

AN INTERVIEW WITH AZURII COLLIER

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Azurii [00:00:14] Encyclopedia Britannica in the second grade. So in the 90s, I recall Encyclopedia Britannica as being like a big thing for like the middle class families to get for their kids. Right. So it's like the latest and greatest educational tool, and I, think it was like the second grade, was looking through it and I saw a transparency that had like the body. So, I was a curious kid, always asking questions why, most kids ask questions why, but I kept asking questions why for my whole life, and I still do. I saw a transparency of the body and I saw a transparency of the brain. A little slide. And wrote a paper, like my little second grade paper about the three parts of the brain. So, it just made me think about biology. And then in middle school, I learned that the brain controls human behavior. So, my thinking was like if I'm always asking why people do what they do and now I know the brain controls it, if I learn the brain, I can figure it out, right, then I can understand people.

Azurii [00:01:17] So that was in middle school. I'm from Augusta, Georgia. We would take trips to Atlanta, which is the capital of Georgia. And one of those trips we, as the classroom we just had lunch at Emory University. So, me being a little overachieving seventh grader, I use the AOL, the free Internet. And I saw that I had a neuroscience major. I was like, oh, I got to do this. That was like seventh grade. Seventh or eighth grade.

Azurii [00:01:48] I enjoyed the intellectual rigor of being like a researcher, right, so I enjoyed thinking about what are interesting problems. I enjoyed writing papers and going to

conferences, but I didn't see myself being seventy five with an endowed chair and feeling good. So just the prospect of a career in academia didn't fit me, in my heart, right, I like the intellectual side of it. I liked the problem-solving, but I didn't feel a life in academia with like grants and papers. I began to become more interested in the business side of research. So I thought, what do people who understand biotechnologies, what do they do outside of academia? So, I just started asking questions and like figure it out. So, I started hanging out around the B school some more at Kellogg, at Northwestern, and I saw that, you know, their scientists who work with business folks, and they don't take, they can understand the research, but they can apply it to a market and that can become something. So, that commercialization process became more interesting to me than doing the bench research. So, that kind of was in middle of my PhD. So, I started just like gain more skills in biotechnology commercialization. What's the market assessment? What's competitive analysis? What's the regulatory strategy for your TMS, Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation device, that might help stroke? Right. So I start to connect those dots more closely and think about the business side of biotechnology, which led me into consulting. Because consultants, you know, they problem-solving in a business context. And I wanted to make sure I was in the Life Sciences industry.

Azurii [00:03:33] I'm in Applied Life Sciences Solutions, ALSS, and that group focuses on pharmaceutical R&D, as well as patient services. So, everything from preclinical,



clinical, regulatory all the way to when the drug is getting ready to enter the market. So, my particular focus right now is in regulatory. So, I answer questions around, you know, what's the best business process to accelerate your regulatory strategies? How do you manage your content? How do you build globally harmonized ways of working, since you can get medicines to patients faster?

Azurii [00:04:17] I'm excited about the industry's appetite for change. Let me just say it like that. Organizations continue to be, I guess in the last 10 years health care has been disrupted, organizations continue to act as consultants to not just solve them today, but it's almost like two tomorrows. So I think Accenture does a really good job at that, in terms of like designing like next generation almost like everything. So, in the Life Sciences, what does that look like? It looks like less time for people doing stuff that could be automated, because with that you can better manage your clinical trial and figure out. You can fail faster. Does the compound work or not? Right. Does it work in the same location or not? Right. You can fail faster. And with those insights you can apply that for, to get the treatments to the patient faster. So, I'm excited about the appetite that I see in the industry for that kind of change. And, specific to kind of the woman and bio connection, for me, my role I work only in Life Sciences. That's only pharmaceutical companies and biotechnology companies. My client right now is a biotechnology company. So, they think a little more different, a little differently than like a Titan kind of big pharma. Right. So, with that mindset, I think it is super cool to make the connection with the women in bio organization, because what that does, the main goal of women in bio is to say who are women leaders in these organizations and how can they continue to develop their career? So, it's not just, it's actually broader than that, it's not just working women, but it's also like young women. Right. So, young girls. Right. High school girls. And then it's also like executives. So, it's like that whole skull of a young woman to a woman. Right. And how she

might connect to to biotechnology. So, that's part of like pipeline development is how do we get women to connect to the most forward thinking parts of our industry. So that excites me.

Azurii [00:06:30] I mean, you know, I can give you the stock answer, right, like diversity of perspectives adds to the business bottom line, which is, which I think is true. Right. But I think is more, I think it's also around just thinking about how do we empower like one half of the workforce? Right. How do we engage young girls who might have pivoted away from science and math for whatever reason? Right. And we see that cut off kind of happen in middle school. So, where I became even more interested, many other young girls their interest declines around middle school. So, it's like if we're expecting to build a world where there is personalized medicine, where there is more equity in our health outcomes, we have to engage one half of the workforce because they're one half of the people and their perspective should be at the table in all industries, but importantly, the industry that is most closely connected to life. Right. Bio. Life. It's health care. It's fueling. It's feeding. So we have to have those perspectives along way.

Azurii [00:07:37] I come from a really close knit family. I'm a Southern girl. I went to a fine arts magnet high school. So I had a particular educational experience where you're esteemed for learning and like it was, you know, pretty high standard academic environment in school and in home. So, super high expectations of my family still. They're like, oh, you got a PDH. Congratulations. What's next? I'm like, what are you serious people? But it was just a part of me. They knew Azurii was always asking questions. They were like she's going to be asking questions and she'll figure it out. And, I did. And they were exceptionally proud. There wasn't any, like, resistance in my household about like career path. I was like, you know, be a person of integrity, you know, be a person of faith that, you know, be a stand up person and go change the world.



Azurii [00:08:34] So, yes. I think it's coupled with, you know, strong advocates along my educational journey, and then I'll even think about, too, not just kind of my my woman identity, my gender identity, but also my racial identity. Right. So, for example, at Emory, my freshman year, there was a fellowship program for minority students who were interested in behavioral research, as well as brain. So, that was a specific grant, just targeting minorities. And the woman who led that program had a PhD in Neuroscience herself. She is an African-American woman. So, I immediately had visual cues that like a girl can do this. A black woman could do this. Right. And it's not to say that, it's not to say that, success is totally dependent on, like, you know, seeing someone who looks like you in that space, but it definitely creates an environment where there's a connection. And I'll juxtapose that to in my PhD work. I don't know, but perhaps part of my disconnection and thinking about myself long term as an academic, maybe that was related to some of the visual cues in the practice. Maybe. I hadn't thought about that. Maybe. I can't put my finger on a particular incident where, for example, I might have felt like I didn't get that because I was a woman or I didn't get that because I'm black. I can't point to a particular experience on that necessarily. Not to say that it might not have been implicit. But I think about even now, just maybe Chicago, what I'm experiencing is like a geographical limitation. So, biotechnology is much more dense in the Northeast and then California, as an industry. And even though Chicago has the corridor of pharma's in the north suburbs, there is still yet not a fully activated, if you will, biotechnology center here. So that's part of what me as an individual professional, I want to be a part of that, those like that galvanizing community to develop that in Chicago, in the Midwest. So, then I envision myself at seventy five having this reflexion story to say I was in Chicago in the early 2000's. Where Chicago was now and where Chicago is today is much better because of efforts like myself and other leaders. So that's the vision that I see.

Azurii [00:11:04] Oh, of course, of course. I love mentoring undergrads, typically kind of when people know you're from a certain school, when you're in consulting, right, there's interest just from a career connection. Right. So a lot of PhDs reach out to me and they say, hey Azurii, how can you help me learn how to make the transition into consulting? So, I do a lot of career development kind of chats and talks with different organizations, as well as just folks who are connected to me somehow. And I love that. I love the mentoring piece. I love to share my story piece. And honestly, it's really about, in my opinion, helping folks dream. Right, because oftentimes, particularly for PhD students, it's such an isolating experience. They don't even realize how much talent and how much value that skill set is in the academic market, but also in the more commercial market. Right. So I even have to shape and even help them learn their own, you know, professional value, not a person value, of course, but their own professional value. And even just connect those dots and you could hear them almost like being lifted, you know, because they never really thought about that before. So I enjoy that a lot.

Azurii [00:12:21] Always strive for excellence. Always exhibit excellence. And now, I know that doesn't mean you have to have all A's, it's not analogous with perfection, right? For me, perfection is a hoax, right. I personally don't feel a call in my life to be perfect because I don't think that's humanly possible. But excellence says that, you know, with each and every space that you commit your time and your energy, whether or not that's professional or even personal, do it in a way that's consistent with your values and do it to the best of your ability. So, my dad always told me, like, Azurii, you're no better, you're no worse than anyone, right? So, he was trying to raise a humble young woman, right, who also was confident. So, any time I was being a crabby little hormonal teenager, there was this reckoning of my parents and they were like, oh, you're complaining about this is Azurii? Do we need to go, you need to get on your service projects in the next couple of



weeks. So it was always a balancing for me. You know, you're very fortunate. You're very blessed. You know, you're no better, no worse than anyone. So, it was it was a grounding that I still carry. But even within that spirit, it's like no, always operate with excellence. So there is an expectation that treating people with respect, you are pushing yourself to the best of your ability. You're giving yourself grace. Right. Which I've learned in my thirties. I didn't know that in my 20's, learning about giving yourself grace in my 30's. So, yeah, I just I do everything excellence.

Azurii [00:13:55] Life is unpredictable. There's so much outside of our control, there's probably this much that's within our control. And so, that's going to happen. You're not going to get something. Someone's gonna break your heart. You're going to lose people. You're going to lose relationships. And so, you know, when you're a self starter, fast, fast going high schooler and you're getting everything, you think that's how the world works. No, no, no. Right. And so when you get to these instances where, you know, I didn't win that scholarship, or I didn't get that paper accepted, or I didn't get my first jobs when I was applying for consulting. How do you manage that? Right. You beat yourself up forever because you assume you've got to get everything all the time. Or do you get yourself grace to say maybe this opportunity is not for me, I'm going to keep working. Maybe that person's not for me. That doesn't lose everything of who I am, don't let it crush you, but use the quote on quote, failure, you know, as an opportunity just to reflect and keep moving.

Copyright © 2021 Accenture
All rights reserved.

Accenture, its logo, and High
Performance Delivered are
trademarks of Accenture.