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From Eminence to Preeminence: Developing Resilience and Well-being for Penn Law Students

Sharon F. Danzger

University of Pennsylvania, SDanzger@me.com

Joseph Glaser-Reich

University of Pennsylvania, Joseph.Glaser.Reich@gmail.com

Rebecca Lamperski

University of Pennsylvania, RebLampe@gmail.com

Mary Beth Rettger

University of Pennsylvania, mb.rettger@gmail.com

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Abstract

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law school, positive psychology, resilience, positive interventions, well-being, explanatory style

Disciplines

Other Psychology | Psychology | Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Students

Sharon Danzger, Joseph Glaser-Reich, Rebecca Lamperski, and Mary Beth Rettger
University of Pennsylvania

A Positive Psychology Service Learning Project Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for MAPP 714: Applying Positive Interventions in
Institutions
Master of Applied Positive Psychology

April 30, 2018

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Sharon Danzger, Joseph Glaser-Reich, Rebecca Lamperski, and Mary Beth Rettger

SharonDanzger@gmail.com, Joseph.Glaser.Reich@gmail.com, RebLampe@gmail.com, and
MB.Rettger@gmail.com

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Introduction

Law students enter a field that labors under heightened risk for substance abuse and mental health problems (National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, 2017). Attorneys suffer from higher levels of depression, stress, substance abuse, family problems, and burnout than other professional populations and the adult population at large (Reed, Bornstein, Jeon, & Wylie, 2016). Similar problems are also prevalent among law students with 43% reporting binge drinking at least once in the previous two weeks, 17% manifesting some level of depression, 14% showing severe anxiety, and 23% reporting mild or moderate anxiety (Organ, Jaffe, & Bender, 2016). Several additional studies have found that law students suffer from psychological distress, anxiety, and alienation (Huang & Felder, 2015).

Law students enter their first year of school with higher than average subjective well-being (SWB); however, by the end of the first year, their SWB declines precipitously (Sheldon & Krieger, 2004). Several studies suggest that the problems outlined above start in law school (Huang & Felder, 2015; Reed et al., 2016). The legal education system's emphasis on extrinsic motivators and negative explanatory style arguably contributes to the chronically low levels of law students' and lawyers' well-being. The system, and its motivational emphases, correlate with a shift in values among students away from intrinsic values that may have drawn them to the law, such as community service, and towards extrinsic motivations such as valuing prestige (Sheldon & Krieger, 2004). Other experts argue that the competitive learning environment prevalent among law schools obstructs learning (Austin, 2013). Compounding the above problems, the legal culture emphasizes and values individualism and self-sufficiency, leading few students to take advantage of support and other avenues available for help (Huang & Felder, 2015; National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, 2017; Reed et al., 2016).

While the picture is bleak, it does not start this way, it does not always move in this direction, and it does not need to end this way. In response to growing concerns about high levels of stress and low levels of well-being among lawyers and law students, many of the top law schools have implemented programs to enhance student well-being. Common offerings include workshops on stress management and meditation, therapy dog visits, and yoga classes (Duke Law, n.d.; Harvard Law School, 2018; Michigan Law, 2018; Northwestern Pritzker School of Law, 2018; The University of Chicago Law School, 2017; Yale Law School, n.d.).

University of Pennsylvania Law School

Penn Law School is comprised of 750 first through third year J.D. students. Incoming classes have an even-gender distribution, even though senior leadership – as defined by equity partnership positions – in large U.S. law firms is only 11% female. Currently, Penn is focusing on admitting students with work experience; therefore, roughly 60% of incoming students average two years of prior job experience. Additionally, Penn Law aims to increase the diversity of the undergraduate educational experience among admitted students (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018). For example, the students of the class of 2020 come from 126 different colleges and universities (Penn Law, n.d.). Historically, the faculty has been and continues to be primarily educated at Harvard and Yale Law Schools. Penn Law students are, on average, 25 years old, and it is less common for students to be older than 30. However, this age range is starting to shift with the initiatives aimed at admitting students with diverse professional and academic backgrounds (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018). Additionally, the class of 2020 is comprised of 34% students of color, 12% LGBTQ students, and 10% first generation college students (Penn Law, n.d.).

To fully understand the educational context in which law students find themselves, one must recognize the uniformity of the training model; law students are trained in a similar manner across all universities in the United States. The structure of the courses and the way that students are evaluated can pose a substantial challenge for first year law students (1Ls). In their first semester, 1Ls attend three doctrinal classes and participate in the first half of a year-long curricular program called Legal Practice Skills (LPS), which focuses on legal research, writing, and other communication skills. At the end of the first semester, they take three, multi-hour exams, one for each of the first semester doctrinal courses. These exams provide the only grades and formal feedback they receive on their progress in their doctrinal courses. These grades, along with spring semester grades (from courses structured similarly to fall courses), form a large component of students' profiles when applying for jobs directly following law school because many legal organizations interview candidates near the beginning of their second year of law school (J. Leonard, personal communication, April 23, 2018). Additionally, students wait several weeks after completing their first semester exams to receive their grades, which are released over the course of several days. While this process is obviously stressful, it also creates an environment in which the students perceive their previous accomplishments and hard work as reduced to letter grades that they see as having a disproportionate impact on their futures. Being identified as a top performer impacts students' future employment opportunities as well as their confidence levels (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018).

Despite the competition, interviews with students, alumnae, and administrators reveal that the Penn Law community prides itself on being relatively collegial. There is a strong culture of student leadership and many active student organizations where students can build relationships outside of the classroom. In addition, student affinity groups make an active effort

to reach out to potential members and bring them into the community. Furthermore, the pressure surrounding grades seems to be, at least in part, artificial: many students are able to secure employment even after receiving a disappointing grade. Students can gain more control over their job prospects by developing professional relationships, highlighting the most attractive elements of their employment candidacy, learning what led to the disappointing grade, and course-correcting to prevent similar results moving forward (J. Leonard, personal communication, April 23, 2018). Realistically, grades at Penn Law do not matter as much as perceived by many of the students.

Penn Law students have a variety of needs that stem from the structure of the law school curriculum, the atmosphere within the law school, and the culture of the legal industry. As noted above, the structure of the curriculum creates a perceived high-stress, high-risk environment for the students (Penn Law Associate Dean, personal communication, January 26, 2018).

Additionally, the atmosphere creates difficulties for students. They are in classes full of top performers, leading to what Leonard identified as “imposter syndrome,” or the idea that they are not truly competent (Clance & Imes, 1978; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; Lane, 2015). Some students are “terrified” that they cannot live up to classroom expectations and that they negatively compare to other students. All failure can seem catastrophic to these students because they have so much effort and money tied up in their success as defined by the exam grades (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018).

However, the Associate Dean of the Legal Practice Skills Program, pointed out that the students have selected a career field that will only get more stressful after graduation (Penn Law Associate Dean, personal communication, January 26, 2018). Students need to develop the confidence to voice opinions, to express vulnerability, and to seek help. We believe they would

benefit by further understanding the psychology of their experiences so that they can create more beneficial and productive behaviors.

The Penn Law Center on Professionalism

The Penn Law Center on Professionalism (COP) designs and delivers programs to prepare Penn Law students for success as professionals in a complex and ever changing legal landscape. The COP seeks to help students better navigate law school and their transition into the workforce by increasing their resilience, confidence, and engagement. Jennifer Leonard, the Director of the COP and a 2004 graduate of Penn Law, said, “We feel like we are [the] perfect training ground for building the skills for when the stakes are much higher. When [students] are representing clients (and their money, relationships, and freedom) the stakes are much higher” (personal communication, January 19, 2018).

The COP’s programs focus on skills that complement classroom learning, and which are critical to legal professional success; Leonard said that before the creation of the COP, “It was like we were raising an animal in captivity, then releasing it to the wild and hoping it could survive” (personal communication, January 19, 2018). Leonard noted that what separates great attorneys from good attorneys are the impact of skills like collaboration and teamwork that are rarely part of the American first-year doctrinal law school curriculum; these skills were not a stand-alone component of the first year program at Penn until the creation of the 1L professionalism cohort program by the COP (personal communication, April 23, 2018).

The 1L Professional Cohort Program is the only mandatory program offered by the COP. It focuses on four topics: professional development, crafting a professional pitch, lawyer resiliency, and client service best practices. In this program, students meet in groups of 15 to 18 for programs that last 75 minutes. The COP’s staff designs the training materials, but the classes

are taught by a variety of administrators in adjacent programs, such as career planning. Second or third year law students identified by the COP as having leadership skills help facilitate the courses. Feedback from the first-year students indicates that the addition of peer facilitators adds credibility to the content presented and builds feelings of connection across the classes (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018). Currently, the COP offers sessions on the following positive psychology topics: lawyer resiliency, finding your strengths, and wellness and balance (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018).

Logistically, the block academic schedule constrains the COP's programming. Most programs occur on Mondays at noon for 75 minutes; however, the COP shares that time slot with other student service offices such as Student Affairs and Career Planning. The COP also has access to other time slots in the schedule that vary from semester to semester. For example, this semester there are only two upper-level classes on Friday, so they can periodically offer a longer (one to three hour) workshop on that day (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018).

The COP is open to a variety of recommendations and solutions drawn from positive psychology. They are interested in simple recommendations that could be easily added to their current programming. The COP would like to see options that include opportunities for students to play and fail as well as practice and receive feedback. According to Leonard, students prefer programs that allow them to feel like they are acting as lawyers including moot court or mock trial arguments (personal communication, January 19, 2018).

Literature Review and Application Plan

Our situation analysis revealed that Penn Law students face a stressful and competitive environment that may negatively impact their well-being. By and large, 1L students are very concerned about grades, meeting their own high standards, and ultimately landing a job. These stressors can skew their judgment about their competence and cause them to view setbacks as catastrophic. Furthermore, the atmosphere of law school may push them toward financially rewarding but unsatisfying career choices (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018). These stressors are, unfortunately, causing some students to start lifelong patterns of behaviors that will harm their future well-being.

We propose four positive interventions informed by the current psychological literature to help Penn Law students reinterpret and manage stress, more objectively assess their current situation, and bolster their intrinsic motivation:

- A letter writing campaign for 1L students to help manage expectations of new students while also mitigating possible academic achievement gaps.
- A workshop to teach mindfulness skills, redefine stress, and bolster resilience.
- A moot court activity (*Your Style on Trial*) in which students put their negative explanatory style and thinking traps on trial.
- *We Rest Our Case* style posters, offering perspective and wisdom from Penn Law alumni (e.g., “That B- in torts didn’t actually ruin my life.”)

Letter Writing Campaign

This intervention is informed by the work of Walton and Cohen (2011). They developed a brief, one-hour intervention during which second semester freshmen read surveys from upper classmen. The survey responses explained how the initial experience of feeling inadequate and

not belonging significantly improved over time. The study participants were then asked to write and record a speech to future students that incorporated their experiences into these concepts of belonging. The results showed a significant reduction in the achievement gap for minority students throughout the rest of college (Walton & Cohen, 2011). This experiment was later replicated with over 9,500 students from different institutions including private and public universities as well as a charter high school (Yeager et al., 2016).

Staff and faculty at Penn Law have identified imposter syndrome, or the idea that one is not truly competent, despite evidence to the contrary (Clance & Imes, 1978; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; Lane, 2015), as a source of stress for many 1L students. We propose a letter writing intervention, based on Walton and Cohen's (2011) work, that would involve 1L students voluntarily handwriting a note to incoming law students. The note, written during a COP session, would communicate that while the transition to law school was challenging, they were able to adjust and feel a sense of belonging. In addition to reinforcing this message in the minds of existing 1L students, it would provide a connection and sense of comfort for new students who might have some trepidation after the start of law school. At the COP's recommendation, we suggest having the 1L student write these notes (on a voluntary basis) during the April cohort meeting. At this point, students are nearing the end of the 1L experience and looking forward to their summer work (J. Leonard, personal communication, March 14, 2018). See Appendix A for more details.

Mindfulness & Mindset: Unleashing the Upside of Stress (Workshop)

The purpose of this workshop is to emphasize the importance of mindfulness and mindset and provide evidence that supports how developing these skills can help students engage with stress more productively. The session is intended to address some of the specific concerns

around resilience and stress. The legal education system and profession are inherently stressful (Huang & Felder, 2015; Riskin, 2002; Sheldon & Krieger, 2004). Rather than trying to reduce stress, we are aiming to help students change their stress response. The workshop will be 75 minutes to fit into an existing open block in the busy schedule of 1L students.

Mindfulness is defined as “the nonjudgmental awareness of experiences in the present moment” (Hölzel et al., 2011, p. 538). Those who practice mindfulness have enhanced attentional abilities, and there is growing evidence suggesting that meditation also improves emotional regulation (Haase et al., 2015; Hölzel et al., 2011). Mindfulness offers law students a means of more skillfully managing the high levels of stress, anxiety, and negative emotions that often arise in law school (Lewinbuk, 2015; Riskin, 2002). While these benefits sound like a miracle cure, mindfulness is far from a panacea (Huang, 2017). Mindfulness training is challenging and requires time, practice, and commitment (Reuben, 2011). Furthermore, a large body of research exists demonstrating the benefits of mindfulness training for the general population, but little empirical research has been conducted specifically on the effects of mindfulness on law students or lawyers. Excitingly, Huang, Austin, Knudson, Brafford, and Wager recently applied to fund this research (Huang, 2017). Law schools which have implemented mindfulness offerings have seen positive results including improved focus and attention, better academic performance, and increased mental and physical well-being (Lewinbuk, 2015).

The self-awareness developed by mindfulness may enable students to alter their stress mindsets (McGonigal, 2015; Riskin 2002). Short interventions that frame stress as enhancing can lead to positive health and performance outcomes (Crum, Salovey, & Achor, 2013). Adopting a stress-is-enhancing mindset in a classroom setting helps improve academic performance and

alleviate academic anxiety (Jamieson, Peters, Greenwood, & Altose, 2016); therefore, we have included a “stress-is-enhancing” intervention in the workshop. The combination of awareness honed by mindfulness practice, paired with a shift in stress mindset, offers a potent combination to help Penn Law students perform and flourish.

Mindset (not only related to stress) is also an important factor in developing resilience. Resilient individuals are better able to adapt to challenges and function at a high level (Leppin et al., 2014). Growth mindset is a key factor in developing resilience. For students to show greater resilience, they need to interpret challenges as obstacles to overcome and opportunities to learn by developing new strategies and asking for help when needed (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). As mentioned earlier, a stress-is-enhancing mindset enables individuals to flourish, even under pressure (Jamieson et al., 2016). We believe that through training, law students can be taught to be more resilient, thereby enhancing their well-being and making them better lawyers. The workshop we are proposing would build resilience by connecting the concepts of mindfulness, mindset, and harnessing the power of stress. See Appendix B for further details.

Your Style on Trial (Workshop)

Our literature review and personal interviews support an intervention to help build resilience in 1L students and to help them adapt to setbacks with greater equanimity. We propose further building 1L students’ resilience through an interactive workshop titled, *Your Style on Trial*, that teaches the 1L students to identify and address pessimistic explanatory styles (Seligman, 2006) and thinking traps (Reivich & Shatte, 2003). First year students are learning to be more pessimistic which is helpful in their field of work (Huang & Felder, 2015), but can lead to the adoption of a less beneficial and pessimistic explanatory style through which they make adversity personal, pervasive and permanent (Seligman, 2006). They can also fall into thinking

traps which are overly rigid patterns of thinking that get in the way of their awareness of key data and lead to inaccurate predictions and/or assessments of their current or future situations (Reivich & Shatte, 2003). Thinking traps can cause students to jump to conclusions, feel helpless and stuck, or feel threatened.

This intervention is recommended as a vehicle to return students to healthier levels of positivity and provide them with the resilience skills they will need throughout their law career (Huang & Felder, 2015; J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018; Organ, Jaffe, & Bender, 2016; Sheldon & Krieger, 2004). This intervention will help to counteract the negative impact of pessimistic thinking using the skill of real time resilience (Reivich & Shatte, 2003) which addresses pessimistic thinking and thinking traps by creating and stating possible alternatives to these thoughts, evidence that the thoughts are not valid, and outcomes that are more likely to occur. We developed this intervention because law students welcome the opportunity to engage in activities that make them feel like they are acting as lawyers, such as moot court, mock trials, and arguing in front of a jury; in many cases, the first year students lacks these opportunities, and it may, therefore, be an ideal time to incorporate this type of activity (J. Leonard, personal communication, January 19, 2018). In addition, research on drama therapy indicates that dramatic performances can help students shift perspectives and broaden and build new behaviors (Tomasulo, 2016). Expressing emotions through performance changes one's relationship with those emotions or thoughts and allows a person to acknowledge and manage emotions and thoughts in a healthier manner (Muller-Thalheim, 1973). *Your Style on Trial* is designed to help students explore a shift in thoughts and behaviors through role-playing and experimentation.

The program is an engaging and educational guided exercise that cohort facilitators can implement in a 75-minute session. *Your Style on Trial* starts with an icebreaker which reveals students' strengths and enables them to connect with and trust one another. From there, the group will anonymously share some of their stressful thoughts. These thoughts will be bucketed into similar themes and then grouped by explanatory style or thinking trap. The students will split into smaller groups to prepare a defense to advocate for healthier thoughts. They will then perform a real time resilience exercise (Reivich & Shatte, 2003) on the pessimistic explanatory styles (Seligman, 2006) and thinking traps (Reivich & Shatte, 2003). The session will end with a call-back of their strengths from the first exercise, followed by a short mindfulness meditation so that they leave the room with clear minds (D. Tomasulo, personal communication, March 25, 2018). We leave the students with a list of reading resources which also doubles as train-the-trainer reading materials. For detailed facilitator instructions and a presentation deck, please see Appendix C.

We Rest Our Case Posters

We recommend creating vibrant, eye-catching posted messages with photos and quotes from alumni. The messages on the posters should convey the experience of alumni who lived through, and learned from, similar challenges that the law students currently face. The posters are aimed to mitigate the feelings of lack of competence or belonging, often called "imposter syndrome" (Clance & Imes, 1978; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; Lane, 2015). The idea of the *We Rest Our Case* poster campaign would be to enable first year students to identify with alumni who have overcome hardship and succeeded.

Using posters which create awareness and reinforce messages to Penn law students could tap into the powerful ability of visual imagery to affect thoughts and beliefs (Branthwaite, 2002).

Images are experienced holistically, as compared to the linear absorption of other media, and can impact feelings and thoughts faster and more unconsciously (Branthwaite, 2002). To be effective, the posters need to convey benefits that are relevant and accessible to the students; we recommend soliciting anonymous suggestions for poster themes (e.g., grades, pressure, stress) from students during their cohort meetings. Posters allow flexibility in interacting with the media (Krugman, 1965): students can take a quick glance, review the posters in depth, or choose to ignore the poster. The posters should have a primary message that brands the campaign with an emotional appeal; we suggest the slogan “We rest our case” which conveys inclusion and leverages a familiar legal phrase. The posters also need detailed information that create a rational appeal which can be read when a student has more time or interest (Nysveen & Breivik, 2005).

Specific details for the posters are included in Appendix D. We are using the term “poster” here, but the actual media could either be posters that are mounted on bulletin boards in the student lounge areas or electronic messaging for displays around the law school campus. Student suggested issues, along with some seed questions inspired by similar projects at other competitive colleges (Princeton University, 2018; Harvard University, 2018) could be used to elicit stories and quotes from alumni during alumni weekend. Pictures and quotes that speak to overcoming obstacles and which address specific areas of student concern should be addressed on the posters, with pictures of alumni who have provided wisdom. We recommend aiming for at least twelve initial posters, which could then be rotated every several months. We have included sample posters, seed issues and questions, and a web site for easily generating poster designs in Appendix D.

Measurement

All the interventions recommended above have strong empirical support; however, the COP and its students represent a new and unique context. To confirm that the interventions are in fact improving students' resilience and well-being, we recommend a progressive measurement procedure. Analyzing student responses to these quantitative and qualitative questions will allow the COP to make real time course corrections between programs. If in-house capabilities for generating and analyzing these surveys do not exist, we recommend leveraging the resources of the university and partnering with a Wharton or statistics class for data analysis purposes.

We propose the following measurements:

1. Measure programming consumption: track attendance at the mindfulness, mindset, and stress and Your Style on Trial workshops.

2. Measure programming satisfaction and recognition: collect feedback from the students via short digital surveys (using Qualtrics or equivalent) following the activities to gauge student engagement and exposure to the "We Rest Our Case" posters. Possible questions to consider including in the survey:

- Did you find the presentation engaging?
- Did you find the information presented useful?
- Would you recommend attending the program to a fellow 1L?
- What was the most valuable skill or insight you gained?
- If you could change one thing about the workshop, what would you change?
- If you could keep one thing from the workshop, what would you keep?
- Have you noticed posters from the "We Rest Our Case" campaign? How many?
- Did the poster(s) resonate with you? Why or why not?

- Did the poster(s) increase your sense of belonging at Penn Law? Why or why not?

3. Measure student well-being: we recommend tracking students' overall well-being using a validated psychometric tool. Recent research suggests that Diener's Subjective Well-Being (SWB) model accurately captures overall well-being (Seligman, 2018). We recommend using a combination of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and the Short form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Thompson, 2007) to create a digital 15 question multiple choice survey to track student well-being. This approach combines an examination of feelings and objective life circumstances to create a global picture of student well-being and mirrors Krieger and Sheldon's (2015) approach to measuring lawyers' well-being.

Examples of the SWLS and a version of the PANAS are available on the Authentic Happiness website:

- SWLS: <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/satisfaction-life-scale>
- PANAS: <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/panas-questionnaire>

We recommend administering this SWB survey two times per year: before classes start and at the end of the academic year.

4. Track grades: we also recommend monitoring students' grades to ensure that the resilience interventions do not unintentionally result in students committing less time to school and studying thereby resulting in lower marks.

Summary

The four interventions and measurement strategy outlined above provide a variety of options for the COP to engage with and support students, particularly those in their first year. The suggested letter writing and poster campaigns as well as the two workshops are designed to

help students reinterpret and manage stress, more objectively assess their current situation, and bolster their intrinsic motivation. We believe that these interventions will help them build resilience that will serve them in law school and beyond.

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Appendix A

Letter Writing Campaign

Purpose: Provide a brief intervention that enables 1L students to internalize the feeling of belonging while also communicating to incoming students that, while it may be difficult at first, it gets better.

Description: Hand written cards, written by 1L students, delivered to new 1Ls in September during their first professional cohort meeting.

Quantity: Each student would be asked to voluntarily write one note. If everyone does not participate, some students may be asked to write a second note.

Location: The letter writing could be done during a few minutes when the cohorts meet for a COP session.

Timing: We propose writing these letters during the April cohort meeting. At this point, students are nearing the end of the 1L experience and looking forward to their summer work. They see a light at the end of the 1L tunnel, and the weather tends to be more uplifting.

Process:

1. Provide Penn Law School cards.
2. Have facilitator read the following: “Now that you have been here for a year, you know how it feels to be part of a community and receive validation that you belong here. This is an opportunity to communicate that to next year’s incoming class.”
3. Ask 1L students to voluntarily write a note to a future student that describes how they may have struggled at first but have come to feel like they belong.
4. We believe that the handwritten notes will be appreciated by new students who might be wondering what they have signed up for after a few weeks experiencing the Socratic method.

References

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Appendix B

Workshop - Mindfulness & Mindset: Unleashing the Upside of Stress

Purpose: To emphasize the importance of mindfulness and mindset and provide evidence that supports how developing these skills can help students manage stress with more positive outcomes. The session is intended to address some of the specific concerns around resilience and stress.

Description: A 75-minute session that will be offered to all 1L students.

Timing: Based on input from COP, we would recommend running this workshop when the 1L cohorts meet in February.

Format: We have prepared a slide presentation in Keynote which we presented to our client on March 22, 2018 for feedback and comments. The final slide deck will be converted to PowerPoint, at the client's request, and made available for their use.

Handout: We have also prepared a one-page handout that includes notes on the information presented as well as additional resources for the students. This handout (updated to include comments from the pilot program on March 22, 2018) is attached.

References

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Appendix B

Penn Law School
Mindfulness & Mindset: Unleashing the Upside of Stress

<p><u>Law School and Law</u></p> <p>Attorney's show high levels of: Depression, stress, substance abuse, family problems, burnout</p> <p>Reed, Bornstein, Jeon, & Wylie, 2016</p> <p>Law students show signs of: Binge drinking, depression, severe anxiety, psychological distress, alienation</p> <p>Organ, Jaffe, & Bender, 2016; Huang & Felder, 2015</p> <p><u>Mindfulness</u></p> <p><i>Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally</i></p> <p>- Jon Kabat-Zinn</p> <p>How mindfulness helps: Research shows that mindfulness meditation: Reduces activity in the amygdala and insular cortex of the brain where anxiety resides. Improves sleep; reduces symptoms associated with depression, increases working memory, improves concentration, strengthens immune system.</p> <p>Why working memory matters: Correlates with ability to stay on task, drives your decision-making, the more info you can hold in awareness, the better your decisions. Mindfulness can improve working memory.</p> <p>Why it's worth practicing mindfulness: Practice of mindfulness leads to: improved cognitive function, reduced distractibility, less anxiety, greater focus... which may lead to increased productivity and lower stress.</p> <p>Contaminated time: Overwhelmed by everything to do and letting recording play over in head. Opposite of mindfulness.</p> <p><i>"Your entire life is one long experience of the present moment."</i> - Michael Baime</p>	<p>Mindfulness recap: Increases awareness, improves cognitive function, can help alter stress response. Increasing your awareness will help you change your stress mindset.</p> <p><u>Stress</u></p> <p>Causes include: parents, roommate, depression, bar, friends, workload, politics, health crisis, death in the family, anxiety, debt, work, job search, exams, relationships.</p> <p><i>"Stress is what arises when something you care about is at stake."</i> - Kelly McGonigal</p> <p>Stress mindset measure: https://mbi.stanford.edu/instruments/stress-mindset-measure. Higher score represents a stress-is-enhancing mindset.</p> <p>Based on genetics, you are likely to have a pre-disposition to certain stress responses.</p> <p>Stress response research: Improving one's response to stress may be a matter of shifting one's mindset. Adopting a stress-is-enhancing mindset can have positive consequences on health and performance.</p> <p>Crum, Salovey, & Achor (2013)</p> <p>Trier social stress test: Participants told they have to give 5-minute speech on strengths and weaknesses in front of two judges. Given 3 minutes to prepare and be filmed.</p> <p>2 groups: each saw a slideshow. One with info that stress is enhancing; the other that stress is debilitating. During speeches, judges gave negative non-verbal feedback. Filmed speeches reviewed and rated by third party.</p> <p>Those who received stress as enhancing: More confident, smiled more, adopted expansive postures, fewer signs of anxiety, gave better speeches. Viewing stress as a challenge, not threat, lets you harness energy and perform better!</p> <p>Jamieson, Peters, Greenwood & Altose (2016)</p>	<p>Rethinking your stress response: When you bring to mind a recent stressful experience (a difficult assignment, an argument with a friend, oversleeping). How did your body respond?</p> <p>When stress harms us: Stress is most likely to be harmful if: 1. You feel unable to cope 2. You feel isolated from others 3. It feels meaningless and against your will</p> <p>The stress response helps you: Rise to the challenge (focuses attention, heightens senses, increases motivation/energy) Connect with others (activates social connection and prosocial instincts, increases courage, enhances social cognition) Learn and grow (restores nervous system balance, processes and integrates the experience, helps brain learn and grow)</p> <p>How you know it's happening: Rise to the challenge (heart pounding, sweating, quickened breath, feeling excited, energized, anxious) Connect with others (want to be with friends/family, paying more attention to others, desire to protect and defend) Learn and grow (body has calmed but you're mentally charged, you replay the experience in your mind, desire to make sense of what happened)</p> <p>Effective mindset intervention: Learn (a new point of view), Apply (the mindset), Share (the idea with others).</p> <p><i>"Just another cold, dark night on the side of Everest."</i> Difficult goals are not easy, but they are worth it!</p> <p>Dear stressed out me: Use this letter when you need a reminder that stress is normal and can help you perform well. Remember that breathing helps your body regulate in stressful situations. When in doubt, take a few deep breaths.</p>
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Appendix B

Penn Law School
Mindfulness & Mindset: Unleashing the Upside of Stress

Resources

Meditation Apps:

Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer, Simple Habit

Meditation Classes at Penn:

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction:

<https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/mbsr>

Guided Meditation Classes:

<https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/shs/campushealth/bewell.php>

The Penn Program for Mindfulness:

<https://www.pennmedicine.org/for-patients-and-visitors/find-a-program-or-service/mindfulness>

Stress Management:

Counseling and Psychological Services:

<https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/>

General Information:

https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/files/CAPS_Managing_Stress_FINAL_web.pdf

Massage Therapy:

<https://recreation.upenn.edu/wellness/massage-therapy/>

<https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/shs/MassageTherapy.php>

Wellness Resources at Penn:

<https://www.wellnessatpenn.com>

Suggested Reading:

Crum, A. J., Salovey, P., & Achor, S. (2013). Rethinking stress: The role of mindsets in determining the stress response. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(4), 716–733.

Jamieson, J. P., Peters, B. J., Greenwood, E. J., & Altose, A. J. (2016). Reappraising stress arousal improves performance and reduces evaluation anxiety in classroom exam situations. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 7(6), 579–587.

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Appendix C

Your Style on Trial – Facilitator Guide and Presentation Deck

Time	Timing	Topic	Instructions	Slide
00:00-05:00	5 min	Welcome	Smile and welcome students as they come into the room SAY: Welcome! We are going to have some fun today putting your Style (air quotes) on Trial. More to come on that – but we are going to start with a quick exercise.	Slide 1
05:00-15:00	10 min	Ice Breaker	Exercise: “Me” as a Superhero: SAY: Think of a character strength that you have, or a good deed that you have done. If you were a superhero – what would you call your super strength/gift or what would your superhero name be and why? REVEAL: Now, quickly in 15 seconds or less each - introduce yourself to 3 people as your superhero self. SAY: You have 2 minutes to introduce yourself to 3 people and have them introduce themselves to you!	Slide 2
15:00-20:00	5 min	Overview	SAY: It feels good when we think about our strengths, and the good deeds that we have done, but law school isn’t just full of fun times, and positive emotions. Would you agree? REVEAL AND SAY: It’s normal to feel a range of emotions, especially when you are in a world renowned, challenging, and competitive program like the Penn Law program! SAY: What other emotions do you sometimes feel? (take about 10-15 emotions and write on whiteboard). REVEAL AND SAY: Again, this is normal!! Today we are going to explore how our thinking styles can impact our emotions and behaviors and use our legal skills to process some of the ways we might change our thinking to better support our emotions and lower our stress. We want to purposely create more of the emotion on the left – and less of the emotion on the right by being more aware of our thinking traps!!! REVEAL: We also call this “building your resilience.”	Slide 3 Slide 4 Slide 5

			So, today we are putting Your Style on Trial! Don't worry – it's not going to be a lecture, we'll have some fun, and make this very experiential.	Slide 6
20:00-35:00	15 min	Activity #1	<p>SAY: First thing we want to do is find out what you are thinking when you get triggered by a negative event or situation because these thoughts have consequences with your emotions, reactions, and even things like your heart beat.</p> <p>Provide easy personal example – such as....</p> <p>SAY: The other day, my boss was asking me a million questions about a project I am working on. I thought to myself after he left "He must not think I can handle this project." And, I was a bit upset, and stressed about it, and my heart was pounding. Can you see how a simple event triggered my thoughts and emotions? How do you think this might impact my performance?</p> <p>ACTIVITY #1: SAY: So, here's the activity. Grab a sticky note and write down 1 thought (like mine) that you have had in the past month. This should be a thought that you have when you are triggered at school. They should be written just as if you are saying them "out loud" about the situation, or about yourself. Don't worry – we won't be sharing who wrote the thoughts. So, you can share anything you feel comfortable sharing. We'll be using these thoughts to find common themes in the cohort. I'm only going to give you a minute, because I want you to pick the first thing that came to your mind when I gave my example.</p> <p>Collect the sticky notes, and as you read them, try to group similar thoughts – get the class's approval as you sort (ex. Do you think this goes with this one? These two seem similar, do you agree?)</p> <p>"Name the Groups" – Pick one thought per bucket that "best" represents the groupings – or name the groupings. You should have as few groupings as possible and all notes should be in a grouping so that no one feels "alone in their thinking."</p>	<p>Slide 7</p> <p>Click to progress animation</p> <p>Slide 8</p>

35:00-40:00	5 min	Quick Concept Review	<p>SAY: You might see in our thoughts a pessimistic explanatory style or a variety of thinking traps. When we are being pessimistic, we make things personal, pervasive, and permanent. When we fall into thinking traps, we miss critical information because of our rigid thinking patterns (give examples).</p> <p>It's very normal – they call it “Confirmation Bias” – we see what we want to see because of our beliefs.</p>	Slide 9 Slide 10
40:00-50:00	10 min	Activity #2 – Your style on trial	<p>SAY: Ok – it's time to put these thoughts (or what I like to call your style) on trial – more so because it rhymes!</p> <p>Split into 4 Groups: Assign each group one thought to put “on trial.”</p> <p><u>Prepare your Defense - Easy as 3-2-1:</u> <i>Consider the evidence:</i> 3 reasons the thought is not true. <i>Consider the alternatives:</i> 2 more accurate thoughts <i>Consider the implications:</i> 1 more likely outcomes and what you can do to deal with it.</p>	Slide 11
50:00-55:00	5 min	Activity #3 - State your Case	<p>Pick 3 people to be the “advocates” Everyone else in the group is the “thought” Group says the thought to each advocate and each advocate answers firmly with one of your ideas: Advocate #1: “A more accurate way of seeing this is...” Advocate #2: “That's not true because.....” Advocate #3: “A more likely outcome is.....and I can.....to deal with it.”</p>	Slide 12
55:00-60:00	5 min	Activity #3 Debrief	<p>ASK: Thoughts: How did it feel to receive the alternative views? Advocates: How did it feel to firmly address the thought? REVEAL: You have just practiced a concept called “Real Time Resilience!” SAY: You have just put your style on trial! Let me hear you say – together now....“We rest our case!”</p>	Slide 13 Slide 14
60:00-65:00	5 min	Super Hero Reflection	<p>1 minute reflection: Let's go back to your super strength/gift or your superhero. Write down 1 way that your strength or superhero could advocate against your thinking traps. Ask a few people if they would share.</p>	Slide 15


65:00-68:00	3 min	Mindfulness Meditation	3 minute meditation with Cory Muscara, Penn MAPP Graduate and Assistant Instructor at MAPP https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAcoMgGT7nY	Slide 16
67:00-75:00	8 min	Wrap-up – Debrief – Resources	Use this time for overflow or to further debrief the activity. Suggestions for further reading should a student be interested (they can take a picture of this slide)	Slide 17

NOTE: Scripting is not meant to be read verbatim by the facilitator. It is meant only to provide guidance on the concepts and points that should be covered during the training session. Facilitators should feel free to use their own words while honoring the intent of the program.


Train the trainer articles and book chapters to read before facilitating this course:

Topic	Article/Book
Character Strengths	Peterson, C. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). <i>Character strengths and virtues</i> . New York: Oxford University Press.
Emotions	Fredrickson, B.L. (2009). <i>Positivity</i> . New York, NY: Crown Publishers. Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. <i>The American Psychologist</i> , 56(3), 218–226.
Resilience	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (pp. 9-30). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
Thinking Traps	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (pp. 95-122). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
Explanatory Styles	Seligman, M. E. P. (1990). <i>Learned optimism</i> (pp. 40-51). New York: Random House.
Confirmation Bias	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (p. 102). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
Real Time Resilience	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (pp. 207-208). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
Mindfulness Meditation	Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). <i>Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life</i> . New York: Hyperion.

Welcome to....
Your Style on Trial



1



2 Minutes: Think of a character strength that you have, or a good deed that you have done. If you were a superhero – what would you call your super strength/gift or what would your superhero name be and why.

Now....quickly in 15 seconds or less each....introduce yourself to 3 people as your superhero self!


2



Would you agree –
It feels good to talk about
our strengths and good
deeds?


But, we have a range of
emotions throughout
our day, don't we?

3




What
emotions
do you feel?

This is normal!!!



4




Today:

Discuss how
Our Thinking
Styles impact
our Emotions &
Use our Legal
Skills to Process
Emotions.

“Building Your Resilience”


5

Your Style on Trial!



6

Activity #1 Resilience is helpful when you have been triggered (ATC model)

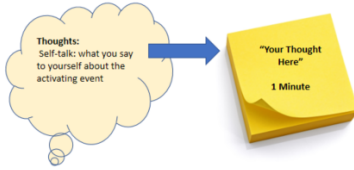


My Personal Example:
Boss Asking Questions

Based on Ellis and Beck (Reivich and Salzberg, 2018)

7

Activity #1



8



9

What makes it so hard to change our minds (aka why do we get sucked into thinking traps)?

Confirmation bias: We notice, remember, and value evidence that supports our initial or habitual beliefs. And we don't notice or remember, and we devalue, evidence that goes against our initial beliefs.

Source: Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). *The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles*. New York, NY: Broadway Books.

10

Activity #2

Your Style on Trial!

Split into 4 Groups:
Assign one thought to put "on trial."

Prepare your Defense—
Easy as 3-2-1 (10 minutes):

Consider the evidence: 3 reasons the thought is not true.

Consider the alternatives: 2 more accurate thoughts

Consider the implications: 1 more likely outcome and what you can do to deal with it.

Real Time Resilience: Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). *The resilience factor: 7 essential skills for overcoming life's inevitable obstacles*. Broadway Books.

11

Activity #3

State your Case:
Pick 3 people to be the "advocates"

Everyone else in the group is the "thought"

Group says the thought (in unison) to each advocate and each advocate answers firmly:

Advocate #1: "A more accurate way of seeing this is..."

Advocate #2: "That's not true because..."

Advocate #3: "A more likely outcome is....and I can....to deal with it."

Real Time Resilience: Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). *The resilience factor: 7 essential skills for overcoming life's inevitable obstacles*. Broadway Books.

12

Activity #3

Debrief:

Thoughts:
How did it feel to receive the alternative views?

Advocates:
How did it feel to firmly address the thought?

You have just practiced
"Real Time Resilience!"

Real Time Resilience: Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). *The resilience factor: 7 essential skills for overcoming life's inevitable obstacles*. Broadway Books.

13

Your Style on Trial!

"We rest our Case!"

Real Time Resilience: Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). *The resilience factor: 7 essential skills for overcoming life's inevitable obstacles*. Broadway Books.

14

1 minute reflection:
Let's go back to your super strength/gift or your superhero.

Write down 1 way that your strength or superhero could advocate against your thinking traps.

SHARE

15

3 minute meditation with Cory Muscara, Penn MAPP Graduate and Assistant Instructor at MAPP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAc0MgGT7Yw>

16

Interested in the topics we reviewed today? Here are some additional resources for your reading pleasure!

Topic	Article/Book Chapter
Character Strengths	Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). <i>Character Strengths and Virtues</i> . New York: Oxford University Press.
Emotions	Fredrickson, B. L. (2009). <i>Positivity</i> . New York, NY: Crown Publishers.
Resilience	Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. <i>The American Psychologist</i> , 56(3), 218-226.
Thinking Traps	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (pp. 9-30). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
Explanatory Styles	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (pp. 95-122). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
Confirmation Bias	Seligman, M. E. P. (1990). <i>Learned optimism</i> (pp. 40-51). New York: Random House.
Real Time Resilience	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (p. 102). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
Mindfulness/ Meditation	Reivich, K., & Shatte, A. (2003). <i>The resilience factor: 7 keys to finding your inner strength and overcoming life's hurdles</i> (pp. 207-208). New York, NY: Broadway Books.
	Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). <i>Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life</i> . New York: Hyperion.

17

Appendix D

We Rest Our Case Posters:

Purpose: Present emotionally evocative words and images for students to consume quickly or passively, with messages from alumni who have been through the same experience. Messaging to emphasize that students belong and that current stressors are temporary.

Description: Vibrant, eye-catching posters or electronic displays with pictures and quotes from alumni that show resilience and convey an *it gets better* message.

Quantity: Aim for 12 initial posters or displays, with the intent of using some, then rotating through every few months, to keep the content fresh.

Location: Present either as printed posters that could be mounted on bulletin boards in student social areas or produce content for electronic display boards that are situated around the campus.

Production: Use Canva.com or equivalent to create the posters.

Basic format: We suggest that you include a branding slogan, i.e., *We Rest Our Case*, an alumni photo, and a quote from an alumnus which highlights a specific issue of concern to students. These topics might stimulate discussion or be a good focus for a poster:

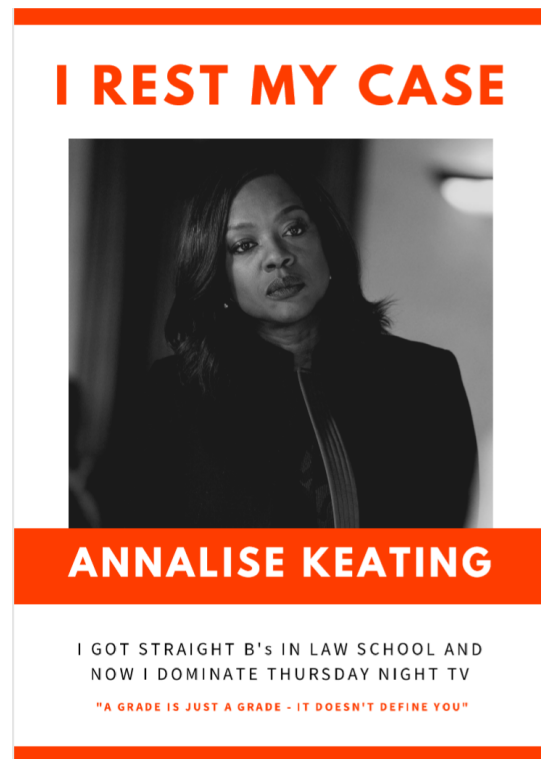
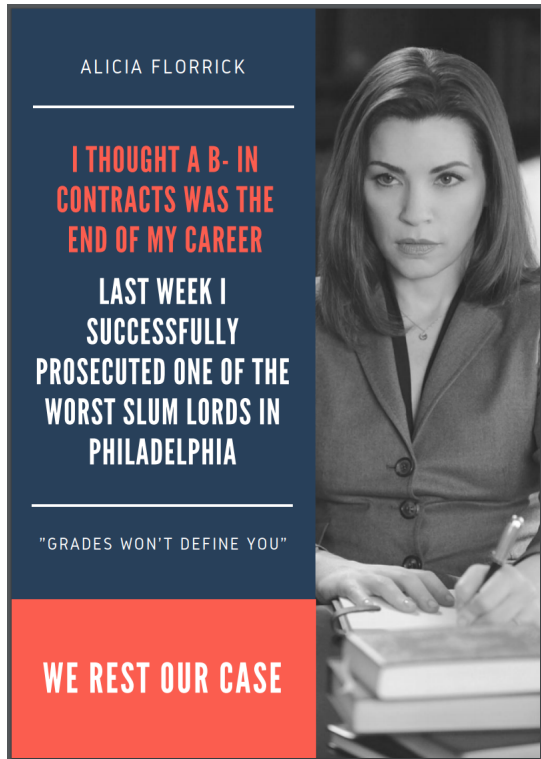
Pressure	Perfectionism	Family	Purpose
Anxiety	Imposter syndrome	Loneliness	Engagement
Grades	Failure / Mistakes	Depression	Relationships
Direction	Goals	Transition	Meaning
Competition	Disappointment	Economic pressure	Achievement

Ideas for content: While the above list may be sufficient, it would be ideal if the COP could target issues of interest for current students. To collect these issues, consider a simple survey during the cohort meetings. For example, pass out index cards and ask a question like “what issues do you think other people struggle with?” This other-focused question may help students be more honest than if they felt they were identifying their own issues.

Content: Interview alumni using the following questions to collect advice for poster content.

- What advice would you give your younger self?
- Did you ever feel like a failure? Or did you ever face rejection or make a mistake? What did you learn from that experience? Or how did you overcome that feeling?
- How did you learn from failure? Or, how did you learn to feel more resilient?
- Have your goals changed over time? What advice would you give your younger self about goals?
- Did you ever feel that you didn’t belong when you were in law school? What message do you have for that younger self?

Samples: For illustrative purposes, we used fictional lawyers. If the COP produces these posters, we recommend featuring photos of the alumni interviewed and quotes taken from their interviews.



References:

- Harvard University, Bureau of Study Counsel. (2018). Beyond the success paradigm, The success-failure project. Retrieved from: <https://successfailureproject.bsc.harvard.edu/beyondthesuccessparadigm>
- Princeton University. (2018). Ideas to consider, Princeton perspective project. Retrieved from: <https://perspective.princeton.edu/share-story/share-story/ideas-consider>