

Real-life story - Valeria Souza

Valeria volunteered with a mental health charity which inspired her to restart her education and begin her career in the psychological therapies.



Valeria Souza Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner

Employer or university iCOPE Psychological Therapies, Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust

Salary range £25k-£35k

How I got into the role

I have always been interested in how the mind works. I have seen how mental ill health can have an impact on people's lives but how psychological support can make a difference and improve wellbeing.

But it was when I was working in book publishing that I was spurred into some volunteering work with a charity helping people with anxiety and depression. It really opened my eyes to how human interaction can really help people so I undertook a foundation degree in modern psychology and then started working as an assistant psychologist ^[1] for the NHS. I then broadened my knowledge and skills by undertaking an undergraduate degree in Psychology, a masters in Mental Health Studies and a post-graduate diploma in Low intensity interventions based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy ^[2].

My studies and clinical work have given me an appreciation of the interaction between human genetic makeup, the environment and life experiences. In particular, the underpinnings driving individuals' thoughts, emotions and behaviours, and how they are expressed in different

mental health disorders.

As you can tell, I am very passionate about what I do and love to study! This led to me applying for my current post.

What I do

My job is really fast paced. Most weeks I speak to 30 clients either on the telephone, in workshops or face-to-face. I do have a high-workload so I have to make sure I am organised to meet targets while delivering high quality care. I use a range of methods and approaches with clients and what I use depends on the condition and severity. There are a variety of ways to help people and each can be different whether they suffer from depression or anxiety.

Knowing that I am making a difference to people's lives is rewarding and inspiring.

The best bits and challenges

Facilitating a positive change in someone's well-being is definitely the best part of my job. Knowing that I am making a difference to people's lives is rewarding and inspiring. My job is also incredibly varied so I always have something new to focus on.

The biggest challenge is the stigma that still surrounds mental health, especially among certain groups and backgrounds. Reaching out to them and changing their attitudes is crucial. We can then need to make them aware of our services and how to access them.

Life outside work

In this role, it is important that we look after ourselves. We need to live the advice we offer clients so a good work/life balance is essential. I love to read, run and spend time with my family (not always at the same time)! I also sing in a choir and enjoy stand-up comedy.

Career plans and top tips for others

Ideally, I would like to train as a high intensity therapist ^[3] or a clinical psychologist ^[4]. It is the next step in my career development.

If I had one tip for anyone thinking about being a psychological well-being practitioner, it would be to do some work experience or volunteering in a mental health setting. You'll get to see what the role involves and make sure it is right for you. You'll also see if you have the core skills. For example, you need to be able to empathise, be committed to health and well-being and be proactive in improving services for clients.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles/psychological-wellbeing-practitioner/real-life-story-valeria-souza>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/assistant-clinical-psychologist>

[2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Cognitive_behavioural_therapy

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/high-intensity-therapist>

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/clinical-psychologist>