



Alyssa Cypher

Interviewed by: Rachel Hopkins

Career Timeline



What do you currently do?

My current job is related to social justice advocacy. I started my organization three years ago. It started as a blog about mental health, stigma, and discrimination, and then I got seed funding and connected with a fiscal sponsor to turn the project into the organization.

How did you conduct your job search/find out about your job?

Every job since graduation I found through networking. That is how you get jobs. Prior to starting my own organization, my first jobs in mental health began as volunteer and internship experiences, and then after doing a good job, I was offered a job.

What skills did you gain from completing a Psychology degree that helped in your career(s) after graduation?

Because I work in mental health, the Psychology foundation is important, but critical thinking and activism are, as well. During my senior year, I learned about Autism Spectrum Disorder in Senior Seminar and had my first experience in Neurodiversity. It opened my eyes to what can happen with activism and social justice. I also gained soft skills in addition to the hard skills of my coursework.

What skills were most useful for your career outside of what you learned from your Psychology degree?

Most useful for getting into graduate school were the different labs and cognitive psychology. Also, policy research and analysis with the research background was very important. Because of that, I could skip the first graduate school statistics class.

Currently at: Inside Our Minds

Position: Founder

Graduated: 2013

Degrees: Psychology (B.S.);
Serbo-Croatian Minor;
Concentration in Russian
& East European Studies

Graduate
Studies: Master of Public
Administration (MPA)
from University of
Pittsburgh Graduate
School of Public and
International Affairs
(GSPIA)

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Social justice; Mental health; Stigma



Are there any skills you wish you had the opportunity to develop better in college?

Especially with psychology in mind, I wish I had more classes about cultural competence, humanistic approaches, and social justice. Pitt is really clinically focused, but if you're going into direct interactions with clients, advocacy, etc., a lot of those skills I picked up on my own through conferences and webinars, so I definitely could have used more of that.

What advice would you give to undergraduates pursuing or graduating from Psychology?

[If you are considering pursuing psychology,] no matter what you want to do with psychology, make sure that you're learning from people with lived experiences in mental illness addiction, who may not be heard as much. Get out of your comfort zone, talk to people with lived experience, and elevate yourself. Don't shy away from that.

[If you are graduating and] if you're still undecided, expand your search. Psychology references so many fields and jobs, but a lot of times people only think about research and therapy. There's also organizational psychology, policy, activism, and advocacy.

Any tips for undergrads who are interested in your career?

If you're interested in pursuing activism and advocacy, go out and meet other activists, especially people not necessarily in your field. Think of intersectionality, like race, gender, queer culture, and disability experiences. Go out of your comfort zone by attending conferences and webinars, and learning as much as you can the things that you can't necessarily get in a traditional educational setting.

Anything you'd like to add?

If you're someone studying psychology with your own mental health struggles, it can be isolating. I have lived experience with mental health. Don't think that's going to hold you back.

