THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 4 – Episode 8

What's Next - Career Advice with Anna Howell

Ashley: So, if you, like me, have a child that's in sixth form, or if you have got a child that is looking at what they want to do after school, we have the perfect person for you. So, welcome, Anna Howell, to the Resilient Kid Podcast. Um, and just disclosure, Anna and I are old friends. In the literal sense, and also, we have known each other for some time.

Anna is speaking to you from sunny Wales, I want to say. Is it sunny today?

Anna: It's getting there. It's taken six months, but it's getting there. Yeah.

Ashley: So funnily enough, the reason I mentioned the weather is because Anna and I met in Abu Dhabi. So bizarrely, I'm in Cheshire, she's in Wales, but actually we met in Abu Dhabi, did we not?

Anna: Sunny Abu Dhabi, good days.

Ashley: Oh, fabulous days.

And particularly, so I was the therapist in a school, in a local international school, and Anna was the careers advisor. So we often had clients that would overlap. We would seek each other out, but also because we were kind of our own boss as well, we would sneak off, have a cup of coffee together, go and do a Starbucks run I never forget the time, do you remember you and I sneaked off to Starbucks and we came back and it was Christmas time and each of the coffees that we ordered for our little friend collective had names of reindeers on them.

And we all used to, because nobody could hide in my office because everybody would come to my office. So we used to hide in Anna's office and she would put a thing on the door to stay busy and we'd all be sat there eating lunch or drinking our Starbucks, weren't we?

Anna: We had

to squash in because it was so small,

Ashley: but brilliant, absolute brilliant times.

And, you know, when you're away from home and, you know, you're away from your old friends that you grew up with and stuff like that, having that real sense of community just helped us all through, I think, didn't we?

Anna: Do you know what it was like, like you're saying you're leaving your old friends, but although we were all new friends, it was like we were old friends.

Yeah. Like we'd known each other forever. And I still feel like that even though I, I haven't seen you since I came to Pointin ages ago when we met up. Yeah. And the same with the girls in, in Abu Dhabi. You know, they, they like my old friends, which is lovely.

Ashley: Yeah, absolutely it is. And that sense of community is just beautiful.

So who better than the resident careers advisor, Anna, to kind of point us in the right direction. And one of the reasons that I did this is I know that lots of people have reached out to me who are in a similar position. My eldest is in year 12 in sixth form. You know, she's looking to, she's just done work experience.

She's looking to go to university. And actually she said to me yesterday. You do know that I've got to start looking at universities after half term and I'm like, what? You can't, you're still, because she's still 16. She's a summer baby. She's still 16. It's crazy, crazy. And also there's, you know, there's kids going through GCSEs now where they What's next?

Because Sixth Form isn't for everyone. University isn't for everyone. So we've brought Anna on so she can give us some advice and some yeah, just help as parents. How can we support our kids? Yeah. So Anna, tell us a little bit about yourself, how you got into careers things like that.

Anna: Okay, um, so like I said, I met Ashley when during my little period in Abu Dhabi, which is lovely.

Before that, I was working for a company in Cardiff called Careers Wales, I had been there for 16 years. And I was incredibly lucky that when we decided to come back after Abu Dhabi, I managed to get my old job back. So I'm actually coming back. I know they say you should never go back, but I have. And it's fabulous because it's what I know.

So I'm working with them now, Careers Wales. I've been in this job for 28 years and before that I was a qualified nurse. And of course you have time off with your kids and you sort of lose touch and you think, do I really want to go back to that busy sort of shift pattern? Quite high, sort of pressured job.

And my mother, strange enough, was my school careers advisor. And so I had three kids under five and I said, oh, I don't know, what am I going to do? How am I going to go back? And it's all changing because it was this Project 2000 and everything was changing in nursing. And she said, well, look, I've got some kids on work experience.

Can you just go and check them and see if they're, okay? And I went, Oh, yeah, fine. So I rocked up, just took notes. And I thought, oh, this is quite interesting because these young kids are just starting on their journey, like their career journey. And it's nice to check where they are, what they're doing, and that there is life outside the classroom.

Because like you say, you know, that, that academic route is not for everybody. So it's quite nice to see these people who were more practical learners going out and doing what they thought they loved. And the nice thing is, although they thought they loved it, they might not. Which is brilliant because they know they can cross that off their list and think, I never want to do that again.

So I thought, well, do you know what, I wouldn't mind doing this on a more permanent basis. So I found that there was a careers diploma being offered at my local university. It was at the time I was classed as a woman returner. So I managed to get it for free. It was only a year postgraduate diploma.

So I did that. And was lucky to work over the summer in Cardiff university with the graduates. Then I actually got into Careers Wales in the schools, which was interesting, going to the local schools. FitzAlan School is one of them, and I think there are about 36 different languages. And I remember this one time I was doing a talk on something, CVs or something.

And it was about 10 past 3 and school was due to close at 20 to 4. And half of them stood up and I said, oh, excuse me, where are you going? They said, oh miss, it's, it's prayer time. And I had no idea what prayer time was. I do now, obviously, having lived in the Middle East. And I said, all right, okay, yeah.

And they said, can we go to prayers? I said, yeah, yeah, of course you can. And with that, the rest of the class all stood up and said, yeah, we've got to go to prayer time as well. And they just marched off when I was left alone with two really good academic kids who didn't want to go to prayer time. So from that, I thought, oh, kids are great.

And it is lovely. I got the opportunity to work with adults. So before I left, I was working with adults' graduates, people who've been under redundancy long term unemployed, everybody really. Then went to Abu Dhabi and worked in the school which I loved. It was lovely. I was there for seven years, working with sort of year nine up to year thirteens.

So it was a whole, UCAS options, A level options, university options, worldwide universities. And it was a fabulous learning curve for me to find out how the students apply. But also because it's quite an academic school, there was only one route, wasn't there? It's just university. And in the Middle East, there was no real work experience.

There were no apprenticeships. So it was quite difficult to sort of place the kids who weren't academic and didn't want to go down the university route. So that was interesting, trying to find things for them. But we did manage to place students in gyms and vets and places like that, where they were a little bit more practical.

So they could work out what it was they wanted. And then maybe, you know, at a later time, when they're sort of 19, 20, And they could decide to go to university. So it was nice from my point of view to see that there were those opportunities in somewhere where really there weren't that many options for them if they weren't academic.

So yeah, I enjoyed it. It was fabulous and sort of finding out about the different routes into university, working with personal statements, learning more about UCAS And overseas students and funding and all that. So it was good fun, really enjoyed it. And I'm glad now that I can offer that to others.

Ashley: Yeah, absolutely.

So, so a couple of questions there. What is UCAS? What's UCAS? Because I think some of, you know, those who, especially if you've not done the UCAS route, you know and now you've got kids who are going, what's this? You know, I need, I need help with this, or I need so many UCAS points. What's UCAS? Tell us, Anna, what's that?

Anna: So UCAS is, university and college admission system I think. . It's the only way to apply to university in the UK. Okay. So UCAS obviously is links with all the universities and every year students apply to university. Then like you said, Erin is in year 12 and she said to you, you know, I got, I'm in year 12, I gotta start applying to university.

It is brilliant to be prepared before you have to do something.

So year 12 now when their exams finish is a fantastic time to start researching. Just have a look at local universities, have a look at what the entry requirements are and are you on track to get those grades. If not, then obviously you need to work a little harder, have a look at alternatives.

But it will give you a good idea of what their entry requirements are. Now, normally A*, A, B. However, they also have these UCAS tariff points. So every A*, A, B equates to a numerical number. Off the top of my head, I think an A* is something like 58, an A is, 52 or B is 48. Don't quote me, but those are the sorts of, of numbers, quite highest numbers.

So if an entry requirement is 102 UCAS points, you look at your A's, B's, C's and D's, you work out what the points are and you add up. Okay? So it could be that 102, I think it's 112, could be two Bs and a C. It doesn't have to. In a specific subject, that's my point. The High Flyers, Law, Medicine, A Star, Maths, Physics, Chemistry, whatever.

Okay, there is no deviation from that. If you want to do something a little more flexible, so not as, I don't want to use that word more professional because, you know, all degrees are professional, you're going to need them at some point to get a job. You can be a little more relaxed, if you like, in the entry requirements, the subjects, it's the grades that they want, the tariff points that they want.

Ashley: So that's really interesting that you say that because I think often, especially at six farmers, they, you know, the colleges are, you've got to get the highest marks. And actually we know that's not true. I have got a student who um, for, because they were really struggling, they were on, you know, the, the, on track to do three A Levels, had to take some time out and because they were really struggling and what happened was they dropped one of their A Levels so they could catch up with the other two and did a project extension on something that they were really interested in and that gave them enough UCAS points to go to uni even though they only had two A Levels.

How, how amazing is that?

Anna: That's brilliant, it's the EPQ. Extended Project Qualifications. So what they do is the EPQ is equivalent to, if you like, half an A level. So that is really good to boost up the grades you've already got. And it can be on anything. I remember when one girl, funny enough, I saw yesterday on her Facebook, she's just put in her final for her degree.

And her, she was the first one I saw an EPQ when I was at Cranley in and she did it on Female Disney characters and their role in modern society.

Wow, amazing. I know, I know, she went through

Ashley: It's just interesting, isn't it?

Anna: Yeah. Somebody else could have done it on the design of the car for F1 racing, anything.

But what it's doing is it's getting you to find your own style. in research and writing and of course that's what you're going to do at university. Now one of the downfalls of year 12 or year 11, you know, you get these fantastic GCSEs and you think you're absolutely chocolate. So you do these and you swagger out and say, ah, you know, I've got nine A*'s or nine nines, whatever it is.

I'm going to go into A level this, that and the other. What the students, I'm sure they are told, but it doesn't actually go in, they jump from GCSE to A Level is phenomenal. It is four times more work than you have ever been used to at GCSE. And it is difficult, year 12 and 13, for a reason, because it's getting to do that jump from GCSE to a university degree.

So it is a struggle, and

I know from fact that In the February of year 12 and the February of year 11, students have a mini meltdown because it's just a little bit overwhelming. They've never done this before. They, let's be honest, they're slightly spoon-fed GCSE. They don't have to work too hard and then they get into year 12.

And they're on their own.

Ashley: I think that top tip from you there around you know, in the February, kind of early February to late, maybe beginning of March, depending. Watch out for that because that we see all the time, don't we? We see, we kind of can predict the student meltdown. It's natural. It is completely natural process.

Of course it is. And one thing I always say to my students who are going through A Levels is that this will be the hardest time in your life. And if you can get through this, you can get through anything because I think doing A Levels is so much harder than a degree because you have got three Subjects in a degree.

It's all one or you might have a major minor, but, but they're all to get, you know, they're all themed, a longer theme. And I think as well, the amount of content that you have to learn. is huge. And I know a lot of colleges will talk you out of, say, doing a big hitter like law and something like psychology because the amount of content, like for me, history, I feel like history's like doing two A levels.

It's so, you know, the content is heavy.

Anna: Um, And I think, you know,

remember that the universities are a business. I went to an event recently, it was for, it was mainly year 12. All the universities were there from all over the country and it was brilliant. And my colleague and I thought, oh my gosh, you know, we're telling kids universities are a business and they're all-around University of Birmingham and all this and we're thinking, oh my gosh, they're going to think we're mental.

Making these kids aware that it is a business, they just want your bottom on that seat. But they're looking at us thinking, well, that's, that's true. We are a business. And what universities don't do is they don't care about that person as a whole. They

care about the degree, the stats they've got to get them there because it looks good on their on their websites and things.

What a lot of the students said was that they were completely, they felt pressured into going to university. They didn't quite know why they were going or what subjects they wanted to do. But we were trying to say, well, look around, look at other universities, look at the different degrees, look at the modules that you're going to do.

Prepare, go and work somewhere in that particular field first to see if you like it.

Because there's nothing worse. I met somebody who'd done a teaching degree. She got her first job. It was an awful school, she hated it and she never went back into teaching ever again.

What a waste.

Ashley: So, so Anna, tell us a little bit, so just to, just to be clear, so the, so while we're talking about university, the kids are going to look around, you're saying, have a look around, have a look at courses, have a look at different universities, look at logistics a guest as well is a really good idea. Yeah, go for a visit.

Look how close or how far away it is from home and also be very realistic around chatting to your kid about how far away because you know, I know if my, my eldest at 16, she would go if she could, do you know what I mean? She can't wait to live on her own and things like that. And that's, and that's amazing, but that's not all kids.

And I know my youngest is a real home bird and if he wants to go to university, he will go nearby. So he can come home for home cooking, he can bring his book in, you know, the usual. So have a very honest and frank conversation about how far away from you. Because if it's, you know, if you're in the north and they want to go to Brighton, you can't visit at the drop of a hat.

So be aware of that. .

Anna: Yeah.

Ashley: Yeah,

Anna: definitely. The other thing as a parent is sort of managing the expectations and, and part of the problem, or it's a massive problem with Covid. What Covid did was to stop a lot of people in their tracks, but. But children especially, because they were at this stage, whatever stage, whether they were four, eight, twelve, whatever they were when it started four years ago, they had part of their childhood taken away from them.

They couldn't, they couldn't interact. And that, I've seen it now, four, I'm sure you have, four years later is a massive knock-on effect for their anxiety, their social skills, their learning. Like you say, they probably don't want to leave their home because they haven't, they, you know, they haven't done it before.

And they're a little bit wary. So it's managing these expectations that your children have, but also your expectations. What we have to remember is that your children are not you. So don't try and mould them, guide them. Don't mould them, just guide them. Because they will have their own ideas, which maybe don't sort of suit your ideas, but it's their passion, so let them go with it and see where it takes you.

If that's the case, then plan. Okay, have a little look. Okay, this is what they're interested. What could we do with that? Let's have a look at if there are degrees or work experience and what jobs are there in this field. Go on indeed. com where they advertise jobs and see what sort of jobs there are, see what sort of things they want.

So that's the end product is to get a job. So what you do then is you come back and say right okay well they actually said they wanted A levels or something called an access course. You have to look then at different levels of qualifications and their equivalents. Okay, so it's, it's managing their expectations of what they want and where they want to go and how they're going to get there.

To plan, to discuss with you again or discuss with friends, discuss with professionals, see what they think, then go back and plan again. because they might have different ideas. Then act on what it is you've done for that second plan, okay? Put it into practice and then from that, act on it but also have a plan B.

Because you never know if things go a bit wrong. But like I was saying Covid was a massive had a massive effect on, on students. They can't learn properly. They haven't had to learn properly. They weren't in school when they were learning, taking exams, whatever. So that has had that knock on effect.

So in a way, yes, we have to treat some of them with kid gloves because they are a little bit more, I don't want to say precious, but they take a little bit more time. They needed a little bit more

guidance.

Ashley: And I think, I think you and I have seen the effects where we have got, we've had students come through us that have never sat an exam, like never sat an exam and then suddenly they have to sit.

You know, and they're in university and they've got through because of, you know, just timing and stuff. And then they get really anxious that they've got to go to, in real life, as the kids call it, in real life exam, you know, it's really scary. So Anna, the process for university, because what I want to do is look at university, then I want to have a look at the alternatives to that.

If we have got, so obviously we know once the kids hit August, they've got the GCSEs in the back pocket, they can start to look for jobs, they can start to look for sixth form, and that's not all A Levels, the new BTEC, well it's not so new anymore, the BTECs are brilliant, aren't they? Because BTECs Give us an idea of what the difference between A level and B tech is.

Anna: So the A levels are, your three subjects, they're all academic and that is that. Yes. Okay, and there's an exam at the end. Some may have coursework, but not many. The B techs are in more sort of vocational topics, subjects. So you could do sport, you could do media, you could do film. And it's for those people who are slightly more learned practically.

Ok, the more visual learners. Still the same level, a level 3 qualification. But you can actually mix A levels and B as well, so you can, you

know, if you're looking for something more visual, you can mix the two together.

Ashley: And I think that's really important to know, because I think we think Or, you know, one or the other.

And actually I have a student who's done two BTECs, one A level. They've got a place at university, just like everybody else.

Anna: There's also when, when kids, sorry, Ash, when you know, if you have somebody who's, who's gone to GCE level and then they thought, oh, I don't really like school and they've left school and they've tried a bit of college and they've got just the GCSEs and they've been out of school for three or four years or two or three years, they can do something called an access course.

And an access course is the equivalent to A levels. So have a look in your local colleges and see if they have access courses. You can do access to humanities, access to nursing. I think you can do access to psychology, access to law. There's all sorts, but they're one-year courses. They're quite intense, but it's a one-year course.

And that will give you the equivalent to A levels. There's a distinction there to the past, obviously, so it depends what you get. But then with that with either A levels and BTEC. BTEC, they've done university in school, allow you to go on to university. So they do accept things like that as well.

Ashley: Amazing. So if we were looking at kind of year 12 and they want to, we've got a few routes, haven't we?

After your A Levels, obviously, they can go off and get a job, you know And, and amazing if that's what they're going to do. If they want to go to say university, obviously we know they need to start looking around, having a look at if they're on target, if they're, you know, if their grades are good enough, what kind of universities and, and what they might want to study.

What's that process look like, Anna? Because obviously we know they're looking at either UCAS points or certain grades, but how, how do they apply? What's it, what's involved in that process for uni?

Anna: No, again, I do tend to deviate. It's looking on the UCAS website. Okay. Or even Type in University of Cardiff or University of Edgier, wherever you want to go or you want to find out about and have a look at the courses.

They'll come up alphabetically. Undergraduate is what you're looking for. So have a look at those and it will tell you on that grade, grade requirements they want. Okay, for the entry requirements. It might specify if they want a grade B or an 8. 7 or 8 in GCSE Maths or English or something for specific topics, not all of them.

And then have a look at the modules. So have a look to see what you'll be studying each of those three or four years because university courses do change slightly. They might have the same title, but the content might change. Okay, so make sure you're signing up for the right, the right degree. Okay, my son's done two and he chose the wrong one.

He just looked at the title and then hated it. So you don't want to be in that boat. So, start a list of the universities you'd like to go to. Be a bit of a geek, get yourself a nice spreadsheet. University, entry requirements, what do you want to study? Okay, and, and, you know, from a work experience sort of background, what would be useful for you to do over the summer that would help you get more of an insight into that particular type of work?

Because once you then decide what it is you want to do over that summer after GCSEs, you can do it GCSEs, from sort of year 12, when you finish your year 12 exams. Over that summer, it's also good to have a look at the preparation and everything is on UCAS. Okay, UCAS is really UCAS. com. Is it com or ac.uk?

Anyway, UCAS. We'll then talk to you about personal statements. So, everybody who applies to university has to write a personal statement. Now, this is where the issues start because this is why I say we're over the summer of year 12 because once you hit year 13, you're off and running on your studies again.

You don't have the time to spend. Research in universities and trying to create a personal statement because honestly, it takes up so much time. It can take weeks and weeks and weeks. So do rough copies over the summer and it is basically, it's 47 lines of you. Why do you want to do this degree? What have you got that is going to be useful?

What, how have your studies helped you that to make this decision you want to do this degree? And where do you want this degree to take you? All right. You literally have 47 lines to put all of that in place. And when you apply to UCAS those 47 lines that you've written, you copy and paste it and it has to fit in a box.

So if it doesn't fit in the box, you, you will have to amend it. The secret is short and sweet and to the point.

Ashley: What kind

of things that they put in there that may make, you know, make them stand out? Because, you know, the people that read these personal statements, and to be fair, I was listening, I was listening to not listening, reading something the other day and you said, I'm a uni admin officer and I've never read a personal statement in my life.

And I wanted to cry because I know how many hours some of these kids spend. And actually the personal statement for me is something that stands them out above the others. So what kind of things they put in there that is, that is going to stand them out from You know, the 500 other people that are applying for this course.

Anna: The main thing is

passion. Okay. It's, it's good to split it up into about five paragraphs. And the first one, I always say, it's your passion. Tell them how passionate you are about the subject. Why do you want to do it? What ignited that flame in you in the first place? Okay. Then your studies have affected your learning.

What have you learned about? What particular things did you do in one of your tutorials that, again, ignited that passion in you. What have you done individually? Have you read books? Have you watched I don't know, autobiographies, whatever, that are related to that particular subject? If it's law, is there something that's been going on recently in the news that has caught, grabbed your attention and you've wanted to explore it further?

Put that in. Then, most importantly, work experience. It can be difficult to find work experience, I know, but if you can find something that is related. To what you want to go and do in the future. And you can actually write about it and don't forget, it's only a little paragraph. You know, you're not going to write more on the piece.

It's just a little paragraph to show the students that you have researched this. You've got up off your bum and you've gone to that place for two weeks. It only needs to be about two weeks and you've learned. More there that will then help with your studies, but it would also give you an insight into what you want to do at university and then where you want all of this and your degree to take you.

Okay, so it's mainly about the passion and what you have done of your own, about your own research into the subject.

Ashley: And I think that's really interesting. And, and work experience, you know, not everybody, and certainly I know some of the schools are not doing work experience. Some of the colleges are not doing work experience.

It's getting less and less now. But what I would say to you is, as a parent is encourage, well one, absolutely rinse your contacts. If you have got contacts in that field, rinse them for your kids, because why not? However, what I would say to you is, do not do it on their behalf, because employers are not interested in that.

So for instance, I'll give you an example. I've got two friends, one who is a lawyer, one who is a barrister. And I said to I did an introductory do you know? Now I never say can you, I always go, do you know? Erin is looking for this. Do you know if there's any experiences? And then what I would do is hand that over.

And, and Erin has done that in two levels and she's, she's done exactly the same. She's gone and she's gone, you know, to the office and she's looked at how that has worked out. And then she said, I'd like to see the other side of it. So she, she gets in touch with this friend who's barrister, who she knows a little bit and just says, I'm just wondering if you know, this is my experience so far, I'd like a little bit more.

Is there anybody, you know, that would mind me shadowing them for the day? And immediately, because we love to be thought of as mentors. We love to be helping, don't we? It's humans. And, and immediately. The answer is yes, of course, come with me, come to the office, come and shadow me in court. You know, so use your contacts as a parent, but get them to do the legwork because it's really important.

If I'd have just asked on her behalf and said it all up, they'd have probably said no because they're not, they're looking for initiative and that is what the personal statement will be looking for. So, yeah. I think the other thing as well is don't be shy in their experiences, getting them to put their experiences.

So they might not have done work experience, but maybe they've gone. I know some of our students went to Borneo and did with some of our mates who were teachers and they, you know, helped build a school, putting that kind of thing.

Anna: And

so what they want is that, that you are going to cope with living on your own, studying on your own. And basically surviving.

So have you got good communication skills? Can you interact with other people? Can you take a bit of criticism? Because you are going to get that at some point from somebody. Are you resilient? Are you going to be resilient? You know, can you cope? Are you going to be a fabulous student and are you going to blossom while you are there?

Because of course what they don't want is for people who are sort of on the edge, like borderline, yeah, they're okay, we'll take them. But then they don't want that university experience to be negative. They want those students to come out of themselves. And if they see a little bit of that in the personal statement.

Then they know that they're going to thrive because that's what it's all about. They want them to develop and love the subject that they go in there to study. And what you're saying about the work experience bit is independence is massive. And I know as parents we're trying, not protect them, but try and do things for them.

So, you know, it's like we're on a time scale. They've got to do this by the end of the week. Kids are not, they're laid back. However, what I would say is get them to use a phone to ring somebody they do not know. That they know of. Through family, friends, but that they don't know because it's just making that step of actually, oh my God, I've gotta speak to somebody.

I don't know who they are. What are they gonna be Like, what if they mean no, it's just like speaking to somebody else. But also, like you say, when that other end of the, that person on the other end is positive. Then, you know, your child is going to think, oh my God, that was so easy. And it gives them such a boost that they, they know it empower them massive and make them feel like they can conquer the world on their own, which let's be honest, they probably can.

So it is good for them. And all this experience is fabulous on that personal statement. However, I will say one thing that. In 28 years, I've only ever seen two personal statements that were spot on and brilliant, the first draft. So you could do anything from one to about 16. All right, so that's how many times you could possibly redraft your personal statement.

Don't be disheartened. Teachers and other people are trying to minimize it, but make it more powerful and success and to sell you as best they can so that you've got that opportunity to go to uni and don't hang on, not plagiarize. So do not look at other people. There's some fantastic websites. Student is brilliant.

You can have a look on there where you can see other people's personal statements, so don't copy and paste because they do actually have. a scanning system where they can tell. Only once has that ever happened. But they do allow, I think it's up to 20%, you could actually have similar to somebody else.

Because I think all students who are studying, I don't know, A level biology with the same exam board, they're all going to be taught the same things. They're all going to write about the same things. Yeah. So there is a little degree there too.

Ashley: And I guess, don't be afraid of getting the kids to ask other people as well.

You know, go into school, get them to ask the teachers to read over it. Is there anything that you think is missing? You know, but remember, it's 47 lines, as Anna says.

Anna: But it's yours, you

know,

it's not personal. So, if you don't agree with the teacher, say I really appreciate your advice. And I want to do this.

Ashley: So they apply. What's the timeline? Can you tell us like succinctly what's the timeline? So they, they apply, then what happens next? When do they normally apply for

university?

Anna: Right, so what happens is in year 13, it's the October time. Well, I say October time. Go back to school September time. The, gosh I've forgotten the dates, it's October, early October is the deadline for medicine and veterinary work.

Okay, so if that's what you want to do, it's even more important that you do your personal statement over the summer. Once those people have their deadline is gone, the head of sixth form or teachers or whoever's in charge will then concentrate on the others. And I think the deadline now has been extended, I think it's the end of January or January 5th.

20th, something like that. So it is better if you get your application in early. So as soon as those medical students pass their deadline, make sure you're ready. Make sure you're sending it to your teachers so they can have a look at it because of course they'll have however many are in the sixth form.

They've got to read all of them. They've got to go through it with you. They've got to upload it on to CATS and it's then got to be sent along with payment. There is payment to as well. And so, the quicker you get in, I suppose, the more opportunity you have, because it will then get busier and busier.

Just need to say that you can't actually wait and apply February March time. I went to a meeting in the University of South Wales not so long ago and there was a fabulous group of people. And she said you can apply as late as you like. Obviously, it's not a good idea, but you can still get places. But I would aim for the week before Christmas.

So when the schools close for Christmas break, make sure your personal statement has been submitted. Okay, because then if there are any issues, it gives you time to correct them.

Ashley: And, and so what we're saying is make sure you get in before Father Christmas arrives.

Anna: Yes, but also you know, you might hear within three or four days that you've got a place.

So, you might have a conditional which means you have to reach certain conditions. So, you have to get some of the A's, B's, C's or A level to accept this place. You can only choose five universities. Okay, you send the one personal statement to those five. It's medicine, you only have four. So if you're doing medicine, you have to write that one personal statement and your fifth option is going to be a medically related degree.

So biomedical sciences or something like that. Okay, because don't forget if you don't get accepted for medicine, which is incredibly, incredibly competitive. It's not the end of the world. That's another thing. It is not the end of the world. If you fall down a bit, it's not the end of the world. You can always get back up and start again.

This is why I say plan and have a plan B because then if you do. Not get into medical school, for example, you do your biomedical sciences, that's fine because you become a graduate of biomedical sciences and then you're graduate qualification in medicine. Brilliant. Okay, so there's always,

always options.

Ashley: So, so, okay, so that's universities. What's the alternative, Anna? Because uni's not for everybody and also, you know, we don't want our kids to be racking up huge bills if, you know, they're not completely sure that this is what they want to do.

Anna: No, and that's where the work experience is really important. For those who are sort of not sure if they want to go down academic or not, there's nothing wrong with just getting a job saying, you know what, I'm going to hang fire for two years while I get a job and work out what it is I want to do.

Yes, I will pay mum and dad a bit of you know, housekeeping but you're going to have money in your pocket.

Ashley: Do you know what I'll say to you as well is that I've had my nephew, my sister, they all did this. They got a job call center in a retail. They did all this. And actually what it really did was go, I'm not doing that for the rest of my life.

Do you know? And I think it really did them well because they didn't have any idea. One has gone off to do music management at universities in the last year. Amazing. My sister, she, she started training as a nurse when she was 21. She spent, you know, she spent a good kind of, I would say, she did, she did a bit, did she go to college?

I think she did, I don't know. Hopefully she's not listening. But after she went from job to job and she just didn't like it, she wasn't sure, she liked it initially and then

thought, God, no, I couldn't do this for the rest of life. And it made her really think, okay, what do I want to do? She started to do it.

And she's still a nurse now, you know, so it doesn't mean that, and also as well, what I will say to you is, there is plenty of kids out there, plenty of people out there that we've all started in one job and then we've changed to something else, and we can do that now, we have the luxury now to do that.

Anna: So the nice

thing is that I mean, I went to university at 35 because you sort of find jobs and you think, well, yeah, it's great and I'm good at it, but does it satisfy me?

No, not really. So it's nice to find out what you do. But both universities and employers prefer people who are experienced, especially universities. If you go at about 22, 23, they know that you're not going to drop out because this is what you've had time. to think about, maybe experience that you actually do want to do this degree.

I think now I've done this job, like I say, for 28 years 30 is the new 20, in as much as It's taking people until they're about 30 to realise what it is they actually want to do. Even if they've got the degree, they can't find work in it, so they just get a job, and then they think, well, actually, hang on, what am I doing?

And they reassess at 30. But there are those who, like we said, are not academic, they want to, they can do the work, which is great, just go and find a job. Or they could consider apprenticeships. So you could get your normal, straightforward, basic apprenticeship. You could do when you're 16 in the more practical subjects like admin, there's playing a role in the rest of it, which is really practical work for some students who, yes, it might be, you know, have all their GCSE, they just don't want to go and study further.

So let's go and do an apprenticeship. Level two, levels one and two in the college, level three with an employer. Once you've got level three, you become self-employed and,

you know, the

world's your oyster. But if you have got your A levels and you think, oh, I don't know what I want to do. I'll go and get a job in Tesco for the summer.

I'm still not sure. I'm not going to apply to university because there's degree apprenticeships, which I've known about for a while, but they are becoming more and more popular. And as a parent and a student, they're fabulous because you don't have any fees to pay. So what it does, it is. As it says on the tin, it is a degree and it is an apprenticeship.

So you work for somebody in a particular field that interests you, but you also study for a degree at the same time. You marry the two together. So it's a bit like the old-fashioned stuff we used to do in the seventies. You won't remember, but in the seventies, when I was little people would actually do youth opportunities and stuff like that.

And they would go and do the degree uh, the apprenticeship. But of course they didn't have the academic background, but then those who were doing the academic stuff didn't have the practical background. So this is what this is now, it's linking the two together and it's absolutely brilliant. Because like I say, you go to university, you're also going to university.

Still work for an employer. So you're learning the important transferable skills, but you're also getting a degree. So when you finish a degree, that company you've been working for three or four years might take you on. But then you've also got the, those four years of experience to put on a CV to offer your next employer.

And you also get paid while you're doing this. So you might get paid anything between, I've seen 12,000 and I've seen 22,000. You know, so that's the salary we're getting. Studying. Yeah.

Ashley: And your first and first out. First job out the bag kind of thing, which is brilliant. Yeah. So that's kind of separate.

So we know there's apprenticeships out there where you might get minimum wage, but they're gonna teach you on the job. So like one of my nephews, he's got a joiner apprenticeship, which is great 'cause he'll get qualification and he's getting paid now. He is not getting paid Mega, but the motivation is once he finishes the college part. Once he gets those qualifications, his wages will go up. So amazing. Those kids who, who learn in a more practical manner. This is separate. This is

kind of, you're gonna get a degree and you're gonna get paid. And actually I've got a client who has just won a really amazing degree apprenticeship.

And they're getting 28, 000. I mean, 28, 000 for your first job, amazing. But they also have a degree from a top university. So that is, you know, so I think, I think for me, it's like, if you want that academic career, it is. And we're not paying university fees. How amazing is that? And so where would they find something like that, Anna?

Anna: So again, they're just coming, you know, a couple of years ago when I was still in Abu Dhabi, I could see that they were coming through. So it's mainly looking on the university websites. And it will come up, or you can look at the government gov.uk website and just type in degree apprenticeships.

And it will come up there. Okay, and you'll have a look, but it's also worth I mean a young lad that I've been speaking to recently. He was in a dilemma, he's working in Tesco, he's 19 and he said, well, I want to go to university but I don't want all that expense and mum and dad, you know, can't really afford to help me like that.

So I said, well, what do? And he said, well, I want to do quantity surveying. I said, right, well, have you sort of thought about it? degree apprenticeship. And he said, well, not really. I don't know anything about it. So I was lucky enough that to work with one of my colleagues who, who works with employers, she links with employers.

And I messaged and I said, look, have we got any quantity surveyors in Cardiff, South Wales, who wants to take anybody on? And she found a vacancy. And this company actually wanted a qualified quantity surveyor. And they said, well, send us his CV. So I took a fabulous CV with him and we'll consider it.

And he went for an interview and they said, well, we'll see, you know, we'll give him another interview in April. So he thought, Oh, it's a long time. Is it beginning of April to end of April? Is there anybody else? So we looked at other places. Then they got back to him before the end of April and said, well, can you come for a second interview, which he did?

And they discussed that he would probably go on placement for one week. And I said to his mum, I said, well, how does he feel about that? She said, Oh my God, he's really up for it. He wants to go. And he heard two days ago that he has got the

place with this company to work. And he's also, he's already applied to the University of South Wales for the third-degree apprenticeship.

So he's, because he's got his, degree apprenticeship sorted. And he managed to find himself a placement. Now universities do have links with employers, so they'll help you. But this has worked out really well for this lad. And he's going to stick in his job in Tesco's until September. And then So, you know, that is really brilliant.

Ashley: And

you know, there's lots of career's advice. I think those who are attached to schools, you know, they usually provide, they usually bring in outsiders like yourself that bring out in outsiders to give you this advice. So ask there because there will be links. But I know that standalone six farmers, their careers advice, how they really work hard in building those connections with local companies or companies that you can do that.

Anna, as we finish, quick question, and I'm going to probably put you on the spot about this. Okay, now she's like uh, um, do you, is there, do you offer, now obviously this is a paid service, but do you offer a service or do you know of people that offer a service where they either help with personal statements or they help with that application for that application process because I know sometimes some parents really kind of a little bit worried about, are they doing it right? Are they getting the right information? You know, and, and because, you know, when you're at a primary, you stood at the gates, you know, the teachers, you know, all the parents, when they go to high school, you're lucky if you know their mates, but when they get really have contact with, you know, with the teachers, you might have a one, you know, a 20 minute well, a five minute meeting with each subject once a year, you know, Is that a service that is out there?

Is that service that people provide?

Anna: If, you know, there are websites, obviously, there's Careers. I've been looking and doing research. Careers England. I don't know a massive amount about English careers. I'm really, really sorry. I apologize. National Careers is always good. Their website is fabulous. Careers Scotland is a good one to look at.

Careers Wales, obviously. But I can always help with personal statements. I can help with options, GCSE, A levels, university, studying abroad, even if they don't

know what they want to do, that's fine. We can spend time assessing what they want to do because there's no point rushing at all. Okay, but look at websites.

Um, there's something called icould.com. I think, which is really good. They have options at 14, 16, 18. Things like if you are in the sixth form like I said, studential.com is the good one to have a look at other people's personal statements. UCAS is brilliant, has everything on there you want. The other one I was thinking of then, oh my gosh, my brain's gone blank.

Prospects.ac.uk is really good because if you go to the career's advice section, it says, what can I do with my degree? Because it's a great degree, but what the heck are you going to do with it when you've got it, you know? And it'll give you options that your degree is directly related and options where your degree would be useful.

And more importantly, skills to go on a CV, because when you want to apply for a job, you want somebody to help with the CV which I can help with as well. But honestly if people are stuck or they're sort of unfocused, whether it's parents or students, just, you know, it helps to get in touch, can always help.

Ashley: Brilliant.

I hope that has been really useful for, for you guys listening because, well, Anna is a wealth of knowledge, as you can hear, but I think sometimes as parents, we kind of, You know, if you've not been through this process yourself, or the chances are if you have, it's been, not been years, it's been years since you've filled out a UK card, reach out and we're going to put all Anna's details and links and some of the Stuff that she's talked about, like I could and student and stuff, I'll put them all.

Or the lovely Chantelle, we'll put all them in the show notes and the transcript because remember, every single podcast we record for inclusivity and because that's the way I learn is we do a transcript. So everything that Anna has said, you can print off as well, or you can have a read on your iPad just to have a look.

Yeah. So we'll put the links there for Anna, so that you can, you know, you can get in touch, or you can always get in touch with me, me and Anna are always in touch. So you know, if you need help, if you want a service like that, that will help you, give you more information, will give you, your student that little bit of comfort or confidence.

Or if it is that they've got no clue what they want to do, speak to Anna, have that chat, get them to have that chat so she can pull out the kind of things that maybe they can do but also the kind of things they should be looking at if they want to bump up that CV because they want to apply for a job, apprenticeship, whatever it is.

Anna: I mean there are, you know, lots of People who can help in your area. It's always worth looking to see who's local, you know, if you want that actual face to face make sure they've sort of got a qualification in careers guidance because that's always handy. But yeah, any, you know, it's good to talk to anybody to get ideas as well.

Ashley: Anna, thank you for joining us today. You've been an absolute mind blower. Lovely to see you. Yes, and you. I can't wait to see you for a little cooch. Yes, so thank you very much. Really appreciate it. And guys, guys and girls and everyone out there, if you need some help, if you need some help to support you as a parent through this process or to support your student through this process, get in touch and we'll put all Anna's links.

Anna, thank you very much. It was lovely to see you today.

Anna: You're welcome. Let's catch up soon.