



**Podcast:** One Thing - New Professional

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**Summary:** We chat with Kyle Duplantis, a Residence Life Coordinator at the University of Southern Mississippi.

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## B E G I N T R A N S C R I P T

**Stuart Brown:** Welcome to Student Affairs One Thing - New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field. What is one thing you have learned, you feel will help you as you move forward in your career? I'm your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affairs professionals. On our pages, we have the most cost effective job posting board, listing hundreds of open student services positions and a wide range of webinars.

On today's episode, I am very pleased to have Kyle Duplantis, a Residence Life Coordinator at the University of Southern Mississippi. Welcome to the program, Kyle.

**Kyle Duplantis:** Happy to be here.

**Stuart Brown:** So Kyle, what is your one thing?

**Kyle Duplantis:** The one thing I chose was true self. And what I mean by true self is, just say, a sense of being your genuine self, governing self, authorship, whatever really you wanted to find as being you. Whatever unique thing you bring to the table.

**Stuart Brown:** So are you talking about, let's say, you're at a meeting that you're not pretending to be someone or pretending to be the authority? That you're sitting, you're listening. If you have questions you ask? If you have information to impart upon your colleagues, you'll do that.

**Kyle Duplantis:** Yes, sir. I also suppose I'm looking at in the lens of being a new professional in the field. That you're not trying to be anything more or less than where you're at coming in with that fresh knowledge or whatever you bring to the table and not trying to replicate or duplicate just coming at it, I guess, raw in a sense.

**Stuart Brown:** And I would imagine that's one of the reasons that you were hired for the position is because, let's say, at the interview, you were presenting yourself, hopefully as this is my genuine self. I'm not trying to pretend to be something other than what you're looking for.

**Kyle Duplantis:** Yeah, definitely. And it's funny you bring that up because towards the end of my master's degree, I was doing, you know, as a lot of people experience a lot of interviews back and forth and nothing was clicking and I had a couple of offers, but it didn't feel organic. And, honestly, with the job that I'm in now, I just said, well, it's close to home, let's go for it. And I just went in it as genuine and me as possible with my experiences. Next thing you know, they're like, hey, we want you to come down to campus. We want to talk to you some more and I just kept it rolling and you know, I've been here for going on two years now and it's just crazy looking back at just whenever I started facing these interviews or this part of beginning your career instead of trying to mold as, hey, how would my mentors do this or how would so and so do this? But instead of just okay, how am I going to do this? Just like I would do anything else, how much more organic and just perfectly things fell into place.

**Stuart Brown:** Were you surprised a bit as you were going through the interview process and being yourself that people were saying, hey, we like who you are? This is sounding good that you were thinking, wow, just being me is okay.

**Kyle Duplantis:** Oh yeah, I would be a liar if I said I didn't second guess these things. Like I think just about anyone ever, there was a major dosage of imposter syndrome somewhere in the brain and me just sitting there thinking man, they're gonna catch me, they're gonna figure it out. They're gonna, you know, read the fine print and no matter what I told or shared or was vulnerable. Turns out of those things that maybe in other interviews I was trying to hide were those genuine specs they were looking for specifically in this role, which was, you know, new at the time and something they were, they just put together and they were like, no, this is what we need right now. We need this.

**Stuart Brown:** I would imagine, also, that being yourself at these interviews, the interviews became more natural and easier for you because you didn't have to, like you said, have that imposter syndrome, pretend or let me think of the answers they want to hear. I could just be myself.

**Kyle Duplantis:** And it's funny that I didn't realize it sooner because looking back at this pattern, you know, even first job, high school jobs, college jobs of graduate assistantships. I started to find this pattern too of, you know, when you're in that job search, the ones that always worked out have those same similarities. You kind of start straying away from those pre-made questions and you start having genuine conversations because once they start finding that connection they don't want it to end. And the next thing you know, that 30 minute interview is going over to 45 and they have to force you out of it. And I think that's kind of when both parties start to say okay, there's something here, let's see if we can, if we can close this deal.

**Stuart Brown:** I think this is very helpful for master students or even new professionals that are listening to this primarily when they go to the big conferences that have all those interviews and they are very nerve wracking. And I did it for many years on both sides of the table, but it's really to sit there, relax, maybe some breathing exercises. But when you go in to be yourself, not to be someone you think they want to be because it's going to be more natural. And yes, I've had again conversations at both ends of the table being very natural and you just have these great conversations. They don't always pan out because you're competing against a number of people. But at least you'll get to that next level.

**Kyle Duplantis:** I think whenever you are transparent, and this is also something I try to share with my students too, especially one's that are senior staff members that are starting to, you know, graduate and start doing their own interviews. You can look from the outside in and think this is the number one job I want. And I mean, you get in there and if you start, I don't want to say fabricate because that sounds like a lie. But I mean, if you start to kinda fluff up the pillow and make it softer than it really is. Well, when they go to sleep on that pillow and it turns out to be hard as a rock. Well, it's like you're kind of selling a false product, you know, and I feel like and vice versa in our role as a professional whenever I'm not genuine when we're looking for people then, and they get here and I'm a totally different person in the work environment. I think you can just turn out at, going off a past podcast, I think another reason why some people end up moving on quicker than maybe they expected because maybe some fallacies somewhere in that interview process because I need a job. I want a job. I need anything that's offered to me instead of taking that organic approach and letting things work out and having the best situation unfold.

**Stuart Brown:** Is there a story behind this genuineness besides the the interview process? Something else that you experienced either at this position or in grad school where the one thing is that genuineness that you were talking about,

**Kyle Duplantis:** I think like a lot of professionals in higher ed, I mean, I looked back in undergrad thinking I would either go into private practice or secondary education and not even knowing what student affairs was. So then when things start to work out, you know, I move a state over, for this has been away from home. Again, that imposter syndrome setting in. And I'm like, man, I am from south country, Catholic, Caucasian, you know, cis gender. I don't know if I'm diverse enough, I don't know if me is enough to fit a mold or what students are looking for. And I feel like I definitely struggled with my graduate cohort for a little bit. And then when I started showing people my genuine side and that, well, there's other layers to me and the relationships naturally happen. But I made so many connections and I've gotten to where I am now it unfolds easier again. Not to sound like a broken record, you know,

I'd say a story too. I moved up to Arkansas. My graduate assistantship was in Greek housing. My apartment was annexed in a fraternity house. I thought I served my time in undergrad, but I was back in a fraternity house

and the first few weeks were rough because I was trying to, you know, I'm not an undergrad anymore. I need to be a professional to separate myself and the gentleman in that chapter, they weren't buying it. They were like, man, like just be you. I think even one of the president's came up to me and said, can I give you some advice? That I'm a young professional, I'll take anything you give me. In an odd way, they were a good mentor for me and a good development structure. I didn't think it would happen. I thought I was there to help them, but they really helped me develop and say, okay, I might be goofy. I might be from a different place. I might have a different background. But as long as that's really who I am, they will respect that so much more and latch on to the policies and the administrative tasks we ask of them, more of educational themes or the program, whatever it might fall under. I took that into my current full time role, 100%. I would say, looking back and reflecting on okay, what did I do wrong. And it just went back to that theme of, well, you're trying to be someone you're not and you shouldn't be ashamed of being a fraternity guy. You shouldn't be ashamed of your experiences because the only thing wrong to do with this past experiences is to not learn from them or to not develop from them and then use what you've learned in that development to help other people. And I think that's what's helped me be so successful in my current role.

**Stuart Brown:** Now, I think there are two things that you brought up, which are very important. One was we talked about with the interview process being real, being genuine to yourself and to the people that you're speaking with. But I think the other thing that you talked about is also so important, where you need to be genuine once you're in the job because the students know, they really know. And in your case, I think you were very fortunate that you had individuals that said Kyle, let's go over this. Here's some helpful information and then that you were professional enough to say thank you very much as opposed to you're a student. What do you know? So I think it's very helpful from both angles to have that genuineness about you because it's only going to help as you progress in your career.

**Kyle Duplantis:** I would just add that, you know, it can come from a supervisor and it can come from students. Whenever I have my one on one with students, they love giving me feedback, but it's only because I always welcome it too and I definitely preface it with look, I might have more lenses from different places and these things to go off of. However, like I am always welcoming of anything that can help me better help you. And if you don't tell me, then I don't know how.

**Stuart Brown:** Kyle, I want to thank you for sharing your one thing as we move into the job hunting season. I think this is something that people can file away and think about when they start going through the process.

You have been listening to Student Affairs One Thing - New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field. What is one thing you have learned, you feel will help you as you move forward in your career. My guest today has been Kyle Duplantis, a Residence Life Coordinator at the University of Southern Mississippi. I'm your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by student affairs professionals. I hope you'll join us next time for another episode.

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