I grew up in the beautiful state of California, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains just outside Sacramento. I first got interested in understanding the brain when I took a psychology class in high school. I was fascinated by the multitude of functions the brain is capable of as well as learning how one brain could be different from another's in perceiving illusions or in cases of mental illness or psychiatric disorders. I soon realized however that I didn’t have any interest in becoming a psychiatrist, I was more interested in how the brain works. What is really going on at the cellular and molecular level that could explain changes in perception in behavior in say schizophrenia or Alzheimer's disease.

I went to University of California, Davis and majored in Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior. I interned in a lab that studied age-related hearing loss in monkeys and realized that I loved research. I decided I would try to apply for grad school and I was lucky enough to get an interview at the UT Health Science Center and was offered admission. Since then, I have worked in a lab that uses fruit flies to study the genes and pathways involved in perceiving pain. We hope to use what we find to create better treatments for chronic pain management and for cancer patients that experience often painful sensory neuron damage due to the toxic effects of chemotherapy.

FAQ:

**What is your favorite aspect of your job?**
I have the freedom to design my own experiments and answer interesting scientific questions about human biology and the brain that no one else on the earth knows. I get to explore, tinker, and push the boundaries of what we know about the brain and the world around us.

**What is your least favorite aspect of your job?**
At times, trying to answer scientific questions can be extremely tedious. Any scientist will tell you this. The devil is in the details as they say, and as a scientist you have to be extremely thorough in your experiments. For that reason, it can sometimes take years to get to an answer. You have to be patient, positive, and passionate about what you are trying to do.

**How long does it take to get to where you are?**
I did four years of undergrad, and I am now in my 4th year of graduate school. I expect it will take me 1-2 more years to finish my Ph.D (a Ph.D takes 4-6 years on average).

**What would you like to do in the future?**
I would like to go into research and teaching, perhaps work at an undergraduate university and teach biology, neuroscience, or psychology. First, I will have to do post-doctorate work in a laboratory where I can learn additional techniques and get more experience, this will take another 2-5 years.

**How much money could you make in this career?**
Right now, my Ph.D program offers a stipend (income) of $29,000/year, insurance and my school is paid for.

**Can I contact you with more questions about your career decisions?**
Yes!