

[TRANSCRIPT: New Student Special Episode 4: Let's Talk About...Visualising your future]

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[INTRO]

Hello. Welcome to UWE Bristol's Let's Talk Now *New Student Special*. As I'm sure you already know, life is full of challenges. And in a new environment, with a new city to explore, new people to meet and new and more difficult subjects to study, these challenges may feel like more than you can overcome. But we promise you, you can.

We've put together this series of podcasts to give you just that little bit of insider information into what we think you need in order to be successful, not only while you're here at UWE Bristol, but later on in your life and your career.

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[MUBARAK MOHAMUD (MO), LECTURER, BRISTOL BUSINESS SCHOOL]: It lets students imagine a future that yet is to exist. And actually, they are the choreographers, in fact the creators, the designers of their lives. And I think this student...we've obviously seen the other videos about university – it is a weird time, what are your expectations...then we show them the one about anxiety, where we say '*It's ok, it's ok to be anxious*' and then we talked about failing, which is part and parcel to success. And now, what is your end game? And I just think that that is probably the most exciting part of all this. Once you've accepted that you're gonna go through university and you're gonna go through a raft of emotions and it's ok for you to make mistakes, and it's ok for you to feel upset about certain things, but you're gonna roll with it anyway. But what do you want out of it?! And this video, for me, just really says '*close your eyes and imagine a future, in five years' time, where do you want to be?*'. And, Miles, I think this particularly portion of their lives where they have a 'respectful identity' as a university student, they can actually design a life for themselves after university that they can start to lay the seeds for right now. And I think, I remember when I was a student, I would imagine all the time what I wanted to do after and it was

scary, but full of excitement and joy because you can just imagine whatever it is you want. The world is your oyster. It's a weird thing...

[MILES THOMPSON, LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY]: ...totally, totally, totally. I guess there's a couple of things that I really like about this kind of video. One, it does what all the other videos have done...it brings something into the conversation that students might not be aware of. It's kind of like '*OK, yeah. What do you want from your future...if you visualise your future, what does it look like?*' And that's a really useful thing to say. And at the same time, I guess what I'd want to say is: '*Don't put pressure on yourself*'. Not being sure is absolutely fine. Not having clear answers is absolutely fine, but embrace the space and explore. Allow yourself the freedom...so you don't have to go '*I have to have an answer, I have to have an answer, ok I'll go with that and follow that*'. Just go: '*Actually, I don't know, but I'm gonna move forward in some way, I'm gonna try lots of different things so that hopefully through that journeying, I will come up with an answer*'. One of the things we sometimes talk about in psychology, and one of the things we sometimes talk about with the career service is that we might occasionally almost veer on putting too much pressure on students on Day One, or Term One or Year One to go '*what are you gonna do after you finish?*'. And actually, a lot of students don't really know. And I've got to tell you, I got to the end of my degree and I didn't really know what I wanted to do...

[MO]: ...yeah, me too...

[MILES]: ...but, I think I took advantage of the opportunities that university gave me so that I was in a different place at the end than to where I was at the start. I was still visualising and exploring and trying and failing and kind of going '*maybe it's this, maybe it's that*'. I was moving forward.

[MO]: When I visualise, I visualise all the potentials. All the potentials. And I think I had a whole list of things I could possibly do. But all I knew was that I wanted to make a huge impact on something. I wanted to change lives. Of course, I wanted absolutely bucket-loads of money, it's fine if that's what your game is, you should feel free to say that. You want a good life, but as a career, what do you want to do? And in the video, it shows those two students working hard towards a goal. Becoming, fitter, faster, studying really hard and I think it does show that it requires the best version of yourself to do that. Whatever that may be, you have to get beyond your A game. You don't visualise and then '*oh, that's a really*

*nice dream*' because that's a daydream. But actually, you are able and you have full right to fulfill your life goals. And I think it's just a magical time at university where students can be whatever they want to be...

[MILES]: ...yeah, and even if they start in the early days or weeks or months they kind of go *'I don't know, I don't know, I don't know'*...that's ok. Just start exploring with yourself what are the kind of things that are important. And it could be, like you say, trying to make a difference to other people, try to make a difference to the world. It could be the complete flip. It could be *'I want to make lots of money'*, or *'I want to be successful'*. As a psychologist, I might then say, *'hmmm, for who? What's that then gonna give you? There's nothing wrong with that at all, but when you got that, what will that look like and why does that matter'*. But just start exploring these things. What is important to you in terms of work and career? What is important to you in terms of other things as well? In terms of recreation, in terms of leisure, in terms of relationships, friends, families, loved ones. What is important to you? What do you want your life to be about?

[MILES]: Because university gives you so many opportunities to explore that, to broaden that, to widen that. And once you start to know what is important to you, then you can start to move towards it. One of the great things about that video is, you can kind of tell in the video that there is someone who is maybe trying to improve their running time, or maybe somebody trying to improve the amount they can, uh, is that a deadlift? I'm not quite sure, but I think that was a deadlift...the amount of weight they can pull up. And there's someone else saying *'I've got to do well in this essay'*. And these are all quite short-term goals. But they're short-term goals in a direction to be great sports people, or athletes, to be the best they can in terms of their degree result. This is good, but what does that serve as well? What is that about?

[MILES]: In psychology, we sometimes talk about the difference between values and goals. So goals are a thing you can tick off...it's a goal. So, you know when you've scored a goal because the ball has crossed the line and is in the net. You can tick it off...it is done. And goals are kind of easy to identify because they can be ticked off or not, getting x in an exam or y in a degree classification, that's a goal. But sometimes what's also important is to think about the wider value that it serves.

[MILES]: And the funny thing about a value is that a value is like an overall direction of travel. You know, it's like *'heading in a westerly direction'*. And the funny thing about *'heading in a westerly direction'* is it's something you can always keep doing. So I could spend all day *'heading in a westerly direction'*, fall asleep, wake up the next day, keep *'heading in a westerly direction'*...weirdly, I could go all the way around the world, get back to the very place I started and still keep going *'in a westerly direction'*. These values, these ongoing directions of travel, university gives you an option and an opportunity to really narrow these things down...what do I really care about? And then once you know what your values are, once you know what these bedrocks are, then it's like *'ok, what are the goals I can tick off in that direction?'*

[MO]: ...that's huge. So what matters to you in life...what would be a typical value?

[MILES]: People have values in different areas, so in different areas of their life they have different values. When I talk to my students about this, I quite often say *'people have values in terms of relationships, in terms of friends, in terms of family, in terms of loved ones'* and the example I often give is that one of my values is to be a loving and caring partner to my missus. And that's a value, and that's something that's important to me. But then I have goals in that direction...so, every evening I get home, help cook, watch watch we end up watching on tv together...

[MO]: ...so demonstrating what these values mean to you

[MILES]: ...exactly. So you've got this ongoing direction of travel, but then you have these more short-term things that you can tick off. And of course, you tick off these things on an evening...you're doing the washing up...we've got chickens, so clearing out the chickens. That of course doesn't mean that I'm then done and don't need to do anything else for the rest of the week. The next day I keep ticking off the same goals, in the direction of that value.

[MILES]: And university, for students, offers the same opportunity. What different areas do you value? Work? Career? Friends? Family? Recreation? Leisure? Growth? Self-development? Spirituality?...you know, all of those things, which of these things are important to you and then...what do you want to do in that direction? We've talked a lot in these podcasts about just getting people to

give themselves the opportunity and the freedom to, kind of say, what is it you want your university life to be about and your wider life to be about. Seize that opportunity for yourself and let yourself do it...

[MO]: ...it's huge. That's mindblowing stuff...seriously so. Because I hear what you're saying. It wasn't something that I was consciously have actually thought about...

[MILES]: ...I know! But having talked about this stuff quite a bit, this is the weird thing. In all of these videos and in all of these podcasts, what we keep coming back and saying is 'this is important and yet, actually, students might not be aware of it'. Until someone brings your attention to it, it might not be something that is clear. What we're doing again and again is going...

[MO]: ...there was something you said earlier. I want to pin you down on it.

[MILES]: ...go on...

[MO]: ...you said something about happiness and importance, can you speak about that contrast just a little?

[MILES]: ...yeah, totally. I think it's a really, really weird thing, I think in today's world...particularly a world which is slightly dominated by social media and Instagram and these perfect images...

[MO]: ...guilty. Guilty, guilty, guilty [LAUGHTER]

[MILES]: ...these perfect images that we can kind of assume that we are chasing happiness, that we should be happy and things should be perfect all the time. Whereas, actually, just going back to all the stuff we've been saying in these podcasts, hopefully it's beginning to become clear that life is gonna contain anxiety, and it's gonna contain worry, and it's gonna contain things that you're not sure about...there's gonna be uncertainty...it's gonna contain failures, it's gonna contain stress. But it's gonna hopefully contain lots of happiness and joy and laughter as well, but it's gonna have these other things too...

[MO]: ...and I guess you can only know those joys because of the failures and because of the sadness.

[MILES]: ..exactly. Exactly. And actually, you know, happiness is that much greater in comparison to *'oh wow, I was really, really worried about this. I thought I was gonna suck at this, but actually look! I got a really good mark'*.

[MO]: ...There was some student who got a 2:2 and nobody could be happier. The context they came from, the struggle they went through, the cruelty, it meant so much more than a First...it is relative to who you are.

[MILES]: ...absolutely. And so if we just start to dial down the volume of *'you must always be happy, you must always be about joy, you must always be about the perfect Instagram message...'* then, rightly, some people then say: *'well, if it's not about that, then what should it be about?'*. And then, maybe, one of the answers is *'it should be about the many different things that are important to you'*. And I think that's quite important as well.

[MILES]: It's not just about just this one thing is important to me, but this is what's important to me in terms of work and career and education and learning...but this is what's important to me in terms of friends, family and loved ones...and this is what's important to me in terms of hobbies and recreation and leisure...these are all the things that are important to me and actually, I know, that if I move in all of those directions, that could sometimes be a challenge, because sometimes we have to balance those different needs. But if we can move in those directions, then, happiness is going to come along with that. But it comes along because you're moving in the direction of things that are important to you...not because you're just trying to get happiness by and of itself. If we chase that too much, then life can be a little bit too *'tick-box'y...100 places you need to visit before you die, 100 things you need to do before you're 20 or 30 or 40...life is not a tick box. It's about 'what is important to me' and move in that direction.*

[MO]: ...that's huge...

[MILES]: ...does that make sense?

[MO]: ...yes. In this video we're just giving the students the licence to say *'hey, imagine, you can, why not?'*

[MILES]: And that's what we're doing in all of these podcasts, we're just trying to go *'here's another thing we want you to think about'*. There's a risk that university

can just be about 'I want to get a 2:1'. And it's like 'ok, that's fine, getting a 2:1 might be important...'

[MO]: ...if that's all you want, you've missed a huge opportunity...

[MILES]: ...exactly. And so we're just trying to do here is say '*allow your university journey to be about these other things as well*'. And it doesn't mean you have to have answers on day one, it doesn't even mean you have to have answers by the time you graduate, but allow yourself to be on this wider journey.

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