

...with Ruby Bell

Head of Forensic Psychology at Roseberry Park Hospital, Middlesbrough

One moment that changed the course of your career

A visit to C Wing Special Unit at HMP Parkhurst in 1987 – changed my desire to work in clinical psychology to a career in forensic.

One book that you think all psychologists should read

James McGuire's 1995 book *What Works: Reducing Re-offending: Guidelines from Research and Practice*. This collection, and all that has followed, is at the heart of all that we do, and McGuire has been instrumental in bringing together and getting us to consider and carry out evidence-based practice.

One cultural recommendation

We are not always good at looking after ourselves – always take time to get away from psychology and the reality of the job and switch off completely. My way is to go to Barbados, read a Maeve Binchy novel and speak to very few people! It's so revitalising.

One problem that psychology should deal with
The impact of the therapeutic

relationship on treatment outcome. Research clearly demonstrates that the qualities, experience, knowledge and expertise



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of the therapist are important in therapy adherence and positive outcome. Yet we tend to neglect this, and when the treatment appears not to work we blame the client or the content. We may need to look closer to home!

One challenge you think psychology faces

In these economic climes, there is increased pressure to deliver more for less – the challenge is to maintain quality and integrity.

One alternative career path you may have chosen

I am a thwarted artist – I would have loved to illustrate children's books.

One nugget of advice for aspiring psychologists

Always question what you do and why, and change if need be. Sometimes creativity and our own expertise can be stifled by prescribed or traditional working practices.

One proud moment

Developing the Forensic Psychology Service in what is now Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust. At one point we were the first and only team in the NHS to be entirely staffed by forensic psychologists. Currently we have clinical and forensic psychologists who bring with them a wealth of expertise and experience.

One hero from psychology past or present
Professor Arnold Goldstein –

known mainly for his aggression replacement training and work with gangs. He was a proponent of the scientist-practitioner model, and devoted his career to the study and practice of reducing aggression and violence. I had the privilege of meeting him at a conference and was so impressed by his warmth and desire to help people change. Sadly he died in 2002. He had been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his work – how fantastic for psychology that would have been.

One thing that 'organised psychology' could do better

Promote the utility of psychology in all areas – not just with offenders or people with problems. Have a voice and actively promote psychology. We are slowly improving.

One great thing that psychology has achieved
Greater understanding of how and why we are as we are – and how we can affect change when things have gone wrong.

One psychological superpower

To fully understand what is happening in people's heads when they choose to behave in a way that does not enhance their well-being.

One final thought

There is a quote by the American author Carson McCullers which speaks volumes: 'But the hearts of small children are delicate organs. A cruel beginning in this world can twist them into curious shapes.'

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