

... with Victoria Simms

'I pull on my trainers and go for a run'

One important moment

I wasn't feeling very excited about going to university after I finished school. I took a gap year to work in an orphanage in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. The deprivation that I witnessed was startling. I will never forget a conversation I had with a girl who was only a little younger than me: I asked her what she wanted to do when she was older and she looked me in the eyes and said she wanted to go to university. The likelihood of this happening for her was very slim. I realised I was incredibly lucky to be in this position... I threw myself into my studies and when times were stressful I remembered that conversation in the South African countryside.

One place to go

I grew up in a town by the sea in Northern Ireland, Carrickfergus. When I lived in the Midlands I couldn't work out why I sometimes felt so claustrophobic – I realised

I was desperately missing something that I had seen every day of my life, the sea! My favourite spot along our coastline is the village of Cushendall, nestled in the Glens of Antrim with the dramatic Lurig Mountain towering above it and views of the ocean from it.

One activity to de-stress

Whenever I feel like I can't focus or I'm stressed I pull on my trainers and go for a run, no matter what the weather! Running is a complete release. Sometimes I have great ideas whilst I'm running, but mainly I am totally distracted by my surroundings. I've done lots of races, from 5Ks to marathons (and even an accidental ultra, a very long story) but what I love the most is leaving my front door and going on an adventure. I am also now addicted to reading *Like the Wind*, a beautiful quarterly magazine that focuses on why people run rather than how.

One book

I've just finished reading *The Sculptor's Daughter* by Tove Jansson (author of the *Moomins*). Tove reflects on her magical childhood in Finland with her artist parents. As a developmental psychologist, I found the book particularly

interesting as it is written from the perspective of her six-year-old self. It's a really intriguing, insightful book.

One word of advice to early-career researchers

Collaborate with people who you enjoy working with. If you can have both tough theoretical discussions and great chats over a glass of wine, it makes working relationships straightforward, productive and fun!

One amazing live act

Go Go Penguin. They are a three-piece electronica/jazz band from Manchester. They are the tightest group I have ever heard play, they went from beautiful emotive tunes to deep, driving, near drum-and-bass beats.

One activity that keeps me inspired

I help run my local Science Café. I love being involved in public engagement, especially in this informal format. We've had fantastic talks ranging from endurance sport to the science of baking. Seeing how great scientists communicate with the public has motivated me to be creative in the ways that I disseminate my research findings.

One thing I want to do better

Carrying out cognitive psychology research that is related to children's learning obviously has clear implications for education. I've consciously been seeking out great researchers and practitioners to work with outside of psychology as I want to improve the reach of my research. I am constantly amazed by the amount of pseudoscience that targets teachers, and I feel strongly that we need to counteract this. As a discipline we have a lot to communicate, it's finding the right communication tools and

networks that will help get the message out there!

One great thing about social media

I joined Twitter last year (@drvcimmms). It has been a fantastic way to start conversations with the public and other academics. The world is small when you use social media, and there are amazing advantages to this. In fact, this 'One on one' came about through a Twitter chat!

One person to be proud of

My little sister, Charlie Elliott, began a degree that she really didn't enjoy. She had the guts to change course after the first year to midwifery. Our NHS staff work incredibly hard in difficult circumstances and often we forget how it impacts



on them as real people. To see Charlie glow when she talks about her job is really satisfying. I just hope that as a lecturer I can give my own students solid advice, just like my sister was given when she was on a course that was leading her on the wrong career path.

One fantastic gallery

The Science Gallery in Dublin is a great space. Students from Trinity College Dublin are the tour guides and their passion is infectious. The most recent exhibition I saw was on trauma. There was an 'Oculus Rift' that took you to the streets of Syria, a piano that let you experience the deafening noise of tinnitus, and self-portraits by an individual who had dementia, displaying their own cognitive decline.



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