



First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 5
Cottey College

Episode Transcript: Julia Holmes on “The Leadership Process Begins with Knowing Yourself”

intro music (Not My Business)

Hi my name is Madysen and I'm the host of the Cottey College “This I Believe” podcast. Thank you for joining me today.

applause

For our fifth episode we have Julia Holmes who has come to talk to us about her experiences with leadership. Welcome Julia.

applause

Thank you so much for having me Maddie. I'm so glad I get to be here this week! In this episode I'm going to talk about the “First-Year Writing Seminar’s Five Foundational Principles for Leadership,” focusing on the second principle that says knowing yourself is important to effective leadership. I believe that true leadership begins with self-awareness, as understanding one's own values, strengths, and limitations provides the foundation for leading with integrity, making thoughtful decisions, and supporting others authentically.

transition woosh fade into background music (Midnight Mass)

Before coming to Cottey, I spent two years at Virginia Commonwealth University. It was my first time moving far from home, and my biggest worry was that I wouldn't make any friends. I wasn't sure of myself and although I didn't realize it at the time, I didn't know who I was outside of my friendships. I relied on others to understand myself. At VCU, I had three roommates: Ili, Maggi, and Jen. For the sake of this story I'm going to focus on my relationship with Maggi. As soon as I met her I wanted to be her friend. She is confident, assertive and funny. I wanted to be like her. We quickly became close friends and over the two years that I knew her she was the closest friend I've ever had.

Around the start of my second year in Richmond, I noticed I was starting to rely too much on Maggi, for my sense of identity. I started to adjust my values, fears, and even goals to match hers without really noticing. During my second year, things changed. I had a moment of panic, withdrew from my courses, and stayed in Richmond while I figured things out. With more time to myself I had to consider who I was outside of that relationship.

Midnight Mass fade out

Aurora starts

Towards the end of my time in Richmond our friend group crumbled. Maggi shared private information Ili had told her in confidence, and soon, the whole friend group unraveled. I discovered that Maggi had been stirring up lies and causing issues between all of us for most of our friendship. This was a huge wake-up call for me. I realized I had become too wrapped up in someone else's version of who I should be and needed to reconnect with my own values. That's when I started to truly believe that self-awareness is vital to leadership and life.

Losing Maggi as a friend was one of the hardest experiences I've ever gone through. She was my closest friend, someone I could rely on like no one else. Even though everything that happened left me feeling betrayed, I still miss her. There was this deep connection between us, and I'd never experienced a friendship like that before. When it all fell apart, it wasn't just the lies and drama that hurt, it was the realization that I had allowed myself to ignore the warning signs. Deep down, I wasn't even surprised by the things she had done, and that was what shook me the most. This experience meant that I had to ask myself some hard questions. How did I end up here? Why didn't I see the issues earlier? And most importantly, who was I without this friendship that had shaped so much of my identity? That's when I realized I didn't know myself well enough to navigate these kinds of difficult situations.

I'm still mourning that friendship, but I've learned that self-awareness is key, not just in relationships but in leadership too. How can I expect to lead others when I don't even fully understand my own values and needs? This situation showed me that understanding myself is the foundation for making better decisions, for leading with integrity, and for forging a path forward.

When I had initially withdrawn from my classes I started therapy again. It was through therapy that I began to really explore who I was at a deeper level. I spent more time reflecting on my actions and insecurities learning how to make choices that aligned with my true self. This process hasn't been easy and I can't say yet that I have come to terms with everything that happened. However, as I've grown in self-awareness, I've noticed that I've become more effective as a leader. I'm now more focused on how I can support others, because I've learned to take care of myself first. I'm not acting from a place of insecurity anymore, but from a place of understanding. When you know your own strengths and weaknesses, it's easier to recognize and nurture those qualities in others. Therapy helped me realize that knowing myself is what allows me to be present for others, to make decisions with clarity, and to lead with empathy.

Aurora fade out

In My Dreams starts

So, that's why I believe that leadership begins with knowing yourself. It's not about having all the answers, but about having a deep understanding of who you are, what you stand for, and how you relate to the world around you. I've learned that being a leader isn't just about guiding others—it's also about guiding yourself through your own challenges and growth. And when you can do that, you can truly connect with and inspire the people around you.

*Outro starts (Not My Business

Thank you for listening to my episode of Cottey Collage's "This I Believe" podcast! I hope you have a great day and come back next week for a new episode!

Works Cited:

First-Year Writing Seminar (FWS 101). "First-Year Writing Seminar's Five Foundational Principles for Leadership," Cottey College, 2023.

Sound Attributions:

In my episode I used sounds that I could find on Podcastle. They have a large music library and although you have to sort through the sounds that are only part of a premium subscription there are plenty of music clips and sound effects that are available for free. I used their applause and woosh 3 sound effects and a few different audio clips called Not My Business, Midnight Mass, Aurora, and In My Dreams.