

# **FROM STUDENT TO CLINICIAN: WHAT I WISH I KNEW BEFORE MY FIRST THERAPY JOB**

**SDSU Psi Chi & Psychology Club  
Guest Speaker**

**Presentation by  
Roberto Dantes, M.S., M.A., AMFT  
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# WHO I AM

- I have worn Many hats
- From Entrepreneur
- M.S. I/O (Industrial Organizational Psychology)
- Coprparte World To Therapist
- AMFT to PhD student
- Passion: bridging training → practice





**The Myth of Being Ready**



**Shifting from Student to Clinician  
(Grad School)**



**Imposter Syndrome & Growth**



**Why Mentorship & Guidance Matter**



**What Grad School Looks Like &  
Career Choices After Grad School**



**Tools & Resources to take with you**

**WHAT WE'LL  
COVER TODAY**

# THE MYTH OF BEING READY

Even now, as psych majors, you might be feeling pressure:

- Do I need to know exactly what I want to do after graduation?
- Am I ready for grad school? Am I cut out for this field?
- Will that feeling ever entirely go away?

**NOBODY FEELS FULLY READY**

**GROWTH HAPPENS IN UNCERTAINTY**

**PRESENCE > PERFECTION**

**UNDERSTANDING YOUR “WHY”**

# Shifting from Student to Clinician (Grad School)

1

Different Types of Therapist

2

Multiple Paths → No single  
“right” way

3

Different types of systemic  
thinking.

Professional	Primary Distinction	Key Therapeutic Focus	Can Prescribe Medication?
Clinical Psychologist (Ph.D., Psy.D.)	<b>Doctoral degree.</b> Expertise in <b>psychological testing</b> and research.	Evidence-based therapy and comprehensive assessment.	No (except in a few states with special training).
Psychiatrist (MD, DO)	<b>Medical Doctor.</b> Can prescribe and manage medication.	Medical and neurobiological approach; medication management.	<b>Yes.</b>
Marriage & Family Therapist (MFT)	Master's degree. Focuses on relationships and family systems.	Systemic and relational therapy.	No.
Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	Master's degree. Focuses on the "person-in-environment" perspective.	Holistic approach, connecting clients to social resources.	No.
Licensed Professional Counselor (LPCC)	Master's degree. Broad focus on counseling and psychotherapy.	Versatile, client-centered approach to mental wellness.	No.



# Shifting from Student to Clinician (Grad School)

**1** What to Expect From Grad School

**2** Professional Training  
AKA  
"Intern"  
AKA  
Indenterured Servidute

**3** Life After Grad School?

# Imposter Syndronme & Growth

## 1. The Feeling 🤔

- “Who am I to do this?”
- Doubting skills/knowledge
- Comparing yourself to others

## 3. The Trap 🚧

- Over-preparing to ‘prove yourself’
- Avoiding opportunities out of fear
- Thinking you’re the only one feeling this

## 2. The Reality 🔍

- Everyone feels this (even professors & therapists)
- A sign you care and reflect
- Not a flaw, but part of the process

## 4. The Growth 🌱

- Reframe: Imposter = learning in action
- Track your “small wins”
- Lean on mentors & peers
- Build confidence through practice



# WHY MENTORSHIP & GUIDANCE MATTER

## Support 🤝

- Safe space to ask questions
- Encouragement during doubts
- Someone who's "been there"

## Growth 📈

- Learn from real-world experience
- Feedback helps sharpen skills
- Shortens the "trial & error" phase

## Connection 🔗

- Mentors often open doors
- Networking → future opportunities
- Guidance on career decisions

## Perspective 🌍

- Normalizes challenges
- Helps you see the "bigger picture"
- Encourages balance & self-care

The big message here is this: mentorship isn't about finding someone who has all the answers. It's about finding someone willing to walk with you, share what they've learned, and remind you that you belong in this field."



# WHAT GRAD SCHOOL LOOKS LIKE & CAREER CHOICES AFTER GRAD SCHOOL

## The Grad School Experience

- 2–7 years depending on degree (MFT, MSW, PsyD, PhD)
- Mix of classes + hands-on training
- Supervision = guidance from experienced therapists
- Balancing academics, clients, and life

## Training & Licensure

- Practicum/internship: first real clients
- Supervised hours (thousands!) before full license
- Exams + state requirements
- Learning continues after graduation

## Early Career Options

- Community agencies = lots of experience, heavy caseload
- Schools & nonprofits = kids, teens, families
- Group/private practices = flexibility, but less structure
- Hospitals/medical settings = integrated care

## Long-Term Possibilities

- Specialize (trauma, couples, children, etc.)
- Teaching, supervision, or leadership roles
- Private practice owner
- Blending clinical work with research, writing, or consulting

# Tools & Resources to Take With You

<b>Career Prep</b>	
<b>Learning Beyond Class</b>	
<b>Building Connections</b>	
<b>Find Balance &amp; Recharge</b>	

# KEY TAKEAWAYS



**Myth of Being Ready:** Growth as a therapist (and student) happens in uncertainty, not in having all the answers. Clients don't need perfection; they need presence.



**Shifting from Student to Clinician (Grad School):** You don't stop being a learner when you become a clinician; you just start learning in real time, with real people.



**Imposter Syndrome & Growth:** Feeling like an imposter means you're growing, it's proof you care, not proof you don't belong



**Why Mentorship & Guidance Matters:** Mentorship accelerates growth, opens doors, and reminds you that you don't have to navigate this path alone.



**What Grad School Looks Like & Career Choices After Grad School.”** Grad school is your training ground, and your first jobs are stepping stones, not final destinations.



Q&A Time

