

Applied Mindfulness for Attorneys: Mindfulness, Stress, and Substance Abuse Awareness

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*“Between stimulus and response, there is a space.
In that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our response.
In our response lies our growth and our happiness”*

– Viktor Frankl

Mindfulness

“[P]aying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” – Jon Kabat-Zinn

“[K]eeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality.” – Thich Nhat Hanh

“[A] quality of mind that we all experience and enjoy from time to time, but it is something that can be greatly strengthened with practice, and once it becomes sufficiently strong, it leads directly to the attentional calmness and clarity that forms the basis of emotional intelligence.” – Chade-Meng Tan

Training your attention so that it is strong in both clarity and stability.

Meditation

“[A] family of mental training practices that are designed to familiarize the practitioner with specific types of mental processes.” – Julie Breczynski-Lewis

Different forms of mental training.

Mind-Body: Neuroscience & Physiology

Neuroplasticity: The brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life.

Love Your Brain: different parts do different jobs

- Amygdala & Brainstem
 - Oldest parts of the brain
 - “Lizard” brain
 - Threat assessment and pleasure centers – keeps you alive.
- Hippocampus
 - Limbic area of the brain
 - “Mammalian” brain
 - Relates to emotions, memory, how we build relationships
 - One of the first regions of the brain to suffer in Alzheimer's disease
- Prefrontal Cortex
 - Newest parts of the brain
 - “Human” brain
 - Personality and consciousness; planning cognitive behavior, decision making, moderating social behavior, executive function.

Neuroscience: scientific study of the nervous system

- Central Nervous System = Brain and Spinal Cord.
 - Protected by bone (skull, vertebrae)
- Peripheral Nervous System = everything else
 - Connects the brain to limbs and organs.
- Somatic Nervous System = voluntary
 - (e.g., “wiggle your big toe”)
- Autonomic Nervous System = involuntary
 - (e.g., “can you feel this?”)
- Sympathetic Nervous System = Fight, Flight, Freeze
 - STRESS state
 - Heart rate increases, blood shunts away from internal organs to major muscles, brain rapidly firing and rewiring looking for a solution.
 - Cortisol = released by adrenals, reduces immunity protection, and high levels cause damage to body and brain over time, including reduced neuroplasticity
- Parasympathetic Nervous System = Rest and Digest
 - RELAX state
 - Increased blood flow to brain, internal organs, lower blood pressure, lower resting heart rate

Neurons exist throughout your body, in an intricate network that is constantly sending complex sensory input to the brain.

Practical Realities of Being a Lawyer

- Immersed in conflict.
- Constant threat assessment.
- Billable hour model.
- Focus on argument, judgment
- Relationships & Power Dynamics: clients, opposing counsel, court, colleagues
- Competitive
- Emphasis on logical / rational
- Desire for control
- Demanding and draining in specific ways: relationships, schedule, emotional, intellectual

Stress & Burnout

Stress Symptoms

- Headaches
- Sleep disorders
- High blood pressure
- Reduced immunity
- Loss of sex drive, sexual dysfunction
- Over-eating, over-drinking (a coping strategy / behavior that leads to substance abuse)

Burnout = common result of chronic stress

- Exhausted
 - Physically, emotionally, intellectually
- Disengaged
 - Apathetic, low-energy, depressed, hard to concentrate
- Performance Suffers
 - Less creative, reduced cognitive function, relationships damaged

Required CLE on Detection, Prevention, and Awareness of Substance Abuse and Mental Illness is not a coincidence.

Drinking is a common coping strategy among people who are attorneys because it meets social and physiological needs for connection and relaxation.

Consider:

Create patterns that disrupt stress and burnout
and support your Sustainable Success.

Meditation and mindfulness are skills, tools and practices
that you can learn, and apply to your life.

Meditation & Mindfulness: Science & Benefits

reduces stress hormone cortisol

http://www.news.ucdavis.edu/search/news_detail.lasso?id=10538

reduces blood pressure

<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/20/can-meditation-curb-heart-attacks/>

appears to slow the rate of cellular aging

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19735238>

increases attention span

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100714121737.htm>

improves the immune system

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8862275/Meditation-improves-the-immune-system-research-shows.html>

improves emotional resilience

<http://blogs.hbr.org/2012/12/try-meditation-to-strengthen-y/>

induces your physiological relaxation response

http://www.massgeneral.org/bhi/assets/pdfs/publications/lazar_2000_neuroreport.pdf

better focus, less anxiety, more creativity, more compassion, better memory, less stress, more gray matter

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3016649/work-smart/from-om-to-omg-science-your-brain-and-the-productive-powers-of-meditation>

Meditation & Mindfulness: Applications In Business & Sports

People who possess a high achievement drive, work under intense pressure, and want a competitive edge practice meditation and mindfulness.

"My typical coping strategy – the bourbon and cheeseburger method – wasn't working."

Google software engineer on why he started meditating to deal with stress.

"Though mindfulness meditation has its roots in Buddhism, it's an easily accessible technique for quieting the restless mind and focusing on whatever is happening in the present moment. This is extremely useful for basketball players, who often have to make split-second decisions under enormous pressure."

Phil Jackson, storied NBA coach, *Eleven Rings* (2013)

"The more people multi-task, the less efficient and creative they are at completing a task or solving complex problems. Mindfulness cultivates our ability to sustain attention for longer periods of time – to be in the moment in order to make clear decisions."

Janice Marturano, former General Mills attorney,
speaker at 2013 World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland

Want more stories of people who meditate? Check out:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/05/business-meditation-executives-meditate_n_3528731.html

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/03/fashion/mindfulness-and-meditation-are-capturing-attention.html>

Applied Mindfulness & Meditation: 3 Practices to Try On Your Own

1. *Take a Deep Breath. . . and Let It Go*

<http://www.npr.org/2010/12/06/131734718/just-breathe-body-has-a-built-in-stress-reliever>

"The relaxation response is controlled by another set of nerves — the main nerve being the Vagus nerve. Think of a car throttling down the highway at 120 miles an hour. That's the stress response, and the Vagus nerve is the brake. When you are stressed, you have your foot on the gas, pedal to the floor. When you take slow, deep breaths, that is what is engaging the brake."

Practice: Soften the belly and take a full, easy breath – feel it fill the lungs and expand the chest. Then, let it go.

2. *Choose Your Views*

Kelly McGonigal – Change the way you experience stress.

http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend.html

"How you think and how you act can transform your experience of stress. When you choose to view your stress response as helpful, you create the biology of courage. When you choose to connect with others under stress, you can create resilience."

Practice: Notice when you begin to feel stress. Tell yourself that your body is your partner, preparing to meet a challenge, and that you have resources to support you through this.

3. *Label Emotions*

<http://psychcentral.com/news/2007/06/22/the-science-of-mindfulness-meditation/910.html>

"One way to practice mindfulness meditation and pay attention to present-moment experiences is to label your emotions by saying, for example, 'I'm feeling angry right now' or 'I'm feeling a lot of stress right now' or 'this is joy' or whatever the emotion is," said Creswell, lead author of the study. During the labeling of emotions, the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex was activated, which seems to turn down activity in the amygdala.

Practice: Notice when emotions arise, and label them. "*I'm feeling frustrated.*"

Practice: Notice the physical sensations that accompany the emotions, and label them. "*I'm feeling my heart pounding, and the muscles around my jaw tightening.*"

Additional Resources

Books

Norman Doidge, MD, *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (2007)

Dan Siegel, MD, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (2010)

Rick Hanson, PhD, *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom* (2009)

Chade-Meng Tan, *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)* (2012)

Pema Chodron, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* (2000)

Phil Jackson, *Eleven Rings* (2013)

Meditation: Apps & Tools

5 mindful minutes - habit building

<http://lift.do/groups/5-mindful-minutes>

5 mindful minutes: Meditate Every Day for a Week

<http://lift.do/plans/meditate-every-day-for-a-week>

HeartMath

<http://heartmath.com>

Headspace

<http://getsomeheadspace.com>

Private Coaching & Programs for Law Firms

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