# STUDENTS ASK THE QUESTIONS: Psychology ADT With Student Host Obet Campos &, John Pellitteri Professor Of Psychology Episode 147

# 00:00:00 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Listening to podcasts like this and talking to professors helps you decide what career is in your future. The Psychology Department offers an AAT. So, that's an associate of arts in transfer. The transfer degree is going to cover all of your general education and then the special classes that you're going to need so that you can enter some universities straight as a junior and continue your path to get your bachelor's degree in psychology.

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# 00:00:31 **Christina**

# Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

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# 00:00:32 **Sun**

# And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

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# 00:00:36 **Christina**

# Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

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# 00:00:53 **Sun**

# We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

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# 00:00:57 **Speaker 1**

# And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

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# 00:01:02 **Speaker 2**

# She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona! Psychology major, English major ...

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# 00:01:08 **Sun**

# From transforming part-time into full-time-

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# 00:01:11 **Speaker 1**

# I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and cover letter.

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# 00:01:18 **Christina**

# Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

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# 00:01:20 **Speaker 1**

# To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

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# 00:01:23 **Christina**

# We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni, and producer of this podcast.

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# 00:01:35 **Sun**

# And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

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# 00:01:40 **Christina**

# And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

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# 00:01:41 **Christina**

# The benefits of talking with the Psychology Department is that we also get many life lessons and tools along the way as we explore this multifaceted career path. Guest hosted by Mt. SAC student Obed Campos, we listen in, as he interviews his psychology professor, John Pellitteri. They discuss life choices, pursuing higher education, and what to expect when pursuing an ADT in psychology. Enjoy!

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# 00:02:15 **Obed**

# So, hello, and welcome to the Magic Mountie Podcast. My name's Obed Campos. I'll be your guest host today. And today I'm sitting down with psychologist, Dr. John Pellitteri. Welcome, Dr . Pellitteri.

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# 00:02:26 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Thank you, Obed, it's nice to see you.

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# 00:02:29 **Obed**

# Well, nice to see you too. I'm very excited to be here interviewing you today. We know each other because I'm taking your class currently and I'm very eager to learn more about the possibilities of where this degree can take and any student listening. Let's get started.

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# 00:02:42 **Obed**

# Alright, so my first question off, for you today is who are you, and like what do you do?

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# 00:02:50 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# A great opening question. Well, my name, as you said, my name is John Pellitteri. I am a full-time psychology professor here at Mt. San Antonio College. I'm also a licensed psychologist and I've had a private practice in the past where I offer psychological services to the public.

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# 00:03:08 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And I do a couple of other things. Like I do some board work with the American Board of Clinical Psychology. And my main gig when I'm doing private practice is neuropsychological assessment and I do neurofeedback and some mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. And I very much enjoy teaching and working with students.

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# 00:03:30 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# At one point in my past, I had a preceptorship where I was working with undergraduate and graduate and doctorate students, all learning how to administer psychological tests and do neurofeedback. So, I'm very invested in the development of the career of my students. So, I'm glad to be talking to you.

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# 00:03:48 **Obed**

# Glad to be talking to you too. So, let's start from like the beginning; what drew you into the field?

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# 00:03:54 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Well, I wasn't the strongest student in high school and I was fairly unmotivated in lots of my classes. I didn't really like math, I didn't really like history, I didn't like English. I kind of didn't like school. So, but my dad was a teacher and so, I was always under the impression that college is after high school. And there really wasn't much of a question that I was going to be going college, I just didn't really have any direction.

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# 00:04:21 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# My dad was a science teacher and he said, "Do whatever you want, but make sure it's science." I said, "Oh, I hate science. I hate cutting up cats in biology and stuff like that." So, I found a degree at Cal Poly, Pomona, which was fairly near my house called Behavioral Science. And my dad said, "Is that science?" And I said, "Look, dad, behavioral science." I had no idea what it was.

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# 00:04:48 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# But as I got into it, I realized that behavioral science was psychology and sociology. I really enjoyed my sociology classes. Those were a lot of fun, but I thought I could do more with a degree in pyschology. So, I kind of straddled the fence and I ended up getting a bachelor's in psychology and in sociology, and a minor in criminal justice and corrections.

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# 00:05:10 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And I learned to be a better student. My dad died halfway through my college career and I really felt like I was operating now without a net. And I didn't really know what to do except to go to school. That was kind of the last thing he said, is go to school. He said, "They can ever take those letters after your name away from you." And I thought, "Who are they? And why do they even want them?" But whatever.

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# 00:05:36 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, I kind of scrambled around after my bachelor's degree. And I ended up going to Cal State San Bernardino for a master's in national security studies. And I thought, this'll be cool, I'll be a CIA spook. And I'll do work for the state department or a think tank.

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# 00:05:59 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And as I was doing that program, I realized this is not for me. I'm really not interested in calculating kill ratios, figuring out how to bomb a city and leave all the buildings, but kill all the people. I was like, "Ah, this is not for me." So, I dropped out of that and found that the University of Laverne would allow me into their master's of marriage and family therapy program in mid-year. So, I didn't have to wait to start.

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# 00:06:28 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And these were my people. All of a sudden, we're talking about helping people instead of killing them, which I'm more for. And I thought about becoming a marriage and family therapist and finished my degree in marriage and family therapy. But while I was there, I got some encouragement from some professors to go on and look at getting a doctorate in psychology.

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# 00:06:50 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Now, I got some kind of bad advice when I was at that stage, and the bad advice was "Go on and get your marriage and family therapy degree. And then if you decide to become a psychologist, you just kind of do two more years and finish up."

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# 00:07:04 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Well, that's not true, you don't have to kind of start over. And that's what I did. So, I ended up getting another master's degree in clinical psychology and then the doctorate in clinical psychology. That first master's didn't really help me much because it's kind of a different branch of a tree. It's not the same exact thing.

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# 00:07:22 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, while I was there doing my doctorate in clinical psych, I got interested in neuropsychology and after I graduated, I did the Fielding Institute's program which is a post-doctoral program in neuropsychology. And neuropsychology is about doing psychological tests and brain and behavior. And I found those things to be very interesting.

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# 00:07:47 **Obed**

# Oh no, that's great, that's great. Something I wanted to touch on a little bit - you mentioned how at the beginning, you knew that going to college was the path you had to take, but eventually, you kind of switched courses a little bit. And that's something that I experienced and I'm sure a lot of people could agree with that, is that feeling of knowing that you have to take a route, but not going sure which route you want to take.

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# 00:08:12 **Obed**

# So, what's something that you could recommend for someone like myself or someone out there listening that isn't quite sure yet, but knows they want to go maybe into psychology or maybe something similar like that?

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# 00:08:25 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# That's a great question. And it's so true that your career path kind of unfolds in front of you sometimes without maybe even your permission. I spent about 20 years at Mt. SAC being a counselor before I transitioned over into the Psychology Department. And one of the things that I would do and that I encourage students to think of is starting with the biggest picture you can.

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# 00:08:53 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# For example, are you a person, like a people person or are you a things person? So, my son is a things person. He is not interested in people. He's not interested in their relationships and he's doing mechanical engineering. Like the farthest from psychology you could possibly get. My daughter is a people person and she's interested in people. So, she's looking at being a psychologist or being a teacher or something with people.

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# 00:09:23 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, if you know that you're a people person, well, now, you have narrowed it down, you know, pretty good. And if you find psychology or the humanities like sociology intriguing, then you've done even the next step of narrowing it down. So, once you get into kind of the ballpark of what you're interested in: maybe working with people, helping people, then you have a lot of opportunity to kind of explore the different ways that you could help them.

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# 00:09:52 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And you could do it as a nurse or a doctor, or you could do it as a psychologist or a therapist of some kind, or you could be like a researcher that researches people, but doesn't really necessarily work with them directly. So, my best advice is get as close as you can to the field that you find intriguing, and then start to take some classes and see what floats your boat.

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# 00:10:14 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# If you take a psych class and you get inspired, then take more. And if you take a certain class and get turned off, then take fewer classes in that regard. So, through that process, I think you start to hone it, and honestly, you don't have to figure out what kind of psychology you want to do until you finish your doctorate. You don't have to specialize too early. And in fact, specializing too early is probably a mistake because you're just not sophisticated as you will be in five years. In five years, you're going to know so much and you'll be able to make a better decision.

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# 00:10:53 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I have a friend of mine who said, "I decided what I wanted to be when I was 11-years-old and I stuck with it" and I thought, who lets an 11-year-old make their life decisions for them? So, leaving room for your decisions later in life will only make for a better decision.

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# 00:11:12 **Obed**

# Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. For me, personally, I didn't know what route I wanted to take. Going into college, I wanted to do law or I thought I wanted to do law just because I knew I had to go to college and I wasn't sure quite what to go into.

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# 00:11:26 **Obed**

# But then I took a psychology course eventually and I was like, hey, this is pretty interesting. I think I'm going to keep going with this. So, this semester I'm actually in your class, psychology five class, and you especially have been someone that really kind of drew me into the field a lot more. I was like, this guy knows his stuff. He knows what he's talking about. And the way you teach your class or the way you get it going and the way you explain stuff, it's really interesting to me.

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# 00:11:57 **Obed**

# And it really drew me into psychology and something that I like a lot is also sociology. Something that you mentioned earlier too, especially criminology. And I started looking into it and I was like, what's something that combines both sociology or criminology and psychology.

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# 00:12:12 **Obed**

# And I came to you actually, and we kind of had a little conversation and I looked into forensic psychology, which kind of had both aspects of sociology and criminology, if we could define those a little bit. So, criminology would be the study of crime, how it affects the society, why people commit crimes, and so forth. Would you agree with that or would you define it a little differently?

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# 00:12:38 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Yeah, no, I think you've got it. And by the way, thank you for your kind words. I appreciate that. Isn't it interesting how having a good professor, a good instructor, any time in your life; in high school, junior high - that can change your whole life.

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# 00:12:51 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I have a friend, a really good friend who became an English teacher because of one class he took with an English teacher that just blew him away and he thought I want to do that when I grow up. So, it's so funny that that kind of thing happens. What if every single professor we had was that inspiring? You wouldn't know what to do. You'd be like, "I like everything."

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# 00:13:13 **Obed**

# Definitely.

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# 00:13:14 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Yeah, it's a good thing that my high school career wasn't that inspiring or I'd be interested in lots of stuff. But yeah, to your question, the sociology is the study of groups of people and psychology is the study of an individual.

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# 00:13:28 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, you could look at crime and criminology as the study of crime from different levels. And if you want to get down into the individual serial killer, that's one thing. And if you want to look at why crime exists in a social aspect, that's another thing. So, you can open or close the aperture however you like.

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# 00:13:51 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# When I worked at LAPD for a year of internship and my supervisor was really good at interviewing serial killers. And I was able to watch the videotapes of him interviewing these people. And it was fascinating because he was half serial killer himself. But that's just a joke in case he ever hears this.

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# 00:14:11 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# He would really draw them out and to hear these serial killers talk as if they were talking to another serial killer, and they really kind of talked about what their feelings were. It was fascinating. And then you could certainly contribute to the world by knowing why people commit crimes in general and coming up with program and policies to help address that.

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# 00:14:37 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# When it comes to forensic psychology, forensic really refers to anything having to do with the courts. So, you might be an expert witness, or you might do custody evaluations, seeing whether mom or dad is fit to have the kid - that's really challenging work. And then police psychology too. Anything that has to do with working with the court system or the judicial system could be considered forensic psychology. And there's lots of different opportunities there.

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# 00:15:05 **Obed**

# Oh yeah, yeah. Definitely. For me, the reason I'm interested in forensic psychology is just because of how it combines the two aspects, the way I look at it. Because those are two things that really interest me. So, that's just something that when you mentioned that, I really wanted to start looking into, and I still definitely have some research to do on my own. But for you, what would you say on the field of forensic psychology?

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# 00:15:31 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I mean, the whole reason that we pick some careers besides being interested in it is to make money and there's lots of money to be made in forensic psych. So, that's a good thing. A lot of times students are being encouraged to decide their whole life path in my opinion, too early.

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# 00:15:47 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, let's say you wanted to be a forensic psychologist and testify in court, you wanted to be an expert witness - and by the way, one of my neuropsych teachers does that. He's an expert witness and he testifies in neuropsychology cases. And man, the guy makes so much money, it's just amazing. But he's really good at what he does. So, the first step is you got to be a great psychologist before you can be a great expert witness in psychology. Does that make sense?

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# 00:16:19 **Obed**

# Yeah.

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# 00:16:20 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, having the skills to testify, that's a whole separate skillset in addition to being a good psychologist and knowing what you're talking about. So, you can't just go up there and testify about anything. You have to be kind of an expert in the field.

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# 00:16:36 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, my advice is if you know that that's the kind of thing you want to get into: first, become a psychologist with all the basics that you need and then specialize in forensic work and become an expert in testifying in court, or being an expert witness, or if you wanted to testify about neuropsychological cases, you need to have those skills as a neuropsychologist.

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# 00:16:58 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# In a way, it's kind of like being a speaker. You could be a great speaker, but you have nothing to speak about. You know, you need to have something to speak about before you can use those skills of being a speaker. So, I'm kind of a proponent of getting the basics down first, and then specializing second. And by doing that, you also get a chance to stick your toe in.

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# 00:17:19 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, let's say you were a doctorate student, and then you wanted to work in an internship where they did some forensic work. Then you get to see it from the other side and find out if the reality is all it's cracked up to be. And if you say, "Oh, I'm going to end up doing reports all day, this is not what I wanted. I wanted to argue in court and throw my pen around and yell at a jury. Okay, well, now, I know this is kind of the wrong area." So, during your training, you get a chance to try it all out, which is so wonderful.

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# 00:17:49 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# You wake up every morning and you do the work, and if you go, "This is what I want to do forever," bingo, you made it. But if you go ... it's also equally important learning to go, "I don't want to do this anymore."

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# 00:18:01 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I had a doctorate student once who didn't get the internship that she wanted and she ended up having to take an internship working with people with eating disorders. And she was like, "I don't want to do this, I'm not interested in it." Turned out she loves it. And she changed her whole career path so that she could do that full-time.

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# 00:18:20 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# She goes, first of all, you can really make a big difference with people who are dealing with this. I really resonate with the clients and she just found her niche and it was just by accident. If she had gotten the internship she wanted, she never would've discovered that area of psychology.

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# 00:18:38 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, sticking your toe in and trying it out, I think is really important. But if you went the sociology route, then you would probably be more of an academician. You'd be a scholar, you'd be a teacher. You know, you might have a consulting group, things like that. In order to work with people and help them, you need to have a license and there's no license in sociology to sell your services to the public.

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# 00:19:01 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# The licenses in psychology, you could be a licensed professional counselor, an LPC. You could be licensed as a marriage and family therapist. You could be licensed as a social worker, or you could be licensed as a psychologist. So, those licenses allow you to sell your skills to the public for a fee.

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# 00:19:19 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, it's a slightly different angle if you want to work with people in the criminal justice system, that's one thing. If you want to generate research and teach about the criminal justice system in general, that would be a different path. And there are certainly many, many little paths that branch off from that. Did I answer your question okay?

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# 00:19:41 **Obed**

# Yeah, definitely. And kind of how you noted, it's kind like a tree where it starts on the route and then it just branches off in many different aspects. So, that's something that I would like to touch on then, is you're big on getting the fundamentals down and then specializing after, right?

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# 00:19:57 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Yes.

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# 00:19:57 **Obed**

# What are the different routes that you could take? Just starting with that first step of getting the basics down?

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# 00:20:05 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Well, if you like school and if you think you have a doctor in you, then right after you finish your bachelor's degree, you can apply to doctorate programs and there are different kinds. There's a PhD and there's pSyD. The pSyD is a more applied degree, the PhD is a more academic degree. So, if you know that you want to be a licensed psychologist and work with people, the pSyD is a good choice. If you want to be core faculty at a university, then the PhD is a better choice.

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# 00:20:35 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, that's one route. If you're not a fan of school and you're one of those people that's like school is a means to an end, I don't want to spend too long here - D is for done, I want to get out, then you might look at one of the master's level degrees that can get you a license like the MFT or the LCSW or the LPC. And then that gets you in the workforce a little sooner.

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# 00:21:01 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# The psychology license has a wider scope of practice. You can do more things, but if you know what you want to do, and it's covered under the scope of practice of an MFT, then you're golden and you save two years of school plus. So, that's a question you want to reflect on is how much school do I have in me.

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# 00:21:23 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Just as you're interviewing me, and I know certainly from class, you have a very sharp mind and you listen carefully. Those are both good traits for a psychologist. So, I would definitely write you a letter of recommendation assuming you turn in all your homework. So, I can hear just by how you're talking that some of those skills of reflective listening and really paying attention, that makes a good therapist. So, those are skills right there.

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# 00:21:53 **Obed**

# Well, thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that. So, as you said, all the pathways that you could take, what about specifically here at Mt. SAC? Getting your transfers degree, what are some steps after that? What can we do with that?

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# 00:22:06 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Yeah, well the Psychology Department offers an AAT, so that's an associate of arts in transfer. The transfer degree is going to cover all of your general education and then the special classes that you're going to need so that you can enter some universities straight as a junior and continue your path to get your bachelor's degree in psychology.

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# 00:22:32 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And it doesn't take that many classes. The AAT in psychology basically just requires you to take Psych 1A or Psych 1AH, and Psych 10 or Math 110, and then Psychology 3, and then Psych 1B is important for the AAT in psychology. But then you have lots of choices for the other areas. So, just to back up, in a nutshell, to get a degree, you need three things. You need major classes, you need electives, and you need general education.

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# 00:23:05 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And when you finish your general education, that's about 30 units of the 60 you need to transfer. And then the major classes are going to be the ones I just mentioned, those psychology classes. And then you have room for other units of electives and they have to be degree applicable units. And those are mentioned in the catalog whether or not a class is of high enough standing to be degree-applicable.

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# 00:23:33 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# But my advice would be fill up those electives with more psychology classes. It doesn't really make much sense to be a psych major and only take the minimum amount of psych classes. Those can only help you as you transfer into a university and have that background.

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# 00:23:49 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Some classes, you'll want to look at because sometimes what it's offered as here at Mt. SAC being a two-year school, you may take that class and go to a university and that class is offered as a junior or senior level, and then it won't transfer.

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# 00:24:08 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Now, you'll still have all the knowledge, it's just that they're going to make you take it again. You know, so seeing a counselor that specializes in the psychology (and ours is Dr. Julie Perez Garcia, she knows everything about the transfer stuff) is a great way to make sure that you don't accidentally take classes that you're going to have to repeat. Or at least if you do that, you're going to.

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# 00:24:30 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Now, a lot of people take psychobiology with me, and then they know they might have to take it again at a university at a higher level, but they just feel so great having that preparation. And then they can kind of breeze through that class later. And so, that's worth it to them. But then again, you might be inclined to take a different class totally.

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# 00:24:50 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, that's what we offer here and it should plug in nicely to most universities especially the Cal State's university system, and let you continue on where you left off. But preparation is the key and seeing a counselor early and often is a good idea. So, you make sure that you're checking every box and you don't get to your university and find out you're down a class. It's nicer to have everything squared away and the counselors can help you do that.

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# 00:25:19 **Obed**

# Yeah, that sounds great. Real quick, just out of curiosity for me and for anyone else who's listening that might be curious, what classes do you teach at Mt. SAC?

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# 00:25:28 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# You know, because I have a background in neuropsychology, my department appreciates when I teach biological psychology, that's Psych 1B, and that's my area. So, it's easy peasy for me and I enjoy teaching it. And I also enjoy taking that class that many students are afraid of because it's a hard sciencey kind of class, and showing them that it's not that hard to do and you can master this information easily and I try to make it interesting and fun. So, that's also a fun teaching challenge for me.

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# 00:26:03 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And then I like teaching the class that you and I are in together: the Psychology 5, psychology of reasoning because I have lots of opinions and I love to discuss things. And I love to argue, especially with students who are usually informed and sharp like you. And I like drawing out, especially in today's day and age - our world is crazy and people believe crazy things. And I love the idea of pumping out students every year that have better critical thinking skills than the average person, and can apply those to all the crazy decision-making that is going on right now.

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# 00:26:41 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I also, at times, have taught Psych 1A, which is intro to psych. I teach Psych 33, which is the psychology of effective living. That, to me, is a fun class because it's all about using psychology to improve your own life. So, it's kind of a self-help class, at least, the way I approach it.

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# 00:26:58 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And then I've taught in the past Psych 19, which is abnormal psych. I've taught human development before. Let's see ... in different universities, I certainly have taught neuropsychology. I used to teach personality assessment to doctorate students at the University of Laverne and then also, psychological assessment because as a clinical psychologist, that's my main training, is in doing tests and psychological reports and things like that.

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# 00:27:26 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, that's a smattering of what I teach, but lately, I've been called on to do many Psych 1Bs because not everybody has that specialty. And there's certainly other professors here in the department who have specialties that are different than mine, that specialize in other courses.

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# 00:27:46 **Obed**

# Interesting. Well, yeah, speaking from experience, great professor, definitely recommend, just as you said earlier.

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# 00:27:55 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I should put out a tip jar. That's good. Thank you.

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# 00:27:58 **Obed**

# Right, yeah. Oh, definitely, definitely. So, talking a little bit more about yourself; if you can recall on your way to where you are now, starting from being in school, is there any roadblocks or any obstructions in your path that got in your way that you could definitely give hints for people or talk about from your experience?

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# 00:28:22 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# That's a great question. You know, when you say that, I think of cautions that I would give to students, things that I would caution you about. I don't think that I could tell anybody about any obstacles because everybody's got family in life and sometimes kids, and I think everybody knows about obstacles.

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# 00:28:44 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And then certainly college and a university is like any bureaucracy that you kind of have to give them one more piece of paper than they ask for, and then you win. They just keep asking for more stuff and you just keep giving it to them.

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# 00:28:57 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# The discipline, when it comes to going to school is a lot like in martial arts. It's not where people think it is, it's getting up and getting to class. You know what that's like? It's like is college really that super difficult? The hardest part is getting there, making time for it. It's not anything else.

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# 00:29:20 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# But one of the cautions that I think that I would give to students, is be careful about signing on the dotted line with getting yourself in student loan debt. That's a danger that didn't really exist when I was going through school because for $300, you could take a whole semester at Cal Poly and you get a free cow - no, that's not true.

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# 00:29:44 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# But when it comes to racking up student loans, you want to do that as judiciously as you can. So, if you can get through your bachelor's degree without taking any loans, that would be great because most likely, you're going to need to crank up some loans for your graduate degree. And when I finished my doctorate program, I was like $150,000 in debt. And you pay back $3 for every dollar you borrow. So, that's almost half a million dollars.

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# 00:30:13 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# But I will say this, that I would rather be a psychologist who owes student loans than not a psychologist. I didn't come from a family that could afford to pay for my stuff, so I had to do it by myself. And once you get to a certain place in your career, it's just another bill.

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# 00:30:33 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# You pay your phone bill, you pay your water bill, you pay your student loan bill. And my lifestyle is great. I could afford club soccer for my son and karate for my daughter, and I could afford a car and we have a house with a pool, everything's great, certainly better than I grew up. Not that I grew up poor in any stretch, just we weren't rich either.

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# 00:30:57 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, I'm trying really hard to keep my kids out of debt if I can. And like I said, if you have to, you have to, and it's not the end of the world and you'll be able to pay it. The saying that I loved, that I heard from a professor, is live like a student now, or live like a student forever. So, eat your mac and cheese and ramen and cup of noodles now, and buy your textbooks. And then that will be over.

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# 00:31:22 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# If you take out a whole bunch of loans and buy your new car now on your student loans, then you're going to be paying it back forever. So, that's one thing that I would caution students: go into it with your eyes open. And listening to podcasts like this and talking to professors helps you decide what career is in your future, so that you don't accidentally go down the wrong path and end up borrowing money for the wrong thing. So, the more work you can do to know where you're going, the less time and money you'll waste.

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# 00:31:56 **Obed**

# Good advice, good advice. So kind of going off of that, you mentioned how the time to struggle is now and the time to bask in the fruits of your labor is later, right?

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# 00:32:09 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I never said bask, but go ahead,

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# 00:32:12 **Obed**

# Something like that, right? No, but let's talk about the money that comes with the different fields too. What can you comment on that? How is the financial situation going in to different types of fields?

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# 00:32:25 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Well, when it comes to psychology, there are certain specialties that make more than others. The top ones are industrial organizational psychology and neuropsychology. Being a psychologist that graduates, gets licensed, and then goes into a clinic and just works with anxiety and depression, well, you're competing with all the other licensed people.

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# 00:32:49 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, as a psychologist that just does kind of the basics, you compete with MFTs and LCSWs, and LPCs for the same client pool, which may not be a bad thing if you're here in California, because California is very psychologically-minded. If you go to Wisconsin, there's no psychologist and they don't go to a psychologist. So, you might be the only psychologist in 2000 miles, but very few people think of accessing your services. Here in California, everybody thinks about a psychologist, but there's also 10,000 other professionals who are waiting to see them.

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# 00:33:26 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, specializing again, after you've finished the basics is very important, and that could mean specializing in a certain modality like neuropsych or police psych, or military psychology, or it could mean specializing in a certain population. Like you work with adolescents or you work with the elderly, or you work with a certain disorder, like any disorders I mentioned before. So, getting that extra training in your post-doctoral years, as you're learning and getting the hours you need for licensure, that's a good time to specialize. So, specializing is important.

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# 00:34:01 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, just a quick recap: these specializations like neuropsych and industrial organizational psychology, those make ... I haven't looked at the data recently, but my neuropsych professor now granted he's at the top of the food chain, I mean, he would pull in 400,000 a year. And I haven't heard of many making that much.

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# 00:34:28 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# But industrial organizational psychologists doing neuropsych assessments is pretty good. You can easily make over a hundred thousand a year. Industrial organizational, you can make you 100 to 200,000 a year, fairly consistently, depending on what you do. And then MFTs and LCSWs can start at 50 to 60 and make 80 or 90. But then again, if you're in a private practice, the sky's the limit. Depending on how much you work, how many people work for you, you could make a lot of money. The key is your specialization and where you choose to work.

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# 00:35:05 **Obed**

# Okay. So, one thing you mentioned was industrial organizational. Can you define that for us?

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# 00:35:12 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Yeah. Industrial organizational psychology is where your client is basically a business. So, I had a friend of mine. Who's an IO Psych, that's the shorthand for industrial organizational. And these IO Psychs, they go into businesses and they can do executive coaching. They do work time studies.

# 

# 00:35:33 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I asked him one time - his name is Doug, and I said, "Doug, what is it you do as an industrial organizational psych?" And he said, "Whatever needs doing." And I said, well, come on, man, what do you do in a day when you get up?" And he says, "Well, like right now, I'm running a web design team." And I go, "Doug, you don't know anything about web design, how come you're running the team?" And he goes, "I don't have to know anything. I'm the boss." And I go, "But how do you get to be the boss if you know the least about web design?"

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# 00:36:01 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# He goes, "I don't have to know about web design. What I know about is communications and project management and managing people, and getting the work done in a timely way with a high level of quality." And I'm like, "Get out of town." I go, "That's very interesting."

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# 00:36:17 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, he has a lot more business kind of mindset. I have a more clinician mindset, and my clinician mindset is make yourself valuable and skilled and then sell your services to the public. And his mindset is instead of working your way up the ladder, own the ladder in the beginning. So, that's what industrial organizational psychology is about.

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# 00:36:40 **Obed**

# Oh, very interesting. So, something that kind of attest to, is how wide the field is then. Like you said, it's open to anyone with different perspectives on how they want to work, right? Like you said, you have a different perspective than maybe someone who works in an industrial organizational psych, right?

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# 00:36:57 **Obed**

# Now, that being said, a personal question maybe: if you could change, not just your mindset or your view, but even your career or the path you took, would you change it?

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# 00:37:08 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# If I could be a movie star, I would, but-

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# 00:37:15 **Obed**

# We're in the psych field, I guess.

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# 00:37:17 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# Oh, psych field. Here's the secret of life, here's the secret to happiness: you ready, Obed?

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# 00:37:26 **Obed**

# Ready, I'm ready.

# 

# 00:37:27 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# The secret of life is this - having several things going on at once? So, when I was running my private practice, if things were stressful, intense there, I could always turn my attention to my teaching, which I love to do. And if the teaching was irritating or there were problems in that, then I could turn my attention to say, the neuropsych that I was doing and getting into that.

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# 00:37:52 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, always having something else going on in my mind made for a happy life. And then you could always turn your attention to your family, and there's always something going on that you could turn to that's fun and exciting and interesting. If I were stuck in doing the same job and only that all day, every day, that to me, doesn't sound very intriguing. Maybe I have a touch of ADHD or maybe a good, hard slack, but I like many things going on.

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# 00:38:22 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And although it can get a little stressful at times, I kind of thrive on that and I enjoy it. One thing that graduate school taught me is that the day is not just eight hours long because I would go to class for eight or nine hours, and then you'd turn around and go to your internship for another two hours, and then you would go to do a couple hours of work so you could eat.

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# 00:38:43 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# And so, I learned, man, the day starts at 6:00 AM and it doesn't finish till you're done at 10:00 PM, which was rough in graduate school. But now, I have that kind of mindset that I finished my day after six or seven hours, I still have a whole another half day to do something. Now, I can go to my private practice. And so, here, working with students is extremely rewarding.

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# 00:39:06 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# I enjoy being in the classroom, I enjoy talking to people like you. There's always new students coming in and students ... as a psychologist, typically, you work with people who are in distress, right? I work with people who are depressed or anxious or having trouble in their life. You don't go to a psychologist to check in and say that you're so happy. You come in for some services.

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# 00:39:27 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, I really enjoy having a part of my life where I'm working at a school where everyone here is positive, everybody here is working to make their life better. So, all the students I see are aiming for a better life. That's a great energetic place to be. And that gives me some credit that I can spend working with people that are in distress and lending them some expertise to try to make them have a better life.

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# 00:39:54 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# So, that to me, is the secret of happiness, Obed. Have a couple things going on and keep moving - you're a moving target and you never get hit that way.

# 

# 00:40:03 **Obed**

# Definitely, definitely. Well, thank you. That's a nice little bow to wrap things up there, I guess. Well, thank you, for your time Dr. John Pellitteri

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# 00:40:14 **Dr. Pellitteri**

# My pleasure, Mr. Obed Campos.

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# 00:40:18 **Christina**

# Transferring from Mt. SAC to university to earn your bachelor's degree has countless benefits and opens the door to many opportunities. Learn how to do so with an associates of arts or associate of science transfer degree like we highlighted in this episode by using transfer resources, such as the Counseling Department or the Transfer Center. Just go to mtsac.edu/counseling or mtsac.edu/transfer.

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# 00:40:25 **Christina**

# Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast. And don't forget to share your favorite episodes.

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