UCL Remarkable Stories

Season 2 episode 6 - Ashley and her education journey

Transcript

**Gia Lulic**

We are UCL and these are our remarkable stories. I'm Gia Lulic, and I work in the UCL organisational development team. In each episode, I will be in conversations with the UCL guest as they share with us their remarkable stories, experiences and life lessons. In today's episode, I'm excited to be speaking to former actress, current student of neuroscience here at UCL, and sabbatical officer Ashley Slanina-Davies about her fascinating journey as an actress on British drama Hollyoaks and how this experience has led her to find her true purpose. So, before we delve into some deeper conversation, why don't you tell us a little bit about where your acting career started, and how it all began for you.

**Ashley**

And so, well, I started acting when, when I was quite young, and I was part of a youth theatre group in Wigan. And so it's called willpower Youth Theatre. And it's run by to two amazing people, Tim and Caroline, and it's a non-profit company. And so yeah, basically, they run like Saturday classes and Thursday classes, it's all about like, building up kids confidence or giving them you know, somewhere to release their energy. And so I joined that. I really enjoyed it. And then I signed up to an agency which was attached to it, and I did some background work as an extra to earn, you know, pocket money. And, and then I ended up going for an audition, and I got the audition and ended up on Hollyoaks and all of it bizarre, really, I mean, like I did, I did theatre work. Like I'd always done theatre work with the youth theatre but I think that was my first sort of TV position.

**Gia Lulic**

Yeah, what I find so fascinating with your story is that you kind of just fell into the whole thing, but ended up being on there for over 10 years. Yeah. So I guess the first question in relation to that is, how has growing up kind of unusual way? Do you feel like that's shaped your personal development?

**Ashley**

Um, yeah, I mean, definitely, I was always quite a, I really want to use the word precocious. Because I feel like that has such you know, negative connotations. But I was definitely quite old before my time anyway. And then I think with something like that, you just get a lot of extra responsibility, like really quite young. And so I've ended up growing up quite fast. And then there are other things that it shaped like ways in which it shapes you. So you get exposed to quite a lot. And so for example, like I worked with a lot of different charities, and seeing that side of things, and I don't think that most people are exposed to that kind of stuff until they're quite a bit older. So it shapes the way that you start to think about the world. Definitely. I was very fortunate in that. When, when I was sort of most well-known it was before social media was popular. So I kind of escaped all of that, which I'm so grateful for.

**Gia Lulic**

I think what is significant as well with you is it sounds like a lot of the themes that you explored on the show also impacted your daily life, with the charities that you were involved in and with all the other side stuff that you're involved with.

**Ashley**

Yeah, I think, I think part of that is probably to do with, like, what got me interested in acting in the first place. So like, you know, I love people, I think people are great. They're incredibly interesting. The way that their mind works is fascinating. And how people cope with things is, is you know, again, incredibly fascinating. So, so I think that the, because of what acting means to me, and in fact, are almost all forms of like creative art, what they mean, to me as an individual means that I was always going to be interested in that side of things. And so, you know, part of it is on part of that seems like understanding people and then just communicating that understanding. So you're just the thing through which a story is told, and, and what I was always attempting to try and do with that is to communicate to people who might not necessarily understand things from another person's point of view are, you know, what life experiences feel like to certain people is communicate that to a broader audience. And, you know, sort of cause world peace through understanding of others and empathy. So that was why I was always drawn to sort of working with charities and having that be part of like, intrinsically the way that I was living my life, if that makes sense.

**Gia Lulic**

Yeah, definitely. And I think just the way you see the whole experience is maybe quite unique, you see it on a very holistic sort of way, and thinking about how it's going to make an impact, as opposed to how are you going to better yourself as an actress, which I think is quite a unique way for an actress to see this whole experience? Or is it unique? Or is this how most actors see they roll?

**Ashley**

I mean, I can't really speak for, for, for all actors, people have like, really, really varying motivations. You know, some people do it, because it's like, the most fun job in the world and like to them that that's, you know, the motivation and driving factor. I wouldn't say that it's a unique way to look at things. I think that's why different people are drawn to different, you know, like genres. So some people are drawn to comedy, because they just love making people laugh. So not only the sort of personal enjoyment of being silly, and what that kind of a set environment can be like, like, don't get me wrong, it can be terrible. But, but comedy sets can be really, really fun. And, but oftentimes, there is that, you know, you're new, sort of adding a bit of joy to people's lives. So, it, I wouldn't say that it's particularly unique in terms of like a motivator, I think there's just different facets to what people might find that being the particular motivation, if that makes sense. And because I don't know this, it's a bit like, feel like, like almost anything, you know, I'm interested in, like, communication and like people understanding each other, I'm interested in mental health, that's what I want to study and dedicate my life to, but other people are interested in, like environmental issues. And so they'll do that. And, and it's a similar sort of thing like within the industry, there'll be a particular point which you might be more interested in, and a message which you want to convey within that.

**Gia Lulic**

I wonder whether it was a fun experience for you because for those people that are aspiring to be an actor, you know, it is that motivation of it's going to be amazing and fun and glamorous. How would you describe the experience, it’s fun?

**Ashley**

I think I got more and more distracted by the word glamorous, and I was thinking of like, not just being on different sets, which can be ridiculously unglamorous, but also during the whole lockdown period and see like pictures of friends who've made like sound booths out of wardrobes and duvets and it's like, this is my working day now. I live in a cupboard trying to soundproof with clothes and blankets. And I don't know, you know, like, the other thing that everyone was joking about during Coronavirus, was like, you know, the, the lifestyle of being an actor because the reality is, you know, the there is a lot of time that you spend unemployed, and we're looking for work and being rejected. And so when everyone else went into lockdown, it was like, right, okay, rest of the world. Welcome to an actor's life. You've got to figure out things to do when there is nothing to do.

**Gia Lulic**

Wow. Oh, yeah.

**Ashley**

No, I don't mean to make light of the situation. But it's

**Gia Lulic**

what I think we have to at this point.

**Ashley**

No, it's hard. It is hard. Like there are aspects which have fun, you get to be really creative. It doesn't really matter what area you work in. So you know, like, in my sister has a theatre company, and they do a lot of like developmental stuff. And they do it in sometimes co-production with audiences, which is really fun and really different. But she also has the struggles of like, Okay, well, I don't just want to do theatre work, I want to do TV work. And then you know, it's like, hitting your head against a brick wall, like trying to get an audition or trying to get someone to see you not in the role that you've previously been in.

**Gia Lulic**

So just to address another cliché about actors, and I wanted to know what your personal experience was. A lot of people suspect that for some reason, actors have a low self-esteem. And I wondered whether your overall experience you feel has built up your self-esteem and your confidence and your belief in what's possible for you.

**Ashley**

I, again, I really can't answer for all actors. I mean, in terms of actors having low self-esteem, you're asking people to pay you to pretend to be a different person. So I don't know if that says something. You have to get used to a lot of direction. And so you know, you might feel really, really strongly that you're giving a great performance, and you're doing something really authentically within like, you know, a particular scene. And then you have a director come over, and you get actors, directors, and directors, which really aren't for actors. And an actor's director will know how to give you a note, which is basically a way to, you know, amend your performance in a way, which doesn't sort of crush your soul. In the particular, particularly dramatic performance, so you've just, you know, spent five minutes like screaming and crying, and then they come back, and they're like, yeah, could you just, could you just give me a bit more emotion? Like, I want to feel it? I don't feel it. And you're like, Okay, well, I did. So, so you have to get used to that, which does take a certain kind of resilience.

**Gia Lulic**

I also want to say Ashley, being a teenager is such a confusing time as it is in terms of trying to work out who you are and what you're going to be doing. Did you ever feel like you had an identity crisis between this very loaded character at times that you were playing? And I've seen some of the scenes and I honestly, don't think you give yourself enough credit, because I don't think everybody can do that. And I don't, I definitely don't think it's for everybody. But to be at that young, confusing time in your life, and also trying to play these very emotionally loaded scenes in front of a camera. Did you ever feel like you didn't have a grasp on your identity?

**Ashley**

Um, no, not really. I think maybe I'm just one of those people who has, like, many identity crises, like constantly. So I don't think there was ever anything to do with like, the stories are acting, which, which influenced that I think it was just like I had it already grown up like quite, quite quickly. And I was I was fairly mature from a young age. And so had some sort of fundamental truths about myself, which I always stuck to. And then everything else is like, you know, even now you have a every so often what on earth am I doing with my life? And so I think it was just like, a series of those, but those were just part and parcel of life in general, nothing specific to do with acting, I don't think. Thankfully, those were very nice comments.

**Gia Lulic**

Yeah, I think there is something to the fact that no, not everybody gets to do that job. I think it does take a special kind of personality and ability also, to get to that stage and to remain there for as long as you have. So just to go back to all the emotional scenes that you did throughout the years, and there was so many, so there was teenage pregnancy, there was domestic abuse, which I think is a particularly loaded one, just because it is one of those things that a lot of people are dealing with and not talking about, um, was there like an allocated person that you could talk to about what you were experiencing during that time? Or was it just kind of whoever was there to offer the support?

**Ashley**

um, No, there wasn't an allocated person. And I think that might be one of the things which the show itself has changed. And because I would say that that's maybe, maybe one of the bigger flaws, and you know, it's a, it's a great place to work, everyone is really supportive. And if you actively turn to someone for help, you know, there are there are people there, and they will put you in touch with someone, so they'll put you in touch with like a counsellor. But you have to sort of take that on yourself and say, Oh, I think I might need to speak to someone. But the show's cast is predominantly young. There were a lot of people who were, you know, straight out of school, straight out of college, or straight out of drama school, if they'd gone to drama school. You know, price, probably majority under like 25, might have shifted a bit now, because there are quite a few cast members that have been in there longer. And I think that perhaps some of that support was missing. But yeah, I do think it's difficult. It's a bit like a university experience, you know, if you've moved out of home for the first time, which was the reality for a lot of cast members, and you're living in this strange city, and then you put on TV, and then people know who you are, and you're getting a lot of attention, but you have no idea like, where to live or who to live with. And this is the first time that you've had like real responsibility. Like, that's the situation for a lot of people that go into that show. And so I think that there is a greater duty of care that you would expect from them, as opposed to perhaps other places of work and other sort of acting industries. And, you know, but it's a thing across everywhere, like, you get the same thing with like dancers that go into the West End, you know?

**Gia Lulic**

And just to that point, and I want to hear more about how you got to doing neuroscience at UCL, because that's, for me a really interesting journey as well, that kind of ran parallel to the acting, which, you know, saw you going into so much charity work, it seems like a seamless way to get to where you are now, I wanted, just before we go to that, whether you look at your experience and having responsibilities so young, whether you feel like you've missed out on a semi kind of mundane life that, you know, are not mundane, or just a kind of normal life, whatever normal means.

**Ashley**

Um, it's a difficult one, actually, because my instinct is to go “No, no, not at all”. Um, but there are probably things which, which I did miss out on and didn't realise at the time. And, and I think that's to do maybe with like, the relationships that you form, when you're that age, like a lot of people, their best friends are the people that they met in college, or the people that they met in their first job, are the people that they met at university. And you don't really have that same experience. But you can I, you know, this does nothing stop that from happening. So, I think maybe, maybe that will be the thing that I missed out on. I'm moving away from friends and family. I'm like, losing touch with people from high school. And then not really being in a position where I was like, on the same page as other actors in the show, because I was a little bit younger. And so not making those bonds. I think that will be like the main thing.

**Gia Lulic**

And did the fame aspect ever limit you in any way in terms of like, you'll go out for drinks and you'll be like, you know, Ashley, you must behave while everyone else is going crazy or something like that.

**Ashley**

I'm quite, I'm quite lucky in that. I'm quite boring person anyway. And so, yeah, I never I never quite had that. And again, we didn't have social media really. So. So I avoided like, you know, people putting things on like social media. And you always knew, like, if you were being watched, because there will be like paparazzi outside and they weren't particularly subtle. But it tended to have quite a good relationship with them. So they would like leave before the end of the evening. A few would stick around, but you know, whatever. So no, I'd say the only limitations that I had were ones which I've put on myself. Still thinking that I couldn't do something because someone might be watching or someone will be giving, like, you know, extra attention to what I was doing. And so feeling that it will be a bit inappropriate for me to do that or not wanting to mess up when people were watching. And then the only time where I'd say, it got in the way, would probably be the instances. So my partner at the time, like, had two younger sisters, and they were young, like, you know, four. And so we used to look after them a lot. So they would stay at ours, and we'd take them out for the weekend. And so we'd essentially be trying to have like a family meal out, and people would like, sort of get in the way, like when I was trying to take them to the toilet, and things like that. And you know, when you're like, I don't mind at all. And, you know, like stopping for photos having a chat. I don't mind people joining us, like, on our table for drinks or whatever. But I felt like because they were kids, that was a bit inappropriate. Oh, oh, I tell you what I did find intimidating. Because I'm bout the same age as Emma Watson, I think I might be slightly older than her. But I remember there was a countdown, and in the newspapers for when she turned 16. And was, you know, the legal to have sex with. And I remember that making me even though you know, absolutely nothing to do with me. But it was something about the fact that she was my age. And being aware that that might be how the world sees you. That That wasn't a nice experience, I don't think.

**Gia Lulic**

Absolutely. And that's a whole other thing, like actually being an electrician, I in a place like the UK, because I have heard I'm not sure whether this is true. And you can probably testify. But the laws for paparazzi are not very, they're not very strict. So I don't know if they changed at some point. But I understand that, at some point in time, at least, you were able to just follow people around and photograph them without any kind of consequences. So moving on to where you are now, just wondering, where your fascination with neuroscience started, how it's tied to your experience. As an actor, could you tell us about that?

**Ashley**

And, yeah, I can try. I people always think that they're like these two incredibly, different things. And just to me, they're not, they're not at all. And they probably come from this, you know, fascination with people that are that I sort of mentioned earlier. And I think that that's maybe just an intrinsic part of who I am. But maybe also, you know, a product of where I was brought up. So, like I'm from I'm from Wigan, or just north of Wigan, and Wigan’s, quite diverse. Well, it it's not, it's mainly white, there is an Asian community. But it's diverse in terms of like, social class and life experiences. And so, because a lot of the schools mixed, makes it like everybody who lives in Wigan, so you sort of see lots of different life experiences and how they affect people differently. And so I was always like, interested in that, which was where acting came from, because you don't just like to see different life experiences and how they affect people like you see how they affect people. And so you see people struggling. And you see how some people just don't understand that. And so that was part of, of acting, thinking that, Oh, well, if everyone just understood these things, then people one wouldn't be ashamed to struggle to have mental health difficulties. But to then we'd all know how to create supportive environments to be able to take quite some of the distress away. And so it was this feeling that all you needed to do was to make sure that everybody knew that and then it was through acting and reading. Well, actually, I skipped a bit, So I was obsessed at around about like, maybe it was like 12 or 13 with neuroscience, because that was when I discovered the term neuroscience. And I like dunno, it's probably like Ask Jeeves at the time search about where I was good for neuroscience. And it's like UCL, that had that in the back of my mind. And then obviously went off and was acting. And that's what I was trying to do with acting. And it was during that process that I was like, Oh, we, we don't actually know, as much as I thought we knew about people's experiences, like how different people perceive the world, what effect that has on the way that they make decisions, what decisions they're able to make. And so then, yeah, I sort of came back to this idea of, well, you know, I'll stick with acting whilst it's there. But as soon as it's not there, I'll study this, like, this is the thing that I want to do. I want to understand this. I want to play my part in alleviating unnecessary suffering, because I do think that, you know, not having appropriate support and treatments for different neuropsychiatric disorders is something which is preventable. I think that that's unnecessary suffering that people go through. So yeah, so that was like, the motivating factor. And I know always kind of has been, and so when, when I stopped acting, it was natural that I was like, Okay, well, the aim was neuroscience at UCL. So we'll, we'll aim for that. And we'll see what happens. I didn't expect to end up here. And there was like, a huge crisis of confidence. And I got here, you were asking about, you know, a sort of existential crisis when I was acting, no, I think that happened when I arrived at UCL. And, yeah, I actually remember my dad sent me, he sent me a newspaper article from when I'd gone and, you know, picked up my GCSE results. Because I, you know, I was having a panic out, like, what am I doing here, I can't do this work, I shouldn't be here. And that article was like, you know, local actress picks up GCSEs. And then in the interview, had said, that this is what I wanted. Yeah, and so that was like, these little, just keep going.

**Gia Lulic**

It's so interesting that, to me that, you know, for someone like me, going to university is such a mundane thing. And obviously, the experience, you've had something that's so surreal, and kind of out of reach. And then for you, it was kind of the other way around, where you felt like this is some, you know, some strange world that you were, were not a part of, or at the very least you went headed there. I wonder, was there a moment of, did you have like an epiphany, and you thought, I'm gonna go down this road? Or was it something that very gradually, you came to realise? Or did you in the middle of a scene or something you were like, this is what's up? This is what I'm gonna aim for.

**Ashley**

Um, it was always there. And, you know, I'd say, probably when I was a child, what are my dreams? They were dream number one, be prime minister, because obviously, you know, you have to be right at the top if you're going to stop people from suffering, you got to be calling all the shots. So I was like, Okay, well, I'll be prime minister, I'll just tell people what to do. And then I can make everyone be happy that way. I think that was probably about a, you know, have a have a reasonable goal. So yeah, I think that, you know, child dream number one was, was be prime minister. And, you know, like, leave it to me. I'll start out I'll just tell people what to do. And then everyone's gonna be happy. And so I was like, Oh, well, you know, that's a bit that's a bit ridiculous. That's not gonna happen. And then it was, Oh, well, I'll be an actress then. And I'll just communicate things to people and then everyone will understand what's going on. And, and, you know, well, peace. Obviously, that's, that's what's gonna happen. And then I thought, Oh, well, actually, quite a lot of people want to be actresses. So that's, that's maybe not a reasonable goal to have either. So I was like, Okay, well, then I'll go to university. I'll try and get into a university and I'll study people, and I'll try and understand what the issues are, and then solve them that way. And so that was when I first thought about going to university, I probably would have been, I don't know, like just into high school. And then actually, lo and behold, I became an actress instead. And so I acted, and then the step to sort of go back to university was, I'll go back to school was like a huge… Yeah, it took a lot of convincing myself that I was able to do it, took a lot of, you know, that I was going to be listened to in terms of like, my application would even be looked at. I didn't have any qualifications. So I went a bit qualification crazy. I, yeah, I was like, well, I no idea how I was going to support myself for one. So I was like, Well, I'm gonna have to have a job. And then I was like, Well, what kind of job Can I have? And I was like, I can't get a job because I don't have any qualifications. And so then that was when I trained in like yoga, I trained in physical therapy. As a personal trainer, and sports massage therapist. This also was like just taking off all of these like, holistic, different qualifications. So I was like, Oh, I can get some sort of a job. And then I did that for a year whilst I tried to figure out okay, how do I get the qualifications that I actually need to apply to UCL, which is difficult because I couldn't find anything that would accept me, other than an access course. And UCL or the course that I do at UCL doesn't accept access costs, it is an entry route. So that was quite difficult. And, and then, and then there was an option, which is a certificate of higher education at Birkbeck. And so it was like this huge leap of faith of what do I move down to London, and do this course, with the hope that I'll do well enough that UCL will consider me and that I'll actually get in, because I didn't even know if they were gonna look at my application. And so anyway, you know, everything sort of fell into place, let my partner get a job transfer, like he was relocated down to London. And so it was like, right, okay, let's go for it. And so moved down, did the course which, I mean, if anyone is thinking of retraining, the certificate in higher education at Birkbeck is is amazing. The night classes are wonderful. And all of the staff is so supportive. It was a really, really good environment to be in. So yeah, I'd highly recommend that if anyone's thinking of it. But yeah, and then and then I got the UCL. Yeah, which I couldn't have done without everyone who encouraged me and said that it wasn't stupid.

**Gia Lulic**

And how is neuroscience everything you thought it was going to be?

**Ashley**

Everything I thought it was gonna be a more much, much, much more. Neuroscience actually, like means a lot of different things. And it means different things to different people. So if you think you're thinking about neuroscience, you're thinking about like one teeny, weeny tiny aspect of a humongous field. So, so yeah, pretty much within neuroscience, you could study if you obviously, if you're interested in the brain, or the central nervous system, you, you can find it somewhere in some place. And, and that's part of the problem is there's actually too much, which is interesting. And it's sort of picking or trying to pick the bit which you fit into. I don't know if I've done that. Yeah.

**Gia Lulic**

Are you more interested in the scientific sort of medical side of the nervous system? Or are you more interested in kind of the mind body connection thing?

**Ashley**

I guess, Oh, God, can I even describe what I'm interested in? And I guess I'm sort of interested in how people perceive their environment, and how that affects the decisions that they make, or how they make decisions. And so what's the, you know, what are the neural processes which underlie that? So, you know, I think traditionally, it would fall into cognitive neuroscience. And so you'll be looking at things like EEG and things like that. But I'm also interested in systems neuroscience, which is where you would look at specific circuits, and how different circuits interact, and what the connectivity is. So, you know, if you have, like a lesion in one study, or if a particular system isn't working, then what are the effects of that? On the overall, you know, cognitive process and the decisions that people make? But there's also like, I don't know, if, if eventually I will end up in, like, pure neuroscience? Because, like, I'm also epidemiology and, and so, if we go back to like, talking about mental health, you know, it? Well, I guess it's like, mental health and perception and perception of the environment. And so there's a question of, if a person's life experiences sort of skew cognitive processes in a specific way. And if different experiences all intersect, and they might wait, this, you know, differential perception of environments in a specific way. And so it's what those different weightings are and what those intersections are for an individual. And if that bears any relation, in terms of what a person's mental health presentation may be? And, and then what can we do to sort of shift those risk factors, I don't know if any of that makes sense.

**Gia Lulic**

It makes so much sense. And I actually, I'm really interested in psychology, and I think that actually, acting and psychology is such a similar thing, because you're, you're adopting essentially the behaviour of another person. So there has to be that interest in someone else's perspective. And with neuroscience, like you say, there's so many different fields of it, it's literally just a sea of different ways that you can branch out into what would what is your current vision for following your masters,

**Ashley**

and, you know, hopefully a PhD, that will be that will be like the dream. So within that, you know, get to explore, like, like focusing on mental health. So not looking at all the aspects of of neurobiology and brain function, specifically, honing down on what, what's implicated in different neuropsychiatric disorders. And looking at that across different sort of levels of study, in terms of looking both a single neuron and how a neuron behaves, and, and what environmental risk factors there are. So you know, all the way from molecules through to Sociology, so the opportunity to look at that would be amazing. And then you've just got to hope that from that, you, you can find your place, either in science or, or outside of science and academia. So like, for example, working for a charity, and are working in terms of like trying to influence policy and decision making, in ways that like, you know, benefit society. So there's a lot of research, which is made, and it's like, how can we take this research and then translate it for use in people are not in people, like with people, you know, if we know certain things about how, you know, like, child poverty affects developments, all right? Obviously, thinking about current news, and then then, like, what, what policies can we make around that? And why have we not? And what more evidence do we have to put in front of people to make those decisions? You know, so try and translate some of the research in that way.

**Gia Lulic**

It kind of sounds like you're heading for that Prime Minister vote to me.

**Ashley**

Absolutely, no way.

**Gia Lulic**

Just to go back to that, is that why you became a sabbatical officer at UCL?

**Ashley**

I think I was interested in learning, you know, how big organisations work, like how, how slow it is to make policy changes, and why some policy changes which was so, so simple, and will make a huge difference to students, aren't they? Because like I really, really believe in education. And you know, obviously, a university is one kind of education. But I think that all different kinds of education from like, not necessarily formal education apprenticeships, like other forms of learning are incredibly important for individuals. And so it's how do you make that the best like that it can be. And, you know, I also believe that a university especially UCL, like it's hard, it's, it's really hard, and that's fine. But it shouldn't be so hard that like people have been pushed to the brink of what they can cope with. So I think that was part of wanting to understand that why, why are we not doing something about student mental health? Why are we not creating sort of educational frameworks that increase resilience, instead of like, undermining how sort of empowered people feel because they constantly feel like they're failing or not doing you know. So I think that it was kind of that wanting to see, you know, if I could influence that a little bit in terms of just making the whole environment, more supportive, more community focused. And make sure that education is something which is equitable to everyone. That it's not just for, perhaps the people who UCL was originally designed to accommodate. Which is, you know, which is fine. And it's the sad truth, truth of life, the majority of our institutions were built with like, one person in mind. And that person is not the same as the people who come now, you know, that person didn't have a disability, that person wasn't a mature student with kids. That person wasn't female. I know, UCL first to admit females on the same basis as males, whatever. But you know, wasn't at the same time was that?

**Gia Lulic**

I mean it’s such a huge topic isn’t it because you could get into this whole thing politically. To me the study of psychology is studying of people on a micro basis and the study of politics is psychology on a macro basis, so it sounds like it’s all tied together. It sounds like you’re interested in that whole, in everything and how one impacts the other, and making a shift there. In light of that looking back at your life so far and everything you’ve achieved, what would you say you’re most proud of to date?

**Ashley**

Um, I mean, I’m the worst person at replying to people, like I really, really am, but I would say I’m proud of the times when I have been there and when I’ve realised that it’s important for me to show up for someone and I’ve managed to do it. That would what I’m most proud of.

**Gia Lulic**

Mm, that’s a very good one and it shows that, you know at the heart of it, we’re mostly worried about are relationships aren’t we, as opposed to everything else.

**Ashley**

Yeah.

**Gia Lulic**

The last question for you, Ashley, is what would you, and this is the question we ask everybody, what would you tell a younger Ashley?

**Ashley**

Just trust yourself. Who was it that said “it’ll all be alright in the end, and if it’s not alright, it’s not the end”?

**Gia Lulic**

Just to go back to what you said you were most proud of, and you said that it was showing up for someone, I just wanna remind you that you showed up for us today and thank you so much for being so open and candid and letting us take the conversation wherever and um, yeah, thanks for making the time and all the best.

**Ashley**

Aw, thank you, you made it very easy and pleasant. Yeah, thanks.