Using Positive Psychology to Improve Law Student Well-being, Character Development & Performance
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The Path to Lawyer Well-being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change
The National Task Force on Lawyer Well-being Report (Aug 14, 2017), at
https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/abanews/ThePathToLawyerWellBeingReportFINAL.pdf

Foundations for Practice Report, Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers Initiative at IAALS
http://iaals.du.edu/foundations

Mindset

• Fixed Mindset: Intelligence & Personality are Fixed and Stable
  ○ Galvanized by focus on GPA, rank, standardized tests
  ○ Students
    ▪ Over-estimate their abilities
    ▪ Despise feedback as attack on key traits
    ▪ Consider school, work, relationships as zero-sum activities, where the goal is proving oneself to look smart, gain acceptance, win

• Growth Mindset: Can expand aptitude, talents, and improve character with practice and experience
  ○ Students
    ▪ Value learning & crave feedback
    ▪ Seek challenges, focus on improvement, develop passion for learning
    ▪ Are motivated, resilient, and more successful in school and business

Mindfulness

• Defined
  ○ Being fully aware of something and paying attention to the moment, with acceptance and without judgment or resistance. ~ Chade-Meng Tan ~
  ○ Paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally, as openheartedly as possible. ~ Jon Kabat-Zin ~
  ○ An Outcome (Mindful Awareness) and a Process (Mindful Practice)~ Shauna Shapiro ~

• Objectives of Mindfulness: Spectrum
  ○ Calm Monkey Mind: restless, agitated, confused, and hard to control
  ○ Develop Poise and Enhance Capacity to Respond rather than React
  ○ Cultivate Flow, Experience the Zone, and Achieve Optimal Performance
  ○ Joy

• Develop Mindful Perspective - Three Questions
  ○ When is the most important time? Now, because it is the only time that you have some control over.
  ○ Who is the most important person? The person you are interacting with.
  ○ What is the most important thing to do? Do your best to serve the person you are interacting with.
Meditation

- Mindfulness Meditation (Attention & Focus)
  - Easy Way: Bring gentle and consistent attention to your breath for 2 minutes, and when your attention wanders, bring it back
  - Easier Way: Sit without an agenda for 2 minutes, shift from doing to being

- Loving-kindness Meditation (Empathy & Compassion)
  - Think of Yourself, a Loved One, a Difficult Person, and all Persons or Beings
    - May I be happy - May you be happy
    - May I be well - May you be well
    - May I be safe - May you be safe
    - May I be peaceful & at ease - May you be peaceful & at ease

- Cultivate Optimism with Gratitude
  - Journal or Reflect on
    - Three Things I’m Proud of
    - Three Things I’m Grateful for
    - What Went Well: Things that went well today and why

- Foster Joy
  - Notice Thin Slices of Joy: Blue Sky, Bird Song, First Sip of Coffee, Warm Shower Water, Comics

- Priming for Performance: Best Day
  - Recall Best Day prior to Hearing, Presentation, Demanding Performance

- Enhance Engagement and Flow: Savoring
  - Prior to work on a project, recall or reflect on life’s pleasures, wonders, and awe-inspiring moments

Book Recommendations
- The Anxious Lawyer by Jeena Cho & Karen Gifford
- The Mindful Athlete by George Mumford
- Search Inside Yourself & Joy on Demand by Chade-Meng Tan
- Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon’s Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart by James R. Doty, MD

_We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit._

~ Aristotle ~