy for you, what works for you, and how in other relationships that you have are going to help you get through this, they're going to fill your buckets, your well-being bucket, you can call on those as support. And perhaps encourage the other person to think about that, too, you know, who can they call on for support to help you fill their well-being bucket too.

### **Elizabeth Gillies 30:32**

Learning to navigate relationship challenges and endings is often a whole new experience, isn't it at work a university? You're often in contact with a much bigger and wider group of people. And be aware that in that push and pull to make friends and good relationships, sometimes you might need some social rest. So, listen to the podcast about rest and recovery. Because, you know, people talk about that friendship frenzy and even the kind of like conjuring that up at the moment. So that desire to scramble and make friends, you know, it might be that you need a bit of rest for it. And you need a bit of downtime, and just kind of say, 'I'm going to give myself a bit of rest, I'm not going to go out tonight, I'm going to stay safe at home. So, listen back to that rest recovery, where we talk about social rest in there because, you know, finding friends and wanting your friends can be, you know, a big drain on your well-being bucket. And the last thing we're going to say is that in university or in work, wherever you end up, there will be support for you if you've got relationship challenges, and often there's really great information and ways to access support. So, on websites or well-being hubs, or I'm sure there are places in work too, that if there are issues there about some, you know, relationships that you can go and talk to people. So, it's important to ask for help. And remember that first podcasts one of the first series we talked about them pausing to ask for help. So, if relationship issues are getting in the way, you know, there are places where you can go and ask for help. So, remember about old friends as well as new ones, about family and even professional support. As relationships are really important to us, and a really fundamental part of us being able to thrive. If you've got some issues with it. With any with any of this kind of relationship stuff. Remember, you can ask for help. So, we hope we've kind of helped you navigate a little bit way through giving you some skills and understanding about these relationship challenges for you. And next time we meet. We're going to continue our fundamental series about the important things that are really necessary for you to thrive in your new place. So, till next time, bye

## Resources:

We hope this episode has given you some ideas for dealing with tricky friendships and approaches for managing relationship breakdown.

Please do reach out for support from your well-being support team or relationship counsellors if you are facing relationship challenges that are impacting significantly on your well-being.

We mentioned the following additional resources in this conversation:

- **The RAFT framework**, which you can learn more about by listening to Episode One and Two of this podcast. [HERE](#) and [HERE](#)
- **Episode 11 Voices in Transition – Raphie** [HERE](#)
- **Episode 27: The Rest and Recovery Well-being Fundamentals, Do You Rest Enough?** [HERE](#)
- **Episode 6 : Why it Helps to Ask** [HERE](#)

Please help us in supporting other young people by following and reviewing this podcast on your podcast app of choice and sharing it with your friends and networks.

**Content Disclaimer:** *The information contained above is provided for information purposes only. The contents of this podcast episode and transcript are not intended to amount to advice and you should not rely on any of the contents of this podcast and notes. Professional advice should be obtained before taking or refraining from taking any action as a result of the content of this podcast. Elizabeth Gillies, Louise Wiles, and guests, disclaim all liability and responsibility arising from any reliance placed on any of the contents of this Podcast and transcript.*