STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING BURNOUT

Berkeley Law Academic Skills Program Workshop
October 6, 2021
THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WHIRLPOOL

- Impostor phenomenon
- Catastrophic thinking
- Financial concerns
- Pandemic
- National and world events
- Burnout
WHAT IS “BURNOUT”? 

- Exhaustion
- Lack of motivation
- Alienation or detachment
- Frustration, cynicism, and other negative emotions
- Difficulty focusing
- Not taking care of yourself
- Being preoccupied with school even when you are not studying or in class
- Generally decreased satisfaction
- Health problems
WHAT CAUSES BURNOUT?

• Burnout is different from stress
• A person can be burned out in one role, but not in other areas
• Too much demand but not enough support
• Sometimes changing the situation is helpful, but not always
IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON

• A set of beliefs telling you that if you don’t perform perfectly (according to an arbitrary standard), you don’t belong
• Fear of being unmasked as a fraud
• Impostor phenomenon is exacerbated by stereotype threat
STRATEGIES TO BEAT BURNOUT

- Remember: it is not a personal failing!
- Physical habits for well-being and performance
  - Getting outside
  - Moving your body
  - Giving yourself permission to rest
- Growth mindset
- Mindfulness
- Building and being in community
- Time management
- Self-compassion and other self-care strategies
GROWTH MINDSET

• Success is not the result of innate or “fixed” abilities

• Fixed mindset leads to the avoidance of perceived challenges

• Growth mindset is the belief that skills are not fixed, that you can acquire/hone skills with practice

• Mindset itself is a belief that we can change!
MINDFULNESS

- Permission to begin again, as often as necessary
- “Life is not personal, permanent, or perfect.”
  - Your performance in law school is not who you are
  - Things are constantly changing
  - There are things we can control; other times we breathe and let it pass
TRY THIS

1. Take a few deep breaths
2. Acknowledge how you are feeling
3. Connect with that emotion without judgment – name your feelings and welcome them
4. Extend compassion to yourself and others
BUILDING AND BEING IN COMMUNITY

- Community outside of law school
- Community within law school
- Building community in law school
TIME MANAGEMENT

• “Working smarter, not harder”
• Pomodoro (timer) method
• Making time and space for non-law school activities, hobbies, friends
• Scheduling out busy weeks and the final exam period
Anxiety about not being “good enough” or fear of failure

Confusion about what the first steps of the task are or how to begin

Confusion about what needs to be done or how to do it

Confusion about how to divide up a large or overwhelming task
IDENTIFY & ADDRESS WHATEVER IS HOLDING YOU BACK

Reflect
• Check in with yourself and ask: "Why am I avoiding this task?"

Get advice
• Ask your prof or ASP fellow about how to get started, how to divide up the task, a timeline for completion, etc.

Organize
• Use organizational tools such as a to-do list, schedule, calendar, timer, reminders, etc.

Repeat
• Celebrate your successes!
• Reflect on the process
• Adjust your process/get more advice as needed
RESOURCES

• Student Services
• Academic Skills Program faculty and peer tutors
• Academic Skills Program website
• Wellness at Berkeley Law website
• Berkeley Law staff psychologist
• Tang Center Psychological & Counseling Services