

# Lisa Desire Forensic Scientist



*Forensics uses science to assist with medical-legal investigations.*

## **How long have you been a forensic scientist?**

Since 1997. I worked for NYC's Office of Chief Medical Examiner for almost 15 years; since then I've done private consulting for attorneys, authors, and college curriculum coordinators.

## **Where do you currently work?**

I'm the owner of Prime Suspect, LLC, a company that promotes forensic education in schools, camps, and courtrooms.

## **How do you spend most of your time at work?**

As a forensic scientist, my day was spent examining evidence associated with criminal cases, performing DNA testing to determine who may have left this evidence behind, processing crime scenes, and testifying in court.

As the creator of Prime Suspect, most of my time is spent designing programs and bringing hands-on forensic activities into schools, giving virtual lectures, or privately consulting.

## **Why did you choose this career?**

Forensics is a fascinating field; working in New York City has given me experience that I couldn't have gained elsewhere. Since I'm no longer in the lab, I'm using the knowledge I've gained through these experiences to share with educators and students, hoping to spark their interest in the field.

## **What did you do to prepare for this career?**

I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Genetic Engineering, and a Master of Science degree in Forensic Science.

## **What do you enjoy most about your job?**

I love the fact that every case is different. Although there may be similarities, the details, people involved and evidence left behind are never, ever, exactly the same. I also take great pride in knowing the work I have done has helped clear the innocent and expose the guilty.

## **What do you find most challenging about your job?**

Watching CSI-type shows on TV; while some of the science is valid, the episodes are way too glamorized – to the point where I find them almost painful to watch!

## **What is one piece of advice you would give to a young person who is interested in your profession?**

Just one? I've got a few!

- ⇒ It's never too early to start reading about the many different disciplines of forensic science – anthropology, fingerprinting, toxicology, psychology, ballistics, etc. Which topics interest you the most?
- ⇒ If there are colleges or universities in your area that offer programs in Forensic Science, attend one of their public workshops or lectures; they're often free.
- ⇒ You don't necessarily need a degree in Forensics to be a forensic scientist; a degree in biology, chemistry, physics or a related field is often sufficient – you'll get plenty of on the job training before you're permitted to handle actual cases.
- ⇒ One final thought: a successful forensic scientist is someone who can remain unbiased, collaborates well with others, has good attention to detail and a strong work ethic (a strong stomach doesn't hurt either!).

### **LISA'S FUN FACTS**

*I have a bearded dragon named Spike who is super cool.*

*In my free time, I enjoy kayaking, playing shuffleboard and making sushi with my family (they're super cool too!)*

