

The Associate's & Student's Guide to Thriving Not Just Surviving

MARLA WARNER, BSC, CPPC, RCC

WELLBEING AND PRODUCTIVITY SPEAKER, COACH AND CONSULTANT

CHRISTOPHER MCKENNA

DIRECTOR, JUNIOR ASSOCIATES AND STUDENT PROGRAMS (TORONTO)

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Overview:

To do well, we need to be well. Knowing this is one thing, but the life of a law student or associate in early years poses many challenges to being at one's best. Given the demands of new learning, practice, expectations and more, how does one make healthy, positive work-life choices during junior associate years and beyond?

Recent research in both the U.S. and Canada finds that associates and students continue to struggle with their mental health and high levels of perceived stress. Strengthening one's resilience may arguably be the most important skill to learn during the marathon of a legal career. Resilience is both a mindset and a skillset. Strengthening one's resilience supports vitality, engagement, optimism and the ability to have the energy to support one another.

This session is a compilation of workshops presented to associates and students with a goal to support their resilience, to be effective learners and problem solvers, and to maintain focus and performance in both work and life....ultimately enabling them to thrive and not just survive.

Program #1: The Associate's & Student's Guide to Thriving

A. What is Resilience?

- The ability to adapt, recover and thrive in a complex world.
- The ability to bounce back and to recover from disruptive change, illness or misfortune with minimal wear and tear (physically, mentally and emotionally), to ourselves and to our relationships. (M.W.)
- Resilience is developed over time when planned into daily actions.
- "A critical skill for leading a meaningful life and living according to your own values." Adam Grant, Psychologist.

B. Foundations of Resilience

Recovery, Renewal, Reframe and Regular Positive Habits - The 4 R'

1) Recovery

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you."

Ann Lamott

Recovery occurs when we practice behaviours that decrease the stress response and increase our 'rest and digest' response. Our lifestyle behaviours can support this recovery through eating well, exercise, sleep, spending time in nature, managing stress by practicing relaxation and mindfulness and more...

What do you do for recovery to recharge, replenish and bring about balance to your nervous system?

2) Renewal

- Finding meaning and purpose in work and in life supports resilience over time and is more effective than pursuing happiness all of the time.
- The 4 Pillars of meaning: Belonging, Purpose, Storytelling, Transcendence
- How can we build strength in each pillar?
- How do you find meaning in your work?
- Flex your gratitude muscle – write down 3 things each day for which you're grateful.
- Cultivate positive relationships – reach out to others who may need your support.
- Be a learner. Our brains need to be challenged as do our muscles, to grow.

3) Reframe

Managing Self -Talk for Resilience

We talk to ourselves at a rate of 300-1000 words per minute. During periods of stress, we default to a 'negativity bias' and often fall into non-productive ways of thinking. Thinking traps are habitual ways of thinking that stop us from flexible and accurate thinking.

Replacing faulty thinking with more balanced thoughts can improve one's confidence, lead to more creative problem solving, and reduce negative patterns of stress and anxiety. This is the basis for neuroplasticity. We can change our thoughts and re-wire our brains for greater performance and overall well-being.

4) Regular Positive Habits

- ✓ Habits trump willpower
- ✓ Motivation and discipline are insufficient and unreliable over time.
- ✓ Practice, practice, practice...lives as rituals
 - “who brushed their teeth?”
- ✓ Baby steps count – intentional tiny behaviours build new habits
- ✓ Pick a prompt to begin the new behaviour
- ✓ Celebrate every small win

Program #2: Mindset Matters for Enhanced Resilience

A) What is Mindset?

- A set of beliefs, frame of mind, or a way of thinking that determines one’s behaviour, outlook, and mental attitude.

B) The Brain: 2 States

- Bad is stronger and more attention getting than good – we have an inborn negativity bias.
- We are wired to fear threats and move towards rewards.
- SCARF – **Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness** – these 5 domains activate either the ‘primary reward’ or ‘primary threat’ circuitry of the brain. Our mindsets matter.

C) Strategies to Support a Resilient Mindset

1. Nurture a Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset
2. Practice optimism
3. Build a repertoire of positive emotions
4. Strengthen your empathy and compassion muscles
5. Leverage the upside of stress with a mindset reset

Next steps: one question associates & students were asked to consider...

STOP: What behaviour/attitude would you like to stop because of what you learned today?

START: What will you begin to start doing to support your resilience?

CONTINUE: What existing behaviours will you continue in order to support your resilience?

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LinkedIn – Marla Warner marla@forhealth.ca www.forhealth.ca