Psychologist

Overview

Psychology is the study of the mind and behavior. The discipline embraces all aspects of the human experience—from the functions of the brain to the actions of nations, from child development to care for the aged. In every conceivable setting from scientific research centers to mental health care services, “the understanding of behavior” is the enterprise of psychologists.

Psychologists traditionally treat patients with mental and emotional problems, but they also serve as scientists researching the phenomenon of human (and non-human) behavior. They study how human beings relate not only to each other but also to machines, and they work to improve these relationships. In particular, they concentrate on behaviors that affect the mental and emotional health and mental functioning of healthy human beings.

In their research, psychologists follow scientific methods, using careful observation, experimentation, and analysis. They develop theories of human behavior and test them through research. As this research yields new information, psychologists’ findings become part of the body of knowledge that practitioners call upon in their work with clients and patients.

Psychology is a tremendously varied field. Psychologists conduct both basic and applied research, serve as consultants to communities and organizations, diagnose and treat people, test intelligence and personality, and teach future psychologists and other types of students. With the rapidly increasing diversity of the U.S. population, psychologists bring important knowledge and skills to understanding different cultures.

There are many different careers within this profession. For example, psychologists work with business executives, performers, and athletes to reduce stress and improve performance. They advise lawyers on jury selection and collaborate with educators on school reform. Immediately following a disaster, such as a plane crash or bombing, psychologists help victims and bystanders recover from the trauma, or shock, of the event. They team with law enforcement and public health officials to analyze the causes of such events and prevent their occurrence.

For more information— including profiles of people in careers ranging from human-computer interface designer to animal programs psychologist—see the American Psychological Association (http://www.apa.org/topics/psychologycareer.html) website.

Working Conditions

Many psychologists work independently. They also team up with other professionals—for example, other scientists, physicians, lawyers, school personnel, computer experts, engineers, policymakers, and managers—to contribute to every area of society. Thus we find them in laboratories, hospitals, courtrooms, schools and universities, community health centers, prisons, and corporate offices.

Most psychologists say they love their work. They cite the variety of daily tasks and the flexibility of their schedules. They are thrilled by the exciting changes taking place in the field, from adapting technology to humans to working as part of primary health care teams. They are working hard to provide answers to research questions in diverse areas such as prevention, perception, and learning. Educators strive to train the next generations using new technology and knowledge.

Academic Requirements

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), “psychologists hold a doctoral degree in psychology from an organized, sequential program in a regionally accredited university or professional school.” The APA website (http://www.apa.org/ed/accreditation/doctoral.html) provides a listing of APA-accredited doctoral programs in the following areas:

www.explorehealthcareers.org
Accredited Programs in Combined Professional-Scientific Psychology
Accredited Programs in Clinical Psychology - A through L
Accredited Programs in Clinical Psychology - M through Z
Accredited Programs in Counseling Psychology
Accredited Programs in School Psychology

In terms of curriculum, psychology students in traditional programs can expect to study both normal and abnormal functioning, focusing on the intersection of two critical relationships: one between brain function and behavior, and one between the environment and behavior.

For more information, see the “Students” section of the American Psychological Association website.

Professional Associations
American Psychological Association (http://www.apa.org/topics/psychologycareer.html)

Funding Opportunities
Search for funding opportunities in this field (http://www.explorehealthcareers.org)

Enrichment Programs
Search for enrichment programs in this field (http://www.explorehealthcareers.org)

Source
research.apa.org

Learn more about this field:
Mental Health (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/Field.17.aspx)

Salary: $30,000 - $76,604
Years in school: 6 - 8 *
Job outlook: Excellent

* after high school graduation