

About Me

First, let me give you some general information about my background and later I will explain how I came to realize my purpose and potential to be a helper in this world. My name is Melissa Lynn Ennis and I was born in Syracuse, New York. I am the youngest member of my family and I have an older brother and sister. My parents were born and raised within the Piedmont region of North Carolina in a two stop light town called Coats. When I was seven, my parents decided to move back to their hometown where I had the distinct privilege of receiving my elementary education in the same brick laden schoolhouse (with a few new additions) where both my parents and grandparents graduated high school.

As a child, I was fortunate to have been given many opportunities to develop a strong work ethic. I began working at my aunt and uncle's country store when I was ten and also cleaned houses and did yard work until I was old enough to get my driver's license. After that I continued to work and attend school, but I dreamt of the day when I would go off to college to obtain my degree in veterinary medicine. I had volunteered at the local animal hospital for several summers and animals were my passion. That being the case, I graduated high school with honors and started my first semester at NC State University as an animal science major with an emphasis on veterinary medicine. After a year in the program, I decided to take a course in human behavior. It was then that I realized that I no longer desired to pursue a career that was centered on animals. I still wanted them to be a big part of my life, but not as something that made money. So, I decided to begin studying human behavior and what was at first just an inclination to be helpful to others became the main focus of my life.

It was at that point when I transferred to UNC Wilmington in order to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. It wasn't until the summer of my final year when I realized that I was not satisfied with my education and wanted to understand humans as individuals. So, I began to take courses in psychology and graduated with both degrees in the spring of 2002. I had also decided early that spring to apply to graduate schools for an advanced degree in clinical psychology. I was accepted into the master's degree program at UNCW and was set to begin taking classes that fall. In the interim, I obtained a position at the university as Statistician and Assessment Specialist for the Division of Student Affairs. It was this position which led me to become interested in instructional technology.

The primary functions of my position included providing consultations to all departments within the division regarding a wide variety of assessment related issues. I was able to work with clients to develop both quantitative and qualitative assessment instruments, and provide statistical analyses and reports. As time passed, I also began developing websites, training instruments and even departmental newsletters as part of my job. For the first time in my college career, I really felt like I was developing skills that enabled me to help people on a much larger scale and all the while continuing to progress in my training as a clinical psychologist.

Everything seemed to be going well for me. I got married during my second semester of graduate school, had a house full of animals and a great job. I could not have been happier until I began my practicum experience at a local behavioral health hospital. It was not at all what I had expected and I began to feel disillusioned with the program and the profession as a whole. So, I made the decision to search out professions that involved technology and would enable me to help people in other ways. That is when I started to look into other graduate programs at UNCW and discovered MIT.

In the fall of 2004, I was accepted into the program and began taking instructional technology graduate courses while continuing to work at the university. I also petitioned the psychology

program board to allow me to finish a general psychology master's degree instead of continuing in clinical psychology, since I had completed most of the coursework anyway. They agreed to allow me to change programs, so I continued my education as a dual master's degree candidate, and I felt like I had finally found my calling in Instructional Technology.

One of the things that I really value about being an Instructional Technologist is the ability to help people in a variety of ways. This program has provided me with the skills that are necessary in order to develop effective instructional materials for all types of individual differences and learning styles based on sound theoretical principles and systematic approaches. Whether I am working for a large corporation with a team of instructional designers or as a single consultant, I am now able to help people no matter what problems may arise in the workplace.

By incorporating the skills that I learned on the job with the systematic approaches that I have been taught, I am now able to tackle any situation with confidence in my ability to uncover the true issues and then recommend appropriate solutions. If I conduct a thorough needs assessment and discover that the issue involves a human performance problem, then I can recommend training and, if necessary, design, develop and evaluate the instructional materials based on sound models and theories. If the issues are not related to performance, then I can inform the client of the real issues and recommend other solutions which may include introducing a change within the work environment. Whatever the problem may be, clients can rest assured that my findings are based upon a sound assessment and that any instructional materials will be effective for their learners.