

# So you think you want my job?

NAME PRISCILLA SIM

AGE 34

FROM LONDON

JOB RELATIONSHIP  
COUNSELLOR

## A typical day

“Before I joined Relate, the UK’s largest relationship counselling service, I worked as a PA in the City. When my dad died five years ago, I questioned what I was doing with my life and changed careers.

“As a counsellor, my hours vary, so it’s difficult to have a routine, but I usually request evening shifts to fit around the volunteering I do for Childline.

“Relate is based in my local health centre, and when I get into the office I’ll read notes from my last session and think about themes to discuss with the couples I’m going to see. A couples counselling session lasts 50 minutes and I see three or four couples per shift.

“People from all kinds of backgrounds need counselling. It’s usually at major life stages, such as getting married, having a baby or after an affair. I encourage people to visit as soon as a problem arises – don’t wait until crisis point!

“Everything discussed is confidential, though sometimes I’ll work with other counsellors to discuss specific cases. It can be really emotional. I’ve never

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cried in the room, but sometimes I’ve welled up afterwards. Recently I asked a man, who was reluctant to talk, what he liked about his partner. Eventually he said, ‘The moment I saw her I thought she was the most beautiful woman I’d ever seen. I didn’t think she’d look twice at me. I miss our closeness.’ The sudden shift choked me up.

“It can be hard to sit back if somebody is difficult or rude towards their partner, but I have to remind myself I’m not there to judge people. My job is to help couples make their own decisions.

“Between seeing clients, I’ll grab a herbal tea and write up

my notes while everything is fresh in my mind.

“Because my boyfriend and I have different schedules, we share calendars on Google to make time together! Often I grab dinner on the way home and watch *Made In Chelsea* – the perfect antidote to my work.”

## The good

“Watching people going from being at each other’s throats to finally understanding each other is hugely moving.”

## The bad

“You take everything home, good and bad. That makes you a good counsellor but it can be emotionally tiring.”

## STILL INTERESTED?

### Qualifications

“Relate counsellors need a basic counselling-skills qualification and will receive further training with Relate. Visit [Relate.org.uk](http://Relate.org.uk) or call 01302 553915.”

**Salary** “A Relate counsellor earns £10–£20 an hour.”

**Key skills** “An interest in people and relationships. Empathy, self-awareness and a thick skin are must-haves – as is being able to keep a secret!”