

## **The Best Thing Today podcast series by Aalto University psychologists.**

Welcome to Aalto! Orientation episode, 2022

**Length of recording:** 00:17:28

Host: Aalto University psychologist Paula Sjöblom

Guest: student at Aalto Maria Karesoja

Narrator [00:00:01]: Aalto University podcast.

Maria [00:00:08]: I would maybe like to just say that even if it feels like sometimes that a Finnish person is not that chatty with you it is not because they don't want to get to know you. It's just because we are built that way. Have to courage to also be active towards Finnish students. Because most likely they will want to get to know you. And get new friends. And also students that have studied in Aalto before, like myself, it might sometimes feel like they already have their friend groups and they don't maybe want to get to know to people. But I'd also dare to say that most of them would always want to welcome a new friend. So. Keep that in mind.

Paula [00:01:04]: Today we are going to talk about what's it like to study masters in Aalto University. And I have a master student here with me in our studio. You are warmly welcome Maria. I am very happy to have you here.

Maria [00:01:22]: Hello from my part as well. Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here. And yes I am Maria. I am a fourth year business student in Aalto. And then I am majoring in information and service management. And in addition to studies I am also quite active in the student community. Even now as a master student still.

Paula [00:01:41]: Thank you. It's very nice to hear to something about yourself. It's interesting for me and also for our listeners. My name is Paula and I am a study psychologist here in Aalto. So Maria. We have had a phone conversation before so I know a little bit about you. I know that you have studied bachelor also in Aalto. How is it different to be a bachelor or a master student? Or is it different.

Maria [00:02:16]: Well for me it's not that different. I am still me. I am still at the same campus. I still have familiar friends. So it's quite similar. But of course the studies are little bit different. Maybe the workload is a bit bigger than it was during bachelors. And professors expect a bit more from you as a master student aswell. And yeah, basically everything with studies is more in depth. You get much deeper into things and kind of see how things are connected to each other. So yeah, that is kind of how it's different study wise. But not too big.

Paula [00:02:53]: So maybe this is something you can look forward to. That there is something that really interest you and choose those courses that you find interesting.

Maria [00:03:02]: For sure. And of course when you have chosen your major you are most likely interested in it. It's so nice to maybe in the bachelors, it's much more in the surface. You hear interesting concepts but you don't get too deep to them. But then at your masters you really see that you gain knowledge about things that you are interested in. And that's kinda the greatest thing.

Paula [00:03:29]: You have been here in bachelors in Aalto. But do you have some friends, do you know somebody that has studied outside of Aalto their bachelors? And how has it been for them?

Maria [00:03:42]: Yeah I have a couple of friends. Of course a lot of people come from outside of Aalto. So it's not only a few people. But what I've heard from my friends who also study business of course that transition might have been more drastic for them. Switching schools and for some even switching countries. So of course it has been an adjustment for them. They have had to adjust to this new environment. But I think what they've told me is that the biggest thing they were looking forward to was to feel the community and get new friendships and feel that they fit in. And I think that they have been able to find that just by being active themselves. But yeah of course there have been some difficulties, might not be the easiest transition. But I think now they have found their place. Hopefully.

Paula [00:04:31]: Nice to hear that. Of course we all have our own backgrounds. So all the changes, they are a bit different to everybody.

Maria [00:04:41]: Yeah exactly.

Paula [00:04:41]: So there are a lot of activities here in campus. And also hobbies. You can do so much here. But how do you find those activities? For example if you start masters studies here in that you haven't studied here before.

Maria [00:05:03]: Well yes, there are so many things to do in Aalto and in Otaniemi. It can actually be even a bit daunting to see how many different things you can do and how we have clubs for everything. Whatever you are interested in, most likely there is some sort of group or society doing what you are interested in. There are a lot of opportunities. Of course some are a bit more for like bachelor students and more for masters. But of course there are places where you can go like regardless what level you are studying. It can be your guild or KY or wherever you study. They might organize some kind of things you can go to but then also just AYY or Aalto community as a whole has a lot to offer.

Paula [00:05:50]: And of course you also have to be a bit active to...

Maria [00:05:58]: For sure. Sometimes there's this misconception that if you are a master student you are career oriented already or you're in your work life or you're just about your studies. And of course for some that might be the case and that's completely fine. But just kinda let people know that it's also possible to be active in your masters. You don't have to be a serious adult just doing school work or work. You can still attend all kinds of events.

Paula [00:06:27]: Yeah. And enjoy student life. As a whole. I think that's important to remember. Make the student life so that it looks like your life. So you already said that some students might be quite work oriented. Their perspective in their master level. But not all? What do you think about that topic?

Maria [00:06:52]: Well as many master students there are, that many different approaches there are how you look at life and what you do during your study years and so forth. A lot of different stories here. But yeah, some people are career oriented already when their bachelors end. Or not even career oriented but they are more in the work life already. But some are not and everything is completely okay. Kind of build your own path. For example for me I have no idea what I want to be doing when I am supposed to graduate in a year or two so. You don't have to know or you don't have to be in the job that you want to do once you graduate. You don't need to know what that might be.

Paula [00:07:41]: There's no rush. That's a good message.

Maria [00:07:44]: Exactly. You have so many years to work after you graduate so just enjoy your student time.

Paula [00:07:55]: That's a good message. Maybe it is also good to talk to other students that what would you like to do when you graduate? And that way there's people in the same stage of life and you don't have to know for sure but something you can wonder together. And talk about in a very wide perspective.

Maria [00:08:25]: Yeah definitely. If you are not certain what you want to do or feel a bit worried about the future it sometimes might feel, or at least I feel that everybody else knows what they are doing and they have it all figured out. But even if it is a cliché I think it's very important to talk about it. That you might have some concerns or you might have these worries about your future. I think people will be grateful that you brought them up. Because most likely you are not the only one thinking that way. And people will really relate to that and will just thank you for bringing it up.

Paula [00:09:08]: I am sure that if someone brings it up they are not the only one. I think it is very nice that you told me and our listeners that still you have a lot of possibilities.

Maria [00:09:25]: I am sure my parents would love to hear this but they don't have to know.

Paula [00:09:25]: Yeah maybe we don't tell about this podcast to them. Yeah. How about international students? Sometimes when they enter Aalto they have a bit different situation.

Maria [00:09:42]: Well yeah, I was talking before I talked to about a couple of my friends who had come from elsewhere. One of them did their bachelors abroad. She is Finnish but I think still kind of, not the same rules but similar things apply to her as for people that are from somewhere else as well. It is a different culture. It is a different student culture. Of course we have to recognize that those are bit different. Like the Finnish culture and then the Finnish student culture. And then both of them are different for people who come from abroad. Maybe what I would like to say to them or what I have heard is that Finns might seem a little bit shy or a little bit cold sometimes. I promise you most of us are not. But it's a cultural thing. Maybe Finnish are in general more quiet than in a lot of other cultures. I would maybe like to just say that even if it feels sometimes that a Finnish person is not that chatty with you it's most likely not because they don't want to get to know you. It's just because we are built that way. Have the courage to also be active towards Finnish students. Because most likely they will want to get to know you. And get new friends. And also

students that have studied in Aalto before, like myself, it might sometimes feel like they already have their friend groups and they don't maybe want to get to know to people. But I'd also dare to say that most of them would always want to welcome a new friend. So. Keep that in mind.

Paula [00:11:23]: Yeah and after these two years that we studied quite a lot remotely, many many students miss their friends and that they don't have enough friends. So even if Finnish people are not that good in small talk, we want to get to know people. I think many Finnish person is very proud if they have friends outside of Finland.

Maria [00:11:46]: Yeah for sure. It is always nice to travel and be able to say I have friends here and from there.

Paula [00:11:54]: Do you have friends from somewhere else?

Maria [00:11:56]: I mean not as much as I'd like to but I do. I have traveled a bit.

Paula [00:12:06]: Nice. Maria, if you were a new student, what would you like to ask me? I am a study psychologist and I am a staff member.

Maria [00:12:18]: I need to try put myself in to the shoes of a starting student but maybe something that would be interesting and something I am not familiar with. Just like what kind of support I can get from school? What kind of resources you have to offer?

Paula [00:12:39]: In Aalto we many services for students but one thing I want to mention and it is a starting point of well being. It's a name that is good to remember. Just put it in Aalto web pages and you will find a lot. So if you want some support for example for your studies so there are people who will help you. It is very easy, there's face to face services and online services. Starting point of well being.

Maria [00:13:13]: Can I ask who are in the starting point of well being? What kind of people I would find in there?

Paula [00:13:16]: Great question. Well us study psychologists. We are there. And then we have also study counselors. Also people from the student health care. And also Aalto

chaplains. Very easy open events where you can just enter and drink a cup of coffee. And talk with the study counselor for a while. If you look for friends or look for hobby that is also a good place to start. So a starting point of well being. Remember that.

Maria [00:13:52]: I need to remember that aswell. And then one another question that popped in to my mind was that if you can give a one piece of an advice for a master student what would that be?

Paula [00:14:08]: Be active. Talk with people. You don't have to participate in everything in the first weeks. You have time, plenty of time. But if you have the time and energy participate in some events and talk with people and be active. And try to make your life look as your own.

Maria [00:14:31]: That's a very good advice.

Paula [00:14:34]: And how about you? The same question.

Maria [00:14:38]: Well kind of related to what you said. Come to campus if you can, if you're interested. You'll soon see so many things that are happening around here. There are weird traditions, some kind of pranks going on. There are so many just as I said random things happening around the campus I assure you don't want to miss. And they make studying much more fun. Because you are in campus and you get to experience those things.

Paula [00:15:12]: One last question to you Maria. I'd like to know and maybe our listeners would like to know what has been the most memorable thing for you as a student so far? And maybe if you think after a few years, what are the things you might remember?

Maria [00:15:34]: Its gonna be very much a cliché but it's going to be the people I met and I've gotten to know. I might remember some things from courses and lectures but it's mostly the interactions with people. Not just kind of the friendships but also these smaller encounters with people that I didn't expect. That would make my student life more rich. What I mean is as I said when you come to campus you get to experience these little moments where you say hi to somebody you have met in class or you might have a quick chat with a professor you never thought you would get to chat to. Also just what's memorable it's the atmosphere. Walking in to the library when it's nice outside. During fall or something. These are all very clichés I know but they are the things that I remember and

not the specific theory from a course. The professors might not like this either but you know.

Paula [00:16:43]: Many times the cliches are true. It comes from the real life. It is nice to hear that. So thank you Maria it has been nice to talk with you and listen to your story as a student here in Aalto.

Maria [00:17:01]: Yeah thanks for having me on my behalf as well.

Paula [00:17:05]: I also want to thank all our listeners. Have a nice time here in Aalto University. And remember to also check our other podcasts.

Narrator [00:17:23]: Aalto University podcast.

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