

Lana Freed ([00:19](#)):

My name's Lana and I'm the host of Get Hungry. I was born and grew up on Boonwurrung country and also have a very personal connection to my own Jewish culture and heritage. On behalf of the team producing this podcast, we pay our respects to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the traditional owners of the land the Australian Swinburne campuses are located on, and where this podcast was recorded. We also pay respect to elders past, present, and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and aspirations of Aboriginal Australia. We must remember that under the concrete and the asphalt, this land is, was and always will be traditional Aboriginal land. The rich storytelling history of the world's oldest living culture is what we proudly pay homage to when we share stories on this podcast.

([00:50](#)):

This is Get Hungry, a show where we give you a taste of what career success looks like by talking to some of the most successful people in different industries and learn how they got to where they are today. I'm your host Lana Fried, and I'm a psych student at Swinburne University of Technology. And like a lot of you, I often wonder what it is that makes a person successful. In this show, I'm going to talk to people from different industries who've asked themselves the same questions as you and I. Where am I going and how do I get there? We'll grab a bite of food or even a coffee from somewhere near Swinburne. Then we'll find a spot on campus to have a chat. We'll talk about everything. We'll explore the successes that they've had, and just as important, the mistakes and missteps that they've learned from. So let's get into it.

([01:41](#)):

I am catching up with Distinguished Professor James Ogloff. He's the dean of Health Sciences at Swinburne, and an incredibly smart guy. Now James, or Jim, as he prefers, has the most fascinating career history. In addition to being dean, Jim is a forensic psychologist. He's had experience working in prisons with notorious criminals, in clinics with trauma patients, and in consultation with policymakers, shaping community mental health services. In today's episode, we'll talk about the variety of careers on offer in psychology. Jim will tell us how his career took him from his native Canada, all the way to Australia. He'll break down what it actually means to be a forensic psychologist, and Jim will share the story of how he found his calling while doing an elective that he didn't even want to do. Today, we're meeting at Ray Sandwich Deli on Glen Ferry Road. So, let's go.

([02:38](#)):

Now, I am here today on Glen Ferry Road just around the corner from Ray's Sandwich Deli. It's a really beautiful morning today, and the traffic is buzzing on by. Why don't we go have a look and see what they've got to offer.

([02:53](#)):

Hi, are you Jim?

James Ogloff ([02:54](#)):

Hi, yeah, I'm Jim.

Lana Freed ([02:56](#)):

Jim, it's lovely to meet you. My name's Lana.

James Ogloff ([02:57](#)):

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Hi, Lana. Nice to meet you.

Lana Freed ([03:00](#)):

Have you had a look around to see what you were thinking of ordering today?

James Ogloff ([03:03](#)):

Yeah, I've been here for a minute, and I've settled on the Reuben.

Lana Freed ([03:06](#)):

Well, I've been looking at the sweets and the cookies as well, but I think I'm going to get the continental probably.

James Ogloff ([03:17](#)):

So, what year are you in?

Lana Freed ([03:18](#)):

I am in my second year, but I will be doing second semester on exchange in Montreal.

James Ogloff ([03:24](#)):

Oh, I'm from Canada myself.

Lana Freed ([03:26](#)):

Oh my gosh, amazing. Where from?

James Ogloff ([03:28](#)):

I'm from Western Canada, but I lived in Vancouver, and I lived in Saskatchewan. I lived in two US states as well.

Lana Freed ([03:33](#)):

That's awesome.

James Ogloff ([03:34](#)):

You'll really enjoy Montreal. It's a lot like Melbourne, colder, but a similar culture, and they speak French.

Lana Freed ([03:40](#)):

I speak a little bit of French, so I'm really excited.

James Ogloff ([03:42](#)):

That'll serve you well.

Deli staff ([03:43](#)):

Here's your continental.

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Lana Freed ([03:45](#)):

Thank you so much.

Deli staff ([03:46](#)):

Ruben.

James Ogloff ([03:47](#)):

Thanks a lot.

Lana Freed ([03:48](#)):

Thank you.

Deli staff ([03:48](#)):

Thank you.

Lana Freed ([03:49](#)):

Have a lovely day

([03:55](#)):

So now that we've got our food, why don't we head back on campus and we can get the interview started?

James Ogloff ([03:59](#)):

Sounds good.

Lana Freed ([04:02](#)):

So, we had our sandwiches and we were ready to go. For today's conversation, we went to one of the psychology observation rooms, and I found it really cool. So, I asked Jim to explain what it was all about.

James Ogloff ([04:13](#)):

It's a great facility. It's one of our simulation spaces. So, the room we're sitting in now is where the students would sit, and then we're facing a one-way mirror, and behind that, it's the clinical space. So, we can have a variety of different people in there. We can move in equipment, for example, even hospital beds or physio plints and do demonstrations with people that students can observe. The people on that side can't see the students sitting there. And also, as you can see, there's a lot of technology in the room, both buffers for sound, but also hearing so you can hear very well what's happening there. So, the clinical simulation space is really important.

Lana Freed ([04:55](#)):

So personally, as a psychology student at Swinburne, I've been really looking forward to meeting you and chatting about your story, getting into psychology and the things that you've achieved in your career. So Jim, you started off studying something different to where you are now. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

James Ogloff ([05:10](#)):

Yeah. So, I started in commerce and then switched to psychology, and then eventually did, law degree and ended up in psychology and law.

Lana Freed ([05:19](#)):

So, take me back to that time. How did you find yourself getting into psychology from law?

James Ogloff ([05:23](#)):

I grew up a long time ago, so really my formative years were really the late '60s and 1970s. And at that time, psychology wasn't really on the radar. There really weren't books about psychology. There was no psychology in high school. So, I never even knew about psychology. And I'd always planned to be a lawyer or for a long time. And in North America, you have to do an undergrad before you go to law school. So, I started in commerce and did business, and I had to do an elective. So, after my second year, I had to take an elective, and psychology was available in a summer class where I could do it all in three weeks, compressed, attend class every day. And I thought, I'd just like to get this out of the way. But as I was doing that, I just became really entranced with psychology, and I didn't change majors.

([06:12](#)):

I went back the next semester to do commerce again. And I was taking organisational psychology or human resources, and I just thought it was terribly dull. And so, we were really fortunate because I could literally go and speak to the head of the psychology department and change my entire major. So, I changed the major and ended up doing psychology. So, I first started to work with children, but I still had that interest in law. So, when I did my post-grad training, I did it in clinical psychology, but I worked in a facility which was a secure hospital, psychiatric hospital within a federal prison. And it just made me more and more interested in law and psychology. And so, I ended up finishing my training in clinical psychology, worked for a while in a prison and then was drawn to do law. And I was very fortunate. I went to the US where I did a law degree then, and then I was able to do my PhD in psychology. So, from then on, I always worked sort of back and forth between psychology and law.

Lana Freed ([07:17](#)):

And then that led you to becoming a forensic psychologist. So, what does that actually entail? What does that mean?

James Ogloff ([07:24](#)):

A clinical psychologist, which is really working with people with mental illness or other sorts of cognitive disturbances, but also forensic psychology. And forensic psychology is the branch of psychology where we work with people at the interface of the legal system. So, it can be really broad work. So, the sort of work that I've done, for example, everything from working in a prison with people trying to rehabilitate them to reduce the likelihood that they're going to re-offend. My work for the last probably 20 years has mostly focused on assessments. So, assessing people primarily before the courts. So usually, it's someone who's committed a horrific crime, and the court wants some understanding of what happened, why did it happen, from a psychological perspective, will it happen again, what's the prognosis for re-offending or treatment. Similarly, a lot of assessments for the parole board and agencies like that.

Lana Freed ([08:16](#)):

So, then after your study, you do some work in prisons. Could you talk a bit about that, and what you got up to there?

James Ogloff ([08:24](#)):

On and off really, my whole life I worked in prisons. So initially, like I said, I did training. And I was really fortunate, the university I was at, actually had, believe it or not, it was a very large campus and it had a federal prison right on the campus. And the hospital, psychiatric hospital actually had all of the people who were department heads were also people who were at this facility. So, for example, the head of psychology had an appointment within the university. So, for me, it was the first time I really saw the sort of marriage between university and industry, which is something we've done a lot now. So, we have a lot of partners. So, I began working in prisons, really doing frontline work that is some assessment, a lot of treatment. And then over time, for a while, became more interested in mental illness.

[\(09:12\)](#):

And I was in fact the first director of mental health services in prisons in Canada before I came to Australia. So, I helped set up mental health services because people in prison have very high rates of mental illness. And at the time I started, there was very little recognition of that and very little opportunity for treatment. So, I eventually came to Australia, and I was really lucky here because the position that I held when I came was in the state forensic mental health system. So, in Victoria, we have a statewide system that provides services in three areas. One is in a secure hospital. So, this organisation called Forensic Care operates the state secure hospital. So, that's for people who are found not guilty by reason of mental impairment, or people who are in prison and require involuntary psychiatric care. So, I worked in that facility.

[\(10:07\)](#):

And then similarly, that organisation, forensic care, also does all of the court ordered assessments in the state and assessments for parole board and runs a community service for people in the community who require both mental health care, but also treatment to try to reduce offending, and particularly areas of unique offending like people who stalk, people who make threats, sex offenders, violent offenders. And then finally, they run all the mental health services in all the prisons in Victoria, both for men and women. So, it's a very large service. And we're really lucky because our state's unique where the act that establishes that agency requires that there's also training and research. And so, that's actually done through Swinburne University. Swinburne has a centre for forensic behavioural science, and that is operated by the university in cooperation with the forensic service. So, the majority of staff and students who are there are working between the research teaching interface and also providing services within that forensic system.

Lana Freed ([11:11](#)):

It sounds like it's a really fantastic pathway for psych students or any student interested in forensic psychology.

James Ogloff ([11:17](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. It really is. Yeah.

Lana Freed ([11:20](#)):

Do you happen to have an interesting story that you can tell us about your time working in prisons?

James Ogloff ([11:25](#)):

Once I was running a programme in a prison for trying to help people reduce violence. And so, this was a large group programme. And I can't remember now why, but something I said really set off one of the prisoners. And we were sitting in a circle on chairs, and he started to charge across the room toward me. And I had enough wherewithal to think, if I stand up, it'll look like I'm provocative, and he'll punch me. And I thought, I'll just sit here, and hopefully, he won't attack me. But what happened much to my surprise is the two prisoners on either side of me stood up and stopped him from getting to me. And that's something I learned is that, obviously, prisoners come from a range of backgrounds, and they can get very upset with us when we're trying to do things. But oftentimes, you'll have other prisoners stepping in to assist. And certainly, I've seen that a lot.

Lana Freed ([12:17](#)):

That's a really interesting story. It definitely says a lot about the multifaceted capacity of humans. So, then how did you go from this work to where you are now?

James Ogloff ([12:27](#)):

It was, for me, a natural transition that, as I mentioned with the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, I was the one who started that. I was the director for a long time. It started in about 2006. And so, in the last 18 months, I moved from that job into dean of Health Sciences. I'd been part of the executive of the School of Health Sciences since it was established in 2014. And so, I was able to grow into that position. So, I still teach, but I only teach one class now, post-grad class. And I do clinical work, but it's pretty limited. So, about a day a week. So, my job now much more is about developing programmes, developing opportunities for students and staff in the health sciences area broadly.

Lana Freed ([13:10](#)):

It's really interesting. You had this whole career mapped out as a lawyer, but then you took a chance on this one elective subject, and it opened up a whole new world for you. Did you know you had an interest in psychology, and what made you want to get into this?

James Ogloff ([13:25](#)):

No, I didn't. In fact, I sort of despised psychology. I thought of it as a soft area. And I remember taking the bus to uni with the book, the textbook facing in, so no one would see that I was doing psychology. And I really resisted liking that because I saw myself really working in corporate law, a very different area, but I really got sucked in. And for me, there's a real message in that for students, which is really try different things because so many young people I speak to, they think they know what they want to do, and they're almost resistant to trying different things. But I've always seen people who do something they enjoy doing much more. And in my case, it really... And each time in my life. So, the first was taking that psychology class. The second was really, I went into psychology, like I said, did post-grad. And then just again by accident, I was working or volunteering at the university, an evening, for post-grad studies to provide information to undergrads about post-grad.

([14:26](#)):

Yeah. Of course, there was no internet in those days, so everything was done manually. So, what would happen is universities would post their courses to other universities, and then they would have these information nights where you'd have a room, not unlike this, with on the wall, you'd have a bunch of posters. And I got relegated for some reason to the US section, even though we were all Canadian. And I

was hanging up a poster. And it's absolutely true. It talked about law and psychology programmes. And at the time, there were five programmes, they were all in the United States where you could go and do a law degree and also end up doing a PhD in psychology.

[\(15:03\)](#):

So, as soon as I saw that, I was hooked. And it was a real big move. Because I had just been married, moved to a different city already to do post-grad. And the next thing I'm saying, "Let's go to the US." And so, we took a risk and did it. And then obviously, I moved around quite a lot in North America. Each time, it paid off. And then the last big risk for me was really coming to Australia, which was a long time ago now, 2001. But it was again, great opportunity. So, I think a lot of people are very reluctant to take up challenges, but I've always benefited from that.

Lana Freed [\(15:38\)](#):

It's really interesting to think that if you didn't make that change and take, like you say, the challenge of taking on two areas that you may have missed out on your calling. Do you have any advice for students that might be just one elective away from finding their calling?

James Ogloff [\(15:53\)](#):

Take a chance. And the other thing is, for me, it was a real shift going from commerce into psychology, because I went in late. So, it was a four year course over there. And I was halfway through. And that was a real thing to say, "I'm now going to switch my entire study." And similarly, because psychology is very... Obviously, very few people go on to become psychologists. The head of department also said... And you really have to... At that time, because I only had to do my psychology subjects after, I had to do incredibly well, because it was very competitive to get to post-grad. And I have to say, I came from a background that was... I was the first person to go to university. I was raised by a single parent. And I really doubted myself at the beginning, can I do this? So, I learned take a risk and have confidence in yourself. And I think for students, that's really important, because I see so many people who doubt their ability. And when I see that they're able to apply themselves, oftentimes they're doing really well.

Lana Freed [\(16:53\)](#):

If there's someone who's in a similar position to what you were in, who's unhappy with what they're studying and thinking about potentially changing everything, what advice would you have for them?

James Ogloff [\(17:02\)](#):

Seek information, that's the first thing. And information from somebody who really knows. So, somebody who really... In my case, it was a department head. But it can be a lecturer, it can be somebody who really understands. Because I think the other thing is very often, and I'm sure you've experienced this, when you're coming from high school to uni, you think what you're interested in, but then when you start to do it, you think, I don't know if I really like this.

[\(17:27\)](#):

In my case, it was commerce and I was really invested in wanting to do it, but then I didn't really enjoy it, but I didn't allow myself to realise that because I was committed to doing it. So, speak to someone who can really inform you about what it's really like. And again, for me, I was really lucky because it's like at Swinburne, we have work integrated learning now and everything. And so, people can go and see what a job's like. And that really helps us understand what people are doing. And again, and the other bit, I keep coming back to is confidence in yourself. And at Swinburne, we get such a range of people that a

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lot of people I see feel like maybe they're not able to do it. Yet, I've seen and mentored many, many students who've done really well, who at the beginning, really lack that confidence.

Lana Freed ([18:15](#)):

So, these days, you are the dean of the School of Health Sciences at Swinburne. What's an average day in the life like for you here?

James Ogloff ([18:22](#)):

Well, there's no day that's the same as the day before. So, I'm responsible for really everything in the school, everything from teaching, research, all the partnerships. Again, we have more than 20 different industry partners in terms of hospitals, other health services. And I'm responsible for that. And similarly, within the university, I play a role in the leadership around the vision of university. So, my work is largely administrative. So, I do a lot of meetings and supervising people. I still manage to do research and teaching. So, I teach one postgraduate class and teach into a few other classes. And I still have a number, about 10, PhD students who work with me. And I still do research.

Lana Freed ([19:05](#)):

And then if there's anyone out there who wants to get where you are, how would you suggest that they get there?

James Ogloff ([19:11](#)):

A few people, me included, never thought I'd be dean. In fact, I didn't want to be dean. And partly because I loved what I did. So, I taught for many years, I supervised students, I do research and so forth. But I got to a stage in my career where I was wanting to step back from that and really have more of a leadership role. So, I think for most people, you wouldn't set out to want to be a dean. But certainly, I think in my area, is really the two directions that people usually go in are the clinical areas. So, you're doing applied work, like I said, as a forensic psychologist, and then a number are doing the more academic. So, I've had lots of students who are now academics themselves, who are doing teaching and research. So, I think the building block's the same.

([19:55](#)):

You have to do undergrad and you have to do well. That's one thing that is a challenge. And then do post-grad. And then you begin to sort of specialise in different areas. And I think don't be afraid, like I keep saying, take a challenge, but really apply yourself. And I think I've been fortunate because I've never actually had a job that I didn't like. And for me, that was a challenge because I enjoy what I do. So, it's really hard sometimes to pull back, or think, I'll go in a different direction.

([20:23](#)):

So, I think for people it's, have that vision, work hard and succeed. And also the other thing, I think, as you get older, you realise is life is pretty long, and you can do things. Like for example, at one point in my life, I didn't do any clinical work for three years. I was in a university, it was very competitive to get tenure, and I had to do research and teaching. And I didn't work. And at that time, it seemed like a long time. But when I look back, it's just a blip. So, a few years doing a job and then switching, that really works well in terms of your career. And I actually think that's probably more common. So, the course people take really depends on the individual.

Lana Freed ([21:01](#)):

I think for a lot of psychology students, there's this idea that you do your undergrad, your honours, and then a post-grad in clinical psych, and it's not always as evident that there's so many other branches of psychology to go out into. So, what would your number one tip be for psychology students going through the programme right now?

James Ogloff ([21:18](#)):

Well, it's really like a pyramid. So, everybody has to do the same. So, at all of Australia, you do the APAC accredited 12 units in psychology, you get your bachelor's, you then do honours, and then you get into post-grad. And of course, at Swinburne, we have clinical and we have forensic and we have counselling. And we'll have education and development. But students then decide, they decide what will I begin to specialise in. And they do have to do that common pathway because that's what's required to be licenced. But it's at that point you can start to decide what will I actually focus on. So, they could be a clinical psychologist, but you might have somebody who works in a hospital, dealing with people who have serious illnesses like cancer. You could have somebody who's got a private practise, seeing people who are referred from GPs, and paid by Medicare.

([22:11](#)):

So, even though you do the same sort of core training, you can over time, branch off. And like I said, you can do things... Probably 80% of people are doing simultaneous jobs. So, most people are working in the public systems. Even the areas I talked about are doing something like three days or two days, and then they're doing private practise or maybe they're doing some work at university. So, I think one of the attractions particularly of psychology is the diversity, you can really find something for everybody. And then even when you're working, you can have diversity and you can chop and change as you go. And it's particularly helpful I think for people at different stages of life to have that flexibility.

Lana Freed ([22:52](#)):

It's a long programme to get through for psychology students if you're going to make it all the way to your master's or your PhD. Do you have any tips for psychology students who might find that they're burning out along the way, or how to make sure that they're looking after themselves throughout the process?

James Ogloff ([23:09](#)):

There's a few things. One of the things though. We've been focusing on becoming a psychologist, but one of the great things about psychology is there are so many roles for psychology. So, we do work to look at the employability of our students. And the majority, obviously, don't go on to do master's or PhD. They end up with a master of psychology. And you see people, again, in a range of roles. So, I always tell students, when I finished my undergrad, I went to do psychology rather than law was that the psychology degree I did was a two year master's versus at the time three years law. And so, when I was young, that seemed to make a big difference. Now of course, it doesn't. I ended up 10 years in university, and that just seems like nothing now. In fact, you can't even really remember that you did it.

([23:54](#)):

So, I think one step at a time. So, focus on getting the bachelor's, focus on doing well in honours, then think about post-grad. And think about whether you want to do post-grad or go into another area. The other thing I'm a big fan of is moving in, like we talked about, to a different discipline. So, someone who's interested in psychology, say helping people and doing frontline work, post-grad in something like occupational therapy, that might actually be more suited to them. So, each time, again, just take it one

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step at a time, and evaluate your options along the way. And I think it's very daunting if you're sitting, like second year student, thinking, gee, if I would do a PhD, it's going to take me six more years. That's daunting. But if you break it into pieces like, I'm going to do my next year, then I'm going to do one year of honours and decide what to do, it's much more doable.

Lana Freed ([24:46](#)):

That's advice that I definitely need to hear, I think.

James Ogloff ([24:48](#)):

And you can also take breaks, which I'm a great advocate of, is take a break in between. Work for a while, take a break, decide what you want to do in the next step.

Lana Freed ([24:57](#)):

I personally made the decision to defer my last semester. And I do have to say that Swinburne has been incredibly supportive with that whole process. So, it's nice to know that there is that ability to start and stop and make your degree work for you going through, because like you say, it is looking at about a decade in front of you and getting a bit overwhelmed by it. So, I really appreciate that advice of really just remembering to take it one step at a time.

James Ogloff ([25:19](#)):

Once you're looking back, it's very different than looking forward. And again, the message is, just people, don't give up. There'll always be something to do at some point. And I've had people come to me, there was somebody once who worked at a prison I was at, and he was a medical records person, and he had done a three-year psych degree, didn't do very well. But now, he saw what psychologists did and he wanted to be one. And so, at the time, I was at a different university. He couldn't get into honours. But he got into one, and did incredibly well. And now, he's a psychologist. He went through, he did his master's, his doctorate, and he's a psychologist. But he didn't think he could do it. And without encouragement, he might've given up.

Lana Freed ([25:57](#)):

That's an awesome story. Gives me a lot of hope. So, now it's time for our quick fire round. I've got some food related questions that I'm going to ask you in rapid succession. The rules are: you have 10 seconds to answer each question, and you have to answer with the first thing that comes to your mind. Are you ready?

James Ogloff ([26:15](#)):

This sounds very psychological.

Lana Freed ([26:17](#)):

It does, doesn't it? So, let's go. If psychology was a food, what would it be?

James Ogloff ([26:24](#)):

My first thought is something soft and mushy, like a jam donut.

Lana Freed ([26:28](#)):

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Absolutely, love that. What is your favourite condiment?

James Ogloff ([26:31](#)):

American mustard.

Lana Freed ([26:33](#)):

What's the most unique or exotic dish you've ever tried? And did you like it?

James Ogloff ([26:37](#)):

I tried dog in South Korea, and I did not like it. I thought I was eating duck. I said, "Is this duck? Quack, quack?" They said, "No, dog. Bow, wow." And I didn't have any more.

Lana Freed ([26:49](#)):

I was not expecting that. What is the secret sauce to your success?

James Ogloff ([26:53](#)):

I don't know. I guess a slow cook, a long... Yeah. A slow cook probably. A simmer, a long simmer.

Lana Freed ([27:00](#)):

And finally, does pineapple belong on pizza?

James Ogloff ([27:04](#)):

No. Canadians invented it, and it's the one thing I don't like about Canada.

Lana Freed ([27:08](#)):

Correct answer. Thank you so much for joining me on the show.

James Ogloff ([27:12](#)):

Well, thanks a lot for having me. And good luck with your future.

Lana Freed ([27:15](#)):

Thank you very much.

([27:23](#)):

Thanks for listening to Get Hungry, a podcast from Swinburne University of Technology where you get a taste of what career success looks like. If you like what you heard and you're keen to study at Swinburne where you can get your own real industry experience, then head to the website, swinburne.edu.au. To make sure you don't miss an episode of Get Hungry, be sure to subscribe to or follow the show in your podcast app. And while you're there, leave us a five star review. It really helps others to find the show. This show was recorded in and around the Swinburne campus in Hawthorne, on Wurundjeri land, featuring some of the great cafes and most interesting buildings. The show was produced with strategy and production support by Wavelength Creative. I'm your host, Lana Fried. And thanks for listening to Get Hungry.