



Graduate School Statement of Purpose Example for Clinical Psychology (984 words)

When I was 12 years old, my sister suffered a traumatic car accident that left her with PTSD, depression, and severe anxiety. Our parents did not really understand the impact of what she was going through and as a family, we never talked about it much, though we all could witness her pain. So, through my teen years, I watched as a beloved family member struggled with her mental health. Though I did my best to support her through the worst times and assist her in getting professional help, there were still many moments when I felt powerless and clueless in the face of her suffering. This challenging experience set me on the path to pursuing clinical psychology as a career. I wanted to question, dissect, analyze, and hopefully, understand, this mysterious phenomenon that had dominated my life for so long. Through my academic study of psychology and personal experience of my sister's PTSD, I found that I was particularly interested in clinical psychology with relation to adolescent populations.

From the age of 16 to 21, I worked as a volunteer at an after-school care program for children and teens from disadvantaged backgrounds. While there, I met numerous young people, who had faced starvation, neglect, abuse, and violence, from a very young age, and who needed help to cope with the long-term effects of those early experiences. Working with these kids, helping them through events that might be unimaginable for most adults, further sharpened my interest in how trauma influences the development of generalized anxiety disorders and panic disorders, and in particular, the pre-existing conditions and underlying risk factors for suicide in adolescents with PTSD, anxiety, and depression. This is the topic I hope to continue to explore as a Master's student in the Clinical Psychology program of your university. Thanks to my personal and first-hand experiences with the effects of trauma, I think I can bring a unique perspective to the study of long-term PTSD in adolescents.

Though my core interest in clinical psychology and the effects of trauma started as deeply personal, my scholarly curiosity and intellectual proficiency led me to academic explorations of this subject from a young age. While in high school, I took up Intro to Psychology classes from my local community college and completed a Peer Youth Counselling certificate course from the Ryerson Center for Mental Health. This academic exploration confirmed my desire to study psychology in college, and my coursework through my undergrad years focused on building a broad portfolio of the key areas of psychology, including Clinical Psychology, Cognitive Psychology and Behavioral Science, Industrial Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, and more. I also took up courses in Biology, Physiology, and Neuroscience to better understand the physical pathologies of adolescent trauma. I believe this thorough grounding in the biological aspects of developmental psychopathology will help me to address the sorely needed requirement for cross-disciplinary research into effective treatment programs for trauma survivors.

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Throughout my undergraduate education, I gained research experience that helped me develop the skills and knowledge I need for my clinical psychology graduate studies. For my last two years of undergrad, I worked with Drs. Rebecca Brown, Tyler Baker, and Gary Wolf at the Guntherson Memorial Lab at ABC University, on their studies into the development of substance abuse in adolescents suffering from PTSD. As a research assistant my responsibilities included conducting literature searches, data collection, data entry, supervision of study participants, preparation of research documents, and drafting of participant assessment packets. Thanks to this experience, I was able to develop my valuable observational and data analysis skills and learn more about critical aspects of clinical research such as programming computer tests, investigating study measures, forming hypotheses, supervising participants, and more. I also enrolled in Dr. Brown's senior level research class and through my final two years of undergrad, I published four research papers on a variety of clinical psychology topics, including a paper on "Depression, Anxiety, and Traumatic Amnesia in Adolescent Survivors of CSA" that was published in the New England Psychology Journal's June 20XX year issue.

What attracted me to the clinical psychology master's program at XYZ University was the strong emphasis on diversity in the classroom and cultural context in the curriculum which aligns with my ambition to gain a holistic, socially conscious understanding of trauma manifestations in vulnerable populations. Moreover, your program offers the chance for students to complete two research projects in the world-class research facilities associated with the XYZ University, allowing me to develop and perfect my research skills in the most appropriate environment. I hope to complete these projects under the supervision of your faculty members, Dr. Sally Hendrix and Dr. Mirian Forster, widely considered two of the most brilliant, forward-thinking minds in trauma research today. Their work on the endocrinological risks of anxiety development in adolescents and development of abnormal psychology in CSA survivors is particularly pertinent to my own research interests. With my background in clinical research, my first-hand experience of the effects of trauma, and my deep devotion to and understanding of the pathological effects of adolescent PTSD, I think I can bring a lot to your next master's cohort.

Through all the clinical experiences and academic knowledge I gained in the last few years, my interest in the questions of trauma, anxiety, and depression continue to be deeply personal. Though my sister survived her teenage years, she continues to live with anxiety and symptoms of PTSD that she doesn't fully understand. There is still so much about human psychology that we simply don't know, and I hope to address that gap a little by using the training and education I gain at your university to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology in the future. By seeking the answers to the questions of how trauma

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can warp an adolescent brain and what we can do to try and manage it, I hope to shed light on an under-represented area of psychology that sorely needs our attention.