

## Curiosity in science launches Dr Lauren Strober on the path to studying neuropsychology-Ep34

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JOAN BANKS-SMITH  
00:07

Welcome to a Fast Takes Women and Science podcast honoring the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. In this episode, I interviewed Dr. Lauren Strober, a senior research scientist in our Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research. We had the opportunity to talk about her curiosity in science that set the path into studying neuropsychology, how mentors and work experience have influenced her choice to work in science, and her work at the foundation. Let's listen in. Dr. Strober, why did you choose to become a scientist?

LAUREN STROBER  
00:43

I was always sort of curious about things, but on top of that, I always knew I wanted to do something that would help people, either in medicine or psychology. I actually thought I was going to be a pediatrician or a child therapist, to be honest. But I was premed all throughout my academic career. I was majoring in psychology with a minor in biology. And it kind of left me wondering where I would go because there was so much to kind of study. But during my last year of college, I actually enrolled in some advanced graduate courses to help me to determine where I really wanted to go and what I might want to study. So that time I took a neurobiology course, a developmental psychology course, and a biopsychology course. And it was in my biopsychology textbook at that time, it was a list of career paths that one could take with a degree in biopsychology. And it mentioned being a neuropsychologist, and that description was everything I wanted to do to be a psychologist that was first in medical and neurological conditions, who also studied the relationship between behavior in the brain and the intricate association of health and wellbeing. So that really kind of perked my interest. And at that point, instead of heading straight to medical school or graduate school right away, I actually took a position as a research assistant under the mentorship of a neurologist and began shadowing a clinical neuropsychologist at that time to really kind of see what the clinical aspect was like. And then after that, for two years I worked as [inaudible]. I finally applied to graduate school in clinical psychology and studied neuropsychology emphasis, and that set my path along the way.

BANKS-SMITH 02:16

What does a typical day look like for you?

STROBER 02:18

When I was a young girl and I thought about being a scientist or researcher, I probably imagined being in one of those old-fashioned black bench labs doing some sort of behavioral learning study with a chimpanzee or something like that, where I imagine I'd be out in the field observing some primate behavior and social structure. I was fascinated by Jane Goodall and Diane Fosse as a little girl. But alas, I cannot say that my research career has been quite that. I'm not sort of a mad scientist. I'm not in the lab conducting groundbreaking research. But the truth is I spend the majority of my day at my desk writing, whether that's a grant or a paper or a progress report and study. I write. When I'm not writing, I am reading. And when I'm not doing either of those activities, I'm either analyzing data or designing the next study. But I do, fortunately, can get my hands dirty with some data on occasion. And it's fun, sometimes, just think of a question that makes sense to you based on something you observe with the patient or participant or something that

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you read and then you realize, wait, I have that data and I might actually be able to answer that question and just sort of run to your data and it starts on a whole new sort of journey of inquiry. And so those days are really fun and kind of out of the ordinary.

BANKS-SMITH 03:31

If you were completely free to choose a scientific topic to work on, what would it be?

STROBER 03:35

I feel very fortunate to have the position, actually, that I have at Kessler Foundation in that I'm afforded a lot of opportunity and lead way to research ideas that are sort of out of the box or not maybe the norm for me. Over the past few years, I've looked into things such as gardening as an intervention or cooking, and even more recently, I'm working on a grant looking at music therapy as an intervention to reduce fatigue and depression in MS. And I think this freedom at times allows you to kind of think about ideas and interventions that are not necessarily in your wheelhouse or your expertise but make sense for the research interests that you're into and opens sort of a whole new world of learning and collaboration and experiences. And that opportunity really keeps things exciting and interesting. The sky's the limit some days as to what you can do if you just sort of think outside the box and find good collaborators to do things with. So it seems like there's no scientific topic you can't do without a little help from some research friends.

BANKS-SMITH 04:35

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us today.

STROBER 04:38

Thank you.

BANKS-SMITH 04:41

For more information about Dr. Strober and the Center for Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research, links are in the program notes. Tuned into our podcast series lately? Join our listeners in 90 countries who enjoy learning about the work of Kessler Foundation. Be sure to subscribe to our SoundCloud channel, Kessler Foundation, for more research updates. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Listen to us on Apple Podcast, Spotify, SoundCloud, or wherever you get your podcasts. This podcast was recorded on Wednesday, February 9, 2021 remotely and was edited and produced by Joan Bank Smith, creative producer for Kessler Foundation.