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BACHELOR OF ARTS IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT (1999), MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY (2001)
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21 YEARS EXPERIENCE

“Success is not the key to happiness; happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.”
– Albert Schweitzer

Can you tell me a little bit about your hospital and the units you cover?

When in my traditional role, I was primarily CCLS to Pediatrics/Pediatric Rehab/NICU, but I also covered the entire hospital on assigned weekends. In my current role, I am an academic who doesn't cover any “units,” but I provide academic advisement to students both through my Facebook page Child Life Connection: Student Forum and to my Eastern Washington University students (and to any others who reach out to me for guidance!). I also do Child Life consulting through Child Life Connection, so while I'm not assigned to a unit, I support both the development of child-friendly spaces in pediatric settings and the education of non-pediatric providers for pediatric patients.

What does your average day look like?

I have one of those crazy jobs that is primarily online, so I can start work as early as 4am when I have assignments to grade or lectures to write or record. But I also have quite a bit of flexibility to schedule meetings in hospitals or through Zoom, or even travel as needed for my role, because I'm not expected to be “in” a classroom at any given time. I'm also working on completing my doctoral studies (also online), and being involved in committee work through the ACLP – whenever I feel like my attention is needed that day is where it goes, as long as I can get at least 2 hours set aside for my classes daily. I love my Zoom sessions – it's my chance to see my students and colleagues face-to-face – and honored to be involved in program development for two academic universities, which are working towards greater involvement/growth in the field of child life. But I also love the flexibility of being online, as I can take my kids to school and back each day, and I do my best to be done working when they get home...but I've also been able to involve them in setting up play spaces in local hospitals and visiting murals-in-progress, so they've had a bit of exposure to how we can impact pediatric experiences together.

What is your favorite distraction item and how do you use it?

When I was in-hospital full time, there really wasn't a lot of technology, so while I love technology now and love the prospect of what it can offer any age/need immediately, it was never my go-to item. My favorite distraction items include ISpy/Find It toys that work for a range of ages – whether kids are listening to the sound or searching for themed items as diversion or even making their own to travel with them for procedures. For littles, I especially love bubbles (and love hearing laughter in pre-op or the lab when it's so unexpected by others – bubbles can do this so easily!)

What's the best part about your job?

I love being able to impact so many students, and see them working towards their goals of becoming a child life specialist! I find myself working with such an incredible range of experiences, and so many of my students are finding this field after completing a degree and not having academic supports from a CCLS, so I'm especially drawn to supporting those who aren't coming to this field from a traditional Child Life academic program (as I didn't either!) While I'm not currently working in a traditional CCLS role in hospital, I can see the impact I'm making for patients and families worldwide through my role in academics!

What's the hardest part in doing your job? The frustration and anxiety I see so many students experience as they work towards becoming certification eligible and then employed in Child Life.

What's a facet of your job that people wouldn't expect?

That I really only get to meet my students once a year at conference, yet I feel like I know them so well through our conversations both in class, through Facebook/email/Zoom/phone...but I'm always amazed by how many students I recognize at conference (and LOVE that so many come by just to be able to say hello in person). The stories I hear, and the experiences I get to be apart of (even though we're rarely in the same part of the country), makes my online job the most amazing one ever!!!

What's something you wish you knew when you started on this unit?

When I started in the field of Child Life, there was no such thing as online academic opportunities... I wish I had known that online instruction would exist and I could have jumped into it sooner!

Do you have anything else you'd like to share about your job, tips for students, or thoughts?

Everyone applying for practicums/internships/jobs has the same minimum requirements met, so finding ways to not only meet those minimums but to also exceed those in some meaningful way(s) is essential to being competitive. There's no set rule on what ways to do that, but to find what is most meaningful to you – and being able to share your “why” during interviews and networking will showcase exactly what you need to set yourself apart from others. There's no required timeline to meeting/exceeding requirements, so slow down when needed and enjoy the experience!

