

#MonthlyMotivation: Kate Godfree (class of 2007)



Alumna Kate Godfree found a love for Psychology whilst in Sixth Form at Putney High School. After studying the subject at University and completing two masters' degrees, she is now embarking on a career in the pioneering area of Occupational Psychology.

What did you do after leaving Putney?

I took a gap year and spent some time travelling. I then went on to study Psychology at Durham University, which I loved. Although I thought that I did not want to continue studying, when I was in my third year, I decided to complete a masters in Developmental Psychopathology.

Did you know you wanted to go into a career in Psychology?

I really liked Psychology, but as I knew I didn't want to go down the Clinical route, I did some research into different specialities. During my masters, I discovered the speciality of Occupational Psychology, or 'Work Psychology'.

What is Occupational Psychology?

It's a relatively new area so it wasn't covered in my undergraduate course. I have learned that Occupational Psychology allows the science of Psychology to be applied specifically to the workplace. For example, companies can look into

improving the effectiveness of organisations by developing the performance and wellbeing of their employees.

How did you find out about Occupational Psychology (OP)?

As I needed to do another masters to get into this field, I wanted to be sure that I was choosing the right career path. I spoke to qualified Occupational Psychologists to glean how they got into the area and what their job entailed day to day. I quickly learned that it is a very varied career! It was also interesting to learn that many people go into it as a second career. There's no 'one size fits all' career path!

What did you decide to do next?

After a year of working in an administrative job and more research into Occupational Psychology, I did a masters in Occupational and Organisational Psychology at Surrey University. I then secured an internship with an Occupational Health Psychology research consultancy who specialise in health and wellbeing at work, specifically in terms of how work is designed and managed. Four years on, I still work with them as a Research Consultant and I am half way through a PhD at Kingston University researching obesity discrimination at work.

What have been some of the challenges you have faced?

At times, I found it tough not knowing what I wanted to do, and have found it frustrating still being in education when many of my friends had started their careers! I think I also found it hard not knowing anyone in this particular field and it not necessarily leading to a set career pathway. However, I found that when asked, people were very willing to talk about the way they have chosen to build their careers within OP.

Looking back, I'm now so grateful that I persevered in finding a career that I really wanted to do and I am proud to work in an area which I find fascinating and where I can see real impact.

How do you think Putney High School helped you?

I wouldn't call myself a natural academic and I did find certain subjects at school quite challenging. Putney taught me it's good to challenge yourself and not always to do things that you find easy. My school year group were the first to be taught Psychology, and I feel Mrs Buckle deserves a commendation! The positive impact she's had on my life has been huge. She gave me so much encouragement, had so much belief in me and ultimately started me on my Psychology career.

What advice would you give to Putney pupils and alumnae?

My top tip for Occupational Psychology would be that to apply psychology in the world of work you need to have some understanding of work, so get some work experience in any field!

We spend the majority of our week at work and there are so many fascinating careers out there. If there's something that you are passionate about and you'd like to work in it, research it, reach out to others (including Putney alumnae!), and see if there's a way you can gain some experience. It may take a while to get into that field, but once you're in it, it'll be worth it!