

# 2023 MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING PUBLICATION



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WRITTEN BY STUDENTS  
FOR STUDENTS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE  
AUSTRALIAN LAW  
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

ALSA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which this publication was produced. We pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging. We also extend our acknowledgment to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may have contributed to or benefit from this publication.

ALSA recognises the enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to their lands, waters, and communities. We acknowledge their unique cultures, languages, and spiritual relationships with the land that have shaped Australia for thousands of years.

We acknowledge the ongoing contributions and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in promoting holistic health and wellness. We honor the strength, resilience, and knowledge that Indigenous people bring to this space. Their rich heritage, traditions, and deep understanding of interconnectedness provide valuable insights that can help us build a more inclusive and supportive society.

ALSA is committed to learning from and working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create a mental health landscape that respects and reflects their diverse experiences. We acknowledge the need for culturally appropriate and responsive approaches to mental health care, recognizing that healing and support must be grounded in cultural understanding, self-determination, and community connection.

# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE LIST

This publication contains a discussion of topics that some readers may find distressing. The content within this publication addresses sensitive subjects related to mental health, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, and personal struggles. ALSA encourages readers to approach this content with discretion and to seek professional help or support if needed.

The information provided in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional advice or treatment. It is essential to consult qualified healthcare professionals for personalized guidance concerning your specific circumstances.

We encourage you to engage with the content responsibly and to prioritize your own mental health throughout your journey of exploring these topics. If you require immediate assistance or are in crisis, please reach out to your local emergency services or helpline. Remember, seeking support is a sign of strength; you are not alone on this journey.

## **Lifeline Australia**

**Helpline: 13 11 14**

**Website: [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)**

Lifeline Australia is a nationwide crisis support and suicide prevention organization. Their helpline operates 24/7, offering confidential telephone support to individuals in distress, experiencing loneliness, or in crisis. Lifeline also provides online chat services and resources for mental health and wellbeing assistance.

### **Beyond Blue**

**Helpline: 1300 22 4636**

**Website:**  
**[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**

Beyond Blue provides information, support, and resources for individuals experiencing anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions. Their helpline offers confidential advice and emotional support.

### **Headspace**

**National Helpline: 1800 650 890**

**Website:**  
**[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)**

Headspace is a youth mental health foundation that provides support to individuals aged 12-25. They offer a range of services, including counselling, information, and referrals.

### **SANE Australia**

**Helpline: 1800 18 7263**

**Website: [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)**

SANE is a national mental health charity that supports individuals affected by complex mental health issues. Their helpline provides information, support, and referrals for individuals, their families, and carers.

### **Butterfly Foundation National Helpline**

**Helpline: 1800 ED HOPE (1800 33 4673)**

**Website: [www.butterfly.org.au](http://www.butterfly.org.au)**

The Butterfly Foundation is dedicated to supporting individuals affected by eating disorders and body image issues. Their national helpline offers confidential support, information, and referrals for individuals, families, and friends seeking assistance.

### **Kids Helpline**

**Helpline: 1800 55 1800**

**Website:**  
**[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)**

Kids Helpline is a free and confidential counselling service for young people aged 5-25. They provide professional support and guidance on a wide range of issues, including mental health, family problems, bullying, and abuse. Kids Helpline operates 24/7, offering telephone, webchat, and email counselling.

# CONTENTS

- 08** FOREWORD
- 10** PRESIDENT'S WELCOME
- 12** EDITOR'S NOTE
- 13** COMPARISON; THE THIEF OF JOY
- 16** THE METHOD FOR MAKING FIRE:  
AVOIDING BURNOUT
- 19** ORCHESTRATING CHANGE: THE  
CASE FOR NEURODIVERSITY
- 22** FIGHTING FEAR AND IMPOSTER  
SYNDROME
- 26** WORKING AROUND THE WORLD  
(AND THE CLOCK)
- 30** LITTLE THINGS THAT AREN'T SO  
LITTLE
- 32** HOW TO LEAVE YOUR WORK AT  
WORK
- 35** THE POWER OF POSITIVE  
THINKING

# CONTENTS

- 38 THE ALLURE OF SLOW PRODUCTIVITY
- 41 REMINDERS FOR YOU TODAY
- 42 WHAT DOES PRIORITISING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH LOOK LIKE?
- 46 KNOWING WHEN TO SAY NO
- 48 TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR THOUGHTS
- 51 BACHELOR OF LAWS WITH A MAJOR IN HUSTLE CULTURE
- 55 ORGANISATION AND PROCRASTINATION
- 59 DIVERSITY IN THE LAW
- 61 REMEMBER...
- 62 TIPS FOR BEGINNERS
- 66 FINANCIAL WELLBEING

# CONTENTS

- 68 TAMING THE CRITIC WITHIN
- 72 WHEN FAITH COLLIDES WITH THE LAW
- 76 THE NON-NEGOTIABLE
- 78 WARNING: IT IS TIME TO EMBRACE INDIVIDUALITY
- 81 FIVE TIPS TO GET THROUGH THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF LAW SCHOOL
- 85 A NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

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# FOREWORD

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In 1998, I started my dream job at a law firm, the culmination of years of study. The promise of a bright future, doing high-powered work on cases that mattered lay ahead of me. I quickly realised, however, that work as a young lawyer could be incredibly stressful. I learnt to cover my anxiety with bravado, to manage the burden of expectation of my family and the shame of my mistakes through avoidance, and to ignore the persistent intrusive feeling that I was completely inadequate and alone.

I went to the bar with my friends expecting life as a barrister to be different. Along with the excitement of a new chapter however, came an unpredictable dynamic workload, sleep deprivation, criticism from judges and colleagues, the high expectations of clients, and long periods between cases that compounded the doubts about my self-worth. I juggled financial pressures, the birth of my children, family illness, and distress. I took criticism to heart. I watched my colleagues struggle with darkness as work overwhelmed them. I felt the pain of my clients' trauma intruding into my own life, sucking up the joy and replacing it with a heavy fog, beneath which lay despair.





At least one in five Australians experience mental health stress. We know that law school and legal practice are places where bullying, sexism, sexual harassment, and racism regularly occur; where unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as pressing on and ‘toughening up’ are expected; where dependence on drugs and alcohol is normalized. Eventually, something has to give – usually, it is our precious mental health.

The key is to be aware of the fragility of our mental health and the stigma that prevents us from seeking help for our declining wellbeing. As a profession, we need to focus on developing coping mechanisms that are helpful and healing. We must act urgently to protect against workplace practices that undermine our health and instead promote behaviour that cares for us.

The articles in this publication highlight this message. Mental health is not static – it is dynamic, prone to fluctuation. The study and practice of law can be hazardous to our mental health. But by embracing a culture of care from the outset, we can cultivate resilience and create places of work and study that nurture us. I congratulate the Australian Law Students Association for confronting this issue head-on by compiling this important resource.

Real change will need to come from you: the generation that will inherit a system with all its flaws, to make legal practice a place that serves us all. I commend these stories to you.

**Fiona McLeod AO SC**  
**Senior Counsel at the Victorian Bar**  
**1987 ALSA President**



# PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

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Welcome to the 2023 ALSA Mental Health and Wellbeing Publication. As the 2021/22 Equity and Wellbeing Officer and Editor of the inaugural volume, I am beyond proud of the continued dedication to this initiative. The creation of this publication last year served as a testament to ALSA's commitment to breaking down the stigmas associated with mental health, and cultivating a culture of openness, understanding, and mutual respect. This year, it is a beacon of hope, a sign that we are not static, but constantly evolving, constantly learning, and perpetually striving to better ourselves and our community.

These articles speak to the breadth and depth of our experiences as law students, capturing the essence of our diverse community. Our shared experiences are a testament to our collective strength and resilience; they serve as a reminder that no body is alone in their journey. My contribution is an exploration of neurodiversity within the realm of law, following on from my article on perfectionism in the 2022 edition. As we reflect on the importance of mental health, let us also take a moment to appreciate the power of our unique minds.

Thank you for taking the time to read, understand, and connect through this collection of stories. In a world that often seems larger than life, it is these moments of quiet connection and shared experiences that make us feel a little less alone. Let this publication serve as a bridge – one that connects us to one another in our most vulnerable moments, one that further develops the conversation surrounding mental health in our society, and one that moves us closer to a place where every individual feels seen, heard, and valued.

We cannot talk about this year's edition without recognising the extraordinary efforts of our 2023 Equity and Wellbeing Officer, Giovanna. As a close friend, I've had the privilege of witnessing her diligence and commitment to this publication and I could not be more proud of her. Thank you also to Daylon Johnston for his extraordinary efforts on this project and ongoing support.

Take it one day at a time, and look after yourselves and your loved ones.

**Annabel Biscotto**  
**President of the Australian Law Students Association**  
**Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Arts (International Relations)**  
**Curtin University**

# EDITOR'S NOTE

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I am so grateful that you have taken the time to read and reflect upon this inaugural volume of the ALSA Mental Health and Wellbeing Publication.



It is my joy and honour to share these incredibly inspiring and thought-provoking works with you. Contained in this publication is a culmination of articles, written by law students, which speak to the prevalent issue of mental health in our contemporary society. Although we are gradually breaking down the stigma surrounding the topic of mental health, there is still an enormous amount of work to be done. This publication seeks to encourage that purpose by serving as an academic body of literature that will educate, inform, and inspire the legal landscape for generations to come.

I sincerely thank the diverse group of talented authors who have detailed their benevolent wisdom on these pages. Furthermore, I thank the current members of the ALSA committee who have inspired and supported me to produce this publication. It is my hope that what you read will fill your cup and spark positive discussions surrounding mental health in your world.

**Giovanna Bongiorno**  
**ALSA Equity and Wellbeing Officer**

# COMPARISON; THE THIEF OF JOY

When I hear the quote, ‘comparison is the thief of joy’, I immediately envision a swimming race; the second you lift your head to see where the competitor next to you is, you start dropping speed. This image consistently keeps me from falling into the trap of being so acutely aware of others’ positions that I lose the beauty of embarking on my own journey.

With the growth of social media, most users post the highlight reel of their life without showing the journey it took to get there. That is natural, of course, as most will not want to broadcast the difficulties they’ve faced behind the scenes. However, it is important, especially regarding something as daunting and difficult as law school, that future law students and even those in first-year see that the end result is minuscule in comparison to the journey. Anything you come into without hard work may never be appreciated to the extent of something you made sacrifices for. It is undisputed that pursuing a law degree is tough. I believe the difficulty of it blooms the happiest of faces on that awaited day of graduation.



Now, it’s easier said than done to stop or minimise the instinct to compare yourself to others. However, I believe the first step is to ensure you have a strong sense of self. Whether you’re a first-year student straight out of high school or a mature-aged student who may have completed previous degrees, nobody knows you better than yourself. You have the experience of studying and succeeding to make it into law school. Therefore, you must have been doing something right to get to where you are! Trust yourself.

Throughout my studies, I learnt a lot but mostly to take people's study methods and how they tackle university with a grain of salt. Law school is essentially a time when you forge your own path with your own strategies. You have different strengths to other people; some people may succeed by using the Pomodoro technique where they do 25 minutes of work and a 5-minute break repeatedly while some people can happily complete hours of straight work with no breaks!

For example, I know that I need a full night of sleep to function well the next day so I prioritise that over late-night study, while I know some people who can pull all-nighters and sit an exam the following day. I had a friend that would explain principles to a wall over and over until it stuck while you might be better off making flashcards. I could ramble on and on about these examples but apart from the basic requirements of time management and punctuality etc, the way you watch your lectures or do your university preparation is something you should make your own. It's like a perfect recipe that might need to change as your professional career develops. But, it will always work for you.

Finally, I will share a tip that I swear by for those of you that deal with procrastination or perfectionism. Any time I am dreading starting an assignment or studying, I tell myself 'Muneira, do 5 minutes of the task. Just 5 minutes. If, after 5 minutes, you still do not want to continue, then you can stop.' Every single time I have used this trick (spoiler alert: a lot!) I have never wanted to stop once I'd started. Using this trick takes the pressure off starting which is sometimes the hardest part! Now, once again, this trick works for me but it may not work as well for you.



Studying looks different for everyone; therefore, it is important to work with yourself rather than against yourself. Study yourself the same way you study university content. Try different study habits and see which ones allow you to retain the most information. Part of the journey is exploring and being flexible with strategies, applying the ones that work and throwing away the ones that don't. Your uniqueness makes you special. It is much more satisfying to be engrossed in your own journey rather than comparing yourself to others.

**Muneira Jibril**  
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# THE METHOD FOR MAKING FIRE: AVOIDING BURNOUT

I had not realised the extent of my exhaustion until I was catching clumps of hair in my hands as I showered. I had not realised my stress had been simmering away throughout the semester until strands fell onto my desk as I studied. My hair loss was the catalyst to realising that I was depleted of the resources required to keep my fire burning.

The phrase 'burnout' refers to prolonged occupational stress and can manifest in many forms, such as fatigue, insomnia, irritability, anxiety, memory loss, lack of concentration, or even hair loss. As the connection between law students and burnout is notorious, you are probably already familiar with it. But maybe you have not thought about it in the context of its eponymous analogy.

The key to preventing burnout is recognising the onset of it. The fire triangle may be a method that you can harness to do this. It details the essential elements needed to create a fire and demonstrates how we must maintain three integral ingredients: fuel, oxygen, and heat. You can keep your fire burning by keeping yourself fuelled, giving yourself enough space to breathe, and bringing the heat to your studies.



## **I Fuel**

We have all been told to drink water, eat healthily, take a walk, or just breathe. Whilst it is not as simple as that, taking care of our physical health is the wick or wood to our fire. You can practice self-care and look after your body by following a balanced diet, reducing alcohol consumption, and curbing your caffeine addiction with a natural substitute like matcha.

Additionally, developing a consistent exercise routine including regular walks, going to the gym, or participating in a social sport will add fuel to your fire. Prioritising rest and avoiding those last-minute all-nighters in the library is also paramount to keeping your fire burning. As burnout is a long-term issue, a good night's sleep is sometimes not enough to relieve that exhaustion. Therefore, scheduling rest days or mental health days can also recharge your fire.

## **II Oxygen**

Secondly, you must allow yourself space to breathe. Due to our hard-working and high-achieving nature, many law students become addicted to work and fall captive to the 'hustle culture'. This phenomenon has been particularly true the past few years, with COVID-19 forcing many of us to study from home, thus blurring the line between university and our personal lives. Furthermore, law school tends to become many students' identities, thus creating an imbalance between our academic and personal lives.

Organising a realistic study schedule with space to do things that bring you joy can prevent the suffocation of our fires. Additionally, establishing a clear block of time for study and a clear block of time away from the desk or creating a “done” list rather than focusing on your “to-do’s” can breathe life into our mental health.

Whilst it may sound counterintuitive to increase your commitments, consider incorporating a new hobby, volunteering for your student law society, or beginning a hands-on job. This can prevent you from associating your whole life and identity with law school, thus reducing the overall pressure of having to perform amazingly. It will also allow you to step back from your studies and give you the space to be most productive.

### **III Heat**

Remember to bring heat and passion to your work. Burnout is associated with a loss of passion, purpose, and hope. Students experiencing burnout become apathetic, bored, cynical graduates. Consequently, you should seek to develop a growth mindset, build your resilience, and focus on your achievements rather than criticising your errors.

Consider finding a mentor for guidance and support through your studies. Some local law societies offer mentorship programs that allow students to partner with a legal professional. If this is not available to you, let me encourage you to ask someone to be your mentor. This may be a legal professional who has been through law school and can give you advice on how they completed their degree or insight into the legal profession, which can help spark your passion and drive to pursue a career in law.

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# ORCHESTRATING CHANGE: THE CASE FOR NEURODIVERSITY IN LAW

Amidst the hustle of courtrooms and the intellectual rigour of our law schools, there resides an unsung crowd. A collection of individuals as diverse as the neural networks within our minds; each is a unique testament to the rich tapestry of human cognition. In all its stoic grandeur, the law often overlooks this profound diversity.

Our legal landscapes are sculpted for the neurotypical mind, with little room for those with divergent cognitive wiring. This inherent flaw is not only a disservice to those it marginalises but a loss for the legal profession and society at large, which miss out on the creativity and innovation that neurodiverse individuals bring to the table. However, the tides are beginning to turn and the music is starting to sound different. Therefore, we must reconsider how we practice, study, and perceive the law in the context of neurodiversity. This is not just a matter of justice or equality—it's about forging a legal system that truly embodies the diversity of the society it serves.

Within the walls of our legal institutions and schools, a silent performance often occurs that is invisible to the uninitiated. This performance is the act of 'masking', where neurodivergent individuals consciously or subconsciously suppress their natural behaviours, thoughts, and responses to appear 'neurotypical'. They are constantly forced to perform, strive to reach unattainable standards, and suppress their authenticity. The double-edged sword to this is that they are the director, producer, and main character of this seemingly endless performance.

Yet, beneath this mask lies an untapped well of potential. These silent performances represent the ingrained need to consciously present oneself in a digestible and subdued manner. For those who have masked their true selves, whether intentionally or unintentionally, in an effort to gain societal acceptance: you are not alone.

Imagine an orchestra, where each musician has a specific part to play, each instrument contributing to the symphony. Each piece of music is written with these traditional instruments in mind, and conductors direct their orchestras following these predetermined scores. What if a new musician joined, playing an unconventional instrument with a unique sound? As the symphony was written for the usual instruments, this musician struggles to find their part in the composition. The conductor, accustomed to the traditional set, doesn't know how to integrate this new sound.

The legal profession, like a traditional orchestra, is designed and directed in a way that caters to the neurotypical. Neurodiverse individuals, who bring unique strengths and talents to the table, often struggle to find their place in this setting. They're playing an unfamiliar instrument, and the legal profession has yet to adapt the composition to integrate these unique contributions.

Imagine if conductors learned how to direct a more diverse orchestra. The music would be richer, more varied, and more impactful if we rewrote the score to include these unique instruments. Likewise, a legal profession that adapts to accommodate and celebrate neurodiverse individuals could become more innovative, more empathetic, and ultimately more effective.

By recognising, empowering, and supporting neurodivergent individuals, we can reshape our practice of law and community service. To truly harness the potential of our neurodivergent colleagues, we need to 'rewrite the score', welcoming their unique contributions to refine our collective performance. The first step on this journey is to acknowledge the presence of neurodivergent individuals among us. The second is to empower them, and the third is to watch as our profession and society become better for it.

Being different is powerful. It sets you apart in a world where 'ordinary' is all too common. In a field that values novelty and innovative solutions, neurodivergence is not a liability—it's an asset. Neurodiversity adds an indispensable melody. After all, it's our diverse notes that create a vibrant symphony.

**Annabel Biscotto**  
**President of the Australian Law Students Association**  
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**Curtin University**

# FIGHTING FEAR AND IMPOSTER SYNDROME

*"I never, ever, feel like the smartest person in the room."*

*"My accomplishments were not due to my hard work, but due to a stroke of good luck."*

*"I shouldn't be where I am, I am a fraud."*

Imposter syndrome: we've all heard of it. As students, most, if not all of us have experienced or are currently experiencing it. Working as hard as you possibly can, harder than others, only to reach the same level as those around you, who make it look easy. Constantly swimming against the tide trying to catch up with others, who are seemingly already where you want to be or further ahead.

I have struggled with imposter syndrome for many years, even as early as high school. As a self-proclaimed Type A, I am a perfectionist at heart, and always put 110% into everything I do. Logically, I know that all my accomplishments to date, finishing ATAR, being the first in my entire extended family to go to university (with the support of my parents the whole way), studying my dream degree, and taking on a leadership role in my LSS, are thanks to my drive, dedication, and ambition. However, when I achieve a new goal, there remains a lingering thought that I am still not good enough.

It doesn't matter where the thought has come from, it is still there, and I know that I am not alone. People who deal with imposter syndrome believe that they are undeserving of their achievements and the subsequent high esteem in which they are held. It also comes with a fear that one will be discovered to be a fraud, despite having significant qualifications and achievements under their belt. This feeling is purported tenfold whereby it seems that every other law student is extraordinarily successful with seemingly zero effort.

A recent study into imposter syndrome in students found that 25% of male university students and 50% of female students experience imposter syndrome, and it is heavily associated with burnout. Furthermore, the study found imposter syndrome to be heavily associated with burnout, which is not reassuring news for law students amongst whom burnout is all too common. A commonly cited explanation for the imposter syndrome phenomenon is 'pluralistic ignorance'. This is essentially a fancy way of stating the fact that everyone struggles on their own, but no one actually talks about it. It can be debilitating for some, myself included, to talk about our fears and perceived shortcomings. However, it is paramount that we talk about it and break down the stigma associated with this type of discussion.

I have been at university for five years and am only just starting to realise that these feelings are not healthy. It is not healthy to feel fear that you are going to be exposed as a fraud, despite your better judgement knowing this isn't the case. I have worked hard over the last few years to combat these thoughts in my own life, and although I have some way to go, I have developed several strategies that have helped me fight my fears and instead focus on realistic perspectives. While these may not work for everyone, and like most things, should be taken with a grain of salt, here are a few ways that I work to combat imposter syndrome in my own life:

## **I Focus On The Facts**

This is a difficult thing to put into practice, but it is important to establish the facts of a particular situation with how you feel about them. Think of them as “facts vs. stories”. Facts are the observable truths – like what a camera picks up when filming. Stories are how the facts are interpreted.

While you can't stop your brain from creating stories, you can practice centring yourself around the facts. For example, the next time you receive an assessment score, if it isn't the grade you were hoping for, focus on the exact feedback you were given, and take the time to acknowledge what you did well. As hard as it sounds, try and centre yourself around these “facts”, which will help subdue the “stories” that your brain will try to conjure (e.g., ‘I am a failure’, ‘I am not cut out to study law’). As law students, we are taught to focus on the facts in a legal scenario. Why not try to apply this approach to your own life?

## **II Learn From Your Peers / Team Members**

It is common for people with imposter syndrome to compare themselves to their peers, often in a negative light. While it is tempting to be self-critical and therefore fearful, there is a lot that can be done to reframe these feelings.

The next time you are tempted to compare yourself to your peers and put yourself down in the process, take a step back to think about what you can learn from them. The truth is, there are always going to be people who are better at certain things than you are, however, that is not a bad thing. Instead of focusing your energy on feeling jealous, fearful, or inferior, why not turn it into something productive, and learn from those around you to ultimately better yourself?



### **III Toot Your Own Horn**

Sometimes, the best way to combat fear is to face it head-on. The next time you accomplish something you were working towards, or if you feel you did well at something, celebrate it! Whether you celebrate it by yourself or among your friends and family, essentially throwing yourself 'in the deep end' can have a great impact on how you view your achievements.

This is a strategy that personally took me the longest to learn, and I still struggle with it today. So, take your time, and don't be too hard on yourself if you can't do it straight away.

As a final note, I hope those of you reading know that you are not alone and that it is not natural to feel this way. Talk to your peers and your support network, because fear and imposter syndrome are a lot more prevalent than you think.

You are more than your thoughts, and your achievements are none but your own. Own them!

**Adriana Gough**  
**President of the Curtin Student Law Society**  
**Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Psychology**  
**Curtin University**

# WORKING AROUND THE WORLD AND THE CLOCK

I have the pleasure of working with students and professionals worldwide. My work takes me to Singapore, Ghana, and Mexico, all while living and operating in Brussels, Belgium. However, when Asia is awake and working, so am I; when Europe is awake and working, so am I; and when the Americas are awake and working, so am I. Where does that leave room for relaxation and a personal life?

In law school, it was fairly easy to adapt my day-to-day schedule based on my classes and lectures during that day. I would start my day around 8am or 9am, depending on if I had anything scheduled at 8:15am or not, and would end my day around 5pm. During exam periods, the days would become a bit longer. My schedule was dictated by the opening hours of the library, where I would arrive at 8am and gather up my things around 7pm-8pm, having eaten all my meals at the library cafeteria and taken one coffee break (even though I didn't drink coffee) sometime in the afternoon just to get a bit of fresh air.

Of course, I had days where I pulled an all-nighter for an exam or a paper deadline or when my engagement in student associations would have me home late after organising an event. However, I kept my working hours to a controlled 8-ish hour workday throughout the term, with few exceptions. During university, I had time to hang out with friends and to do sports in the evening. However, after graduation, this stopped being the case.

I work with projects that require me to communicate with and coordinate people in many different time zones, spanning from GMT +8 to GMT -7. When you have colleagues and team members asking you for information, updates, and support at all hours of your day and night, it is very easy to lose track of those working hours you initially set for yourself. I found myself constantly checking my phone for emails or texts on the off chance that someone needed me, no matter if it was when I was eating breakfast or lying in bed to go to sleep.

I would have meetings early in the morning, work throughout the day, schedule meetings in the evening, and use the hours after dinner to answer emails or schedule them for the next day. If I would get a question that I technically could answer right away, I would. I did not see the point in waiting until the next day. While the day was over in Brussels, it had only just begun in Puerto Vallarta. I did not have any time to turn off everything and shut the world out because that would make me bad at my job, right? How could I manage these projects if people couldn't reach me 24/7?

On one hand, I was applauded for my “quick response time” as I almost always responded to emails within 24 hours of them landing in my inbox. On the other hand, I did not have the mental capacity to respond to family and friends that asked me for updates about my life abroad, as it was not something that I prioritized or thought I had time for. I had lived in Brussels for several months at this point, but I had yet to see much of the city. When I did take any time off, I was too exhausted to go out and do anything with my friends. It came to a point where I could not receive a notification without being filled with dread about what crisis had emerged that needed my immediate and undivided attention. I had successfully made my job my whole life. In March, I had a month of intense work coming up with a lot of travel and a tight schedule. It was then that I realised I needed to make a change if I wanted to avoid burnout.

I decided to remove my email from my phone and turn off all notifications. I started to only work from my computer, and I made a more conscious effort to only work from my desk and not my bed. Did I still make final edits of documents in bed once or twice? Yes – but I gained a new approach to my day and tasks. When I did check my emails, I had the time to properly read and respond to them without feeling overwhelmed or re-marking them as unread. I took the opportunity to experience the places I was traveling to instead of working in my hotel.

It was difficult in the beginning – others had built up ideas of what they could expect from me that I no longer wanted to follow. While I take some blame for not setting these boundaries for myself earlier, I also recognise it is easy to get swept up in things, especially when you enjoy your work – and I really do enjoy it. Nonetheless, some people will take advantage of your availability, but that is not your responsibility. You must set boundaries.

I used to praise myself for the number of things I could juggle at once, but I don't want to do that anymore. I try to strike a balance nowadays. I still am aware of the location and time of the person to whom I am sending or scheduling emails. This is because I want to ensure that I am not doing the same thing to them as what was done to me and that the people I communicate with get my replies within their working hours. What I don't do is drop everything immediately if someone wants something from me in the middle of the night. My email is back on my phone, but the notifications stay off. Other people's urgency does not have to become my emergency.

At the end of the day (Central European Time for me), setting boundaries makes me better at my job. I am not as easily overwhelmed and can therefore put more consistent effort into my work instead of using sporadic bursts of energy to get as much done as possible – which, let me tell you, is certainly more sustainable. I am better at prioritising tasks and learning when to let things go that are out of my control. The quality of my work has gone up, whilst the quantity has been confined to a more manageable amount. Emails land in my inbox at all hours of the day but they can wait. I receive texts at 11pm on a Saturday night asking me for things, but I will not respond until Monday morning. I can afford to relax for a day or two every once in a while, and so can the people I work with.

**Linnéa Regnell**

**Vice President - Competitions, International Board of  
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# LITTLE THINGS THAT AREN'T SO LITTLE

1. Waking up without an alarm.
2. Listening to the waves roll in.
3. Ticking off the final thing on your to-do list.
4. The sun shining directly on your face.
5. Singing at the top of your lungs in the car.
6. Cotton candy skies.
7. Someone remembering a detail that you told them many months ago.
8. When you arrive indoors just as it starts raining.
9. Looking up at the stars on a clear night.
10. Having an empty inbox.
11. Finding something that you lost ages ago.
12. The first sip of a hot coffee on a cold day.
13. A compliment from a stranger.
14. Crying at the end of a movie you've seen countless times.
15. Popping bubble wrap.
16. The rush of endorphins after a workout.
17. Freshly washed hair.

18. Getting a text from someone that you haven't heard from in forever.
19. Soft sand between your toes.
20. When all the traffic lights are green as you drive.
21. A heartfelt hug from a friend when you're upset.
22. Reminiscing as you look through old photographs.
23. A bath full of bubbles.
24. A sweater straight from the dryer.
25. The smell of freshly baked sweets.
26. Submitting an assignment before the date that it is due.
27. Watching the final moments of a sunset.
28. Your dog greeting you at the door.
29. Seeing a double rainbow.
30. Wearing your favourite perfume.
31. Waking up only to realise that there are several hours before you need to move.
32. Laughing until tears run down your cheeks.
33. Watching the way that the trees dance in the wind.
34. Giddy butterflies in your tummy.
35. Being too excited for tomorrow to fall asleep.

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# HOW TO LEAVE YOUR WORK AT WORK

*“You can’t do a good job if your job is all you do.”*

– Katie Thurmes

Picture this: you are out with your friends, enjoying a night out but you’re distracted by the constant buzz of emails, calendar notifications, reminders, and Slack messages; you cannot seem to switch your mind out of work/university mode. I have been there, trying to reply to emails and messages for various commitments when I’ve had a few drinks, refusing to ignore them.

Whether it’s assignments, university, work, or extracurricular activities that are dividing your attention, it happens to the best of us. Whilst phone reminders and calendar schedules are useful tools for keeping yourself accountable, our phones also follow us when we aren’t at work, and can remind us of all the things we need to do at unfortunate times.

It’s particularly difficult as university students to manage our personal and work time, as we are often juggling many commitments. For me, I have my university work, my employment, my commitments as President of the UOW Law Students’ Society, plus sports, and other extracurricular activities. It is not as simple as completing my work during a 9am to 5pm period, as there are often other things to be done. It’s incredibly easy to get caught up and accidentally work until 3am on your assignment.



Consequently, it is important to discover what works for you – should you start waking up an hour earlier before work and do your readings, so you are free from 5pm? Personally, I allocate time to checking LSS emails during my lunch breaks at work; it allows me to turn my mind away from my job and do something else, but still be productive with my time. This is a very personalised process, you need to find what works for you, but without sacrificing your sleep, friends, and mental health. Here are four tips that you can easily to implemented into your day-to-day life to help you keep your personal and work life separate:

### **I Setting Boundaries With Friends**

I know in my friend group, most of us study the same degree, so it is easy to fall into conversation about upcoming assignments or the recent release of marks. When you're trying to have downtime and leave your work life separate, this can cause anxiety and stress at the wrong times.

Set boundaries with your friends; if they are trying to talk about work with you on your night out, try saying “I'm trying not to think about studying at the moment, let's talk about the assignment tomorrow, we can meet in the library”. This can feel tricky and awkward at first, but you might also be doing them a world of good by helping them separate their work and personal life!

### **II Turn Off Your Notifications At Certain Times**

For me, Slack is the biggest encroachment on my personal time. I receive a message and I struggle not to respond to it instantly. I have started turning the notifications off after dinner every night, and that is time I dedicate to reading, watching tv, or scrolling on Tiktok.

Reflect on what is disturbing your personal life the most; is it emails, calendar reminders, or something else? Consider silencing notifications for that particular app at certain times during the day, allowing you a bit of separation.

### **III Be Productive With Your Time**

If you have an hour-long lecture to watch, don't constantly pause the video, get a snack, check your phone, or talk to your roommate. Otherwise, your one-hour lecture will quickly turn into a three-hour task and you will be left feeling depleted. Be productive with the time you have allocated to something and get it done. It might work better for you to study at the library away from distractions.

### **IV Write A Reflection On Your Day**

Do you ever get to the end of your day and feel like you haven't accomplished anything, so you just keep going? Stop for 10-15 minutes and write down what you have completed during the day. You have probably done more than you thought you had. This also helps set you up for the next day, as you have a record of exactly what you have done.

Finally, while it's important to schedule time for yourself and your social life, make sure you don't over-schedule yourself. It's easy to get disheartened when you have something on your calendar that you don't find time to complete. However, you must be careful not to live your life so rigidly that your calendar begins to do you more harm than good. Leaving your work at work is only going to get harder as you progress through your career – the stakes will become higher, the pressure more intense, and you might have kids or a family to get home to. Setting these boundaries and learning to separate the professional and personal early on in your life will be invaluable to you in the long run.

*“The key is not to prioritise what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.”*

– Stephen Covey

**Annabella Noussis**

**President of the University of Wollongong Law Students' Society**

**Bachelor of Laws**

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# THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING

I have found that whenever I am in a stressful situation, people always tell me to just 'think positively.' And it seems so easy, right? But from my experience, putting that into practice is a lot harder than it seems.

As law students, it's easy to get bogged down in the stress and pressure of university. Whether it's exams, assignments, volunteering, or clerkships, it can be difficult to maintain a positive attitude and outlook with so much going on. However, the power of positive thinking cannot be underestimated when it comes to achieving success, not only in law school but in every aspect of life.

So, what is positive thinking? It is all about focusing on the positives in your life, rather than dwelling on the negatives. It's about embracing a growth mindset and believing that you can improve, even in the face of challenges.

A common misconception is that positive thinking is just about being happy all the time. It's more about recognising that even in difficult situations, there's always something we can learn or appreciate. It's about focusing on what we can control, instead of worrying about what we can't.

As you can probably imagine there are so many benefits of positive thinking, one being that it can help you to manage stress and anxiety. When you approach your studies with a positive attitude, you're more likely to feel motivated and energised, rather than overwhelmed and discouraged. In turn, this can help you to perform better on exams and assignments.

Another benefit of positive thinking is that it can help you to build resilience. Studying law can be tough, and there will inevitably be times when you face setbacks or disappointments. However, if you approach these with a positive attitude, you're more likely to bounce back and keep moving forward. So how can you cultivate a positive mindset? Here are a few tips that I have found useful:

### **Identify Negative Self-Talk**

One of the best ways to practice positive thinking is to start by identifying your negative patterns of self-talk. These are the thoughts that pop into your head when you're feeling down or stressed out. Once you've identified these patterns, you can start to replace them with positive thoughts and affirmations.

For example, instead of saying 'I'm not good enough' or 'I can't do this,' try saying 'I am capable and strong' or 'I am worthy of success.' These small changes in your self-talk can make a big difference in how you feel about yourself and your capabilities.

### **Practice Gratitude**

It's easy to get caught up in negative self-talk when things aren't going well, but it's important to remember all the things you've done well in the past. Consequently, try to celebrate your successes and remind yourself of all the things you're capable of achieving.

Make sure to take time each day to reflect on the things you're grateful for, whether it's a supportive friend or family member, a good grade on an assignment, or a beautifully sunny day. For me, I take 5 minutes each morning to reflect on what went well the day before and what I am looking forward to in the day to come. This puts me in a good headspace to start the day and to remind myself of all the positives.

## **Visualize Success**

Spend some time each day visualizing yourself succeeding at whatever your next goal is. Imagine yourself acing an exam, delivering a winning argument in moot court, or landing your dream clerkship. As the saying goes, if you believe it, you can achieve it.

## **Surround Yourself With Positivity**

Avoid spending time with people who bring you down or who only focus on what they can't control. Seek out friends, family, mentors, or colleagues who radiate positivity and encouragement, which can make this journey easier.

## **Take Care Of Your Physical Health**

Exercise, eat well, and get enough sleep. When your body feels good, your mind is more likely to feel good too and this will make reframing your mindset easier. For me, I find that working out puts me in a far better mood and helps me to put things into perspective.

Conclusively, positive thinking is a powerful tool for success in law school and beyond. By cultivating a positive mindset, you can overcome challenges, build resilience, and achieve your goals. However, it is not a magical cure-all for life's problems, but it does make a huge difference in how you can approach those problems.

Developing a positive mindset is a type of mental fitness, and just like your physical fitness, it takes time and practice to get better. So, start small, and you will find that your momentum will continue. The next time life throws you a curveball, remember that you have the power to choose how you respond.

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**Junior Careers Director of the Curtin Student Law Society**  
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# THE ALLURE OF SLOW PRODUCTIVITY

Ever since my first year of university, I've always loved the idea of being 'productive and busy'. Perhaps I crave the sweet taste of validation from my family too much, but building routines, watching study vlogs on Instagram, and following the meticulous lives of 'studytubers' never fails to give me a sense of purpose. But alas, I am human, therefore, suffering a lack of motivation is nothing new. Last year, I experienced the biggest downfalls I've had career-wise, leaving me confined to a continuous cycle of burnout. My life felt like Sisyphus, simply waking up, studying, exercising, eating, taking my dog for a walk, and repeating this routine again and again. This lifestyle felt like a strenuous battle to push a boulder of accomplishment uphill, just for it to roll down again.

During the 3-month long break over the summer, I began to find joy in the simple things again - waking up to a cup of warm, steaming matcha tea and reading outside in the sunshine. You know, typical Marie Kondo vibes. But being away from studying for so long made me desire it. After resting, I was motivated to study again. Consequently, I decided to pursue four units this semester instead of three.

Currently, I am in the depths of assignment season and fear that I cannot balance on this tightrope of life. I fear that the rope will snap - that I won't get the grades I want. I fear that the burnout I experienced last year will resurface. I fear that rather than "pushing" myself to do four units, I'm actually trying to "prove" myself. So, how have I been coping? By fighting fear with slowness.

## **The Ingredients to Slowness**

Like the air we breathe, 'Hustle culture' is a phrase normalised in society. Turning a blind eye to grinding from morning to night makes us burnt out and become overwhelmed. So, why don't we normalise being intentional with our time and allowing ourselves to recharge? That's what slow productivity is, and these are the three essential components...

### **I Brain-Dumping**

It seems strange to say that you should counter-balance your anxieties with calmness because they are complete dichotomies. By stopping for a second and taking one deep breath, the exhale is all I need to stop the world from swallowing me whole. After that, I write down everything that I need to complete within the week in what I call a 'master to-do list' – whether it is assignments, lectures, or tutorial preparation that have been neglected and left to do till the very last minute (very on brand for me). Realising that I have a mountain of tasks, I also dump on the list what I call 'non-negotiables' – these are 'fun' things that I must do throughout the week to keep me sane, like little rewards. Of course, 'fun' means various things for different people – perhaps it could mean partying every Friday night or spending every waking moment with your partner. For me it is going for a walk, heading to the gym, and spending quality time with friends and family.

### **II Calendar-Blocking**

When I first stumbled across the phrase 'calendar blocking', I assumed that it meant I should never look at the calendar again to avoid all my responsibilities. Instead, it means to 'block out' specific times in the day for certain tasks or activities. It's been personally helpful to see that I have a semi-fixed routine filled with responsibilities but also rewards (the non-negotiables). It doesn't have to be specific, for instance, eating breakfast from 10.30am-10.45am. Instead, it could just be a morning routine from 9am-11am and studying from 2pm-6pm (with breaks in between).

### **III Taking Breaks**

Sometimes, it's really tempting to keep tackling the task at hand, but breaks have been proven to increase productivity. Whether it be scrolling on your phone, going outside, or even just lying down, there are many ways that we can rest our overworked minds. I used to envy those who could concentrate for more than an hour, but I've realised that everyone has different attention spans and so long as you can concentrate, that is all that matters. Consequently, I typically work in 30/10 increments whereas the Pomodoro Technique prescribes 25/5.

### **Motivation vs Drive**

During assignment season, James Scholz appeared on my Youtube recommendations page. I was thoroughly impressed (and concerned) by his '12 hour study with me videos' and decided to join his streams. I was also impressed by his recent video that criticises motivation, saying that motivation is influenced by external factors. If you see someone exercising at the gym on Tiktok and feel a sudden urge to do the same, it's motivation. But drive is having an inner sense of determination and persistence, no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. If it was raining outside, your drive would make you still go to the gym regardless. Conclusively, motivation is what gets you going, but drive is what keeps you going. As a user once commented on a Reddit forum, 'suffer now, prosper later'.

I hope this article serves as a lesson that sometimes, the best way to accomplish tasks is to take it slow, savour little moments, and let productivity come to you. I understand that I am coming from a place of privilege as my parents never forced me to pursue impractical academic goals. But slow productivity has been one of the best things that has kept the tightrope of my life stable. Sure, the boulder of accomplishment may come crashing down later, but for now, I feel ready to push it up again tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after that.

**Emmy Phung**

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**Macquarie University**



# REMINDERS FOR YOU TODAY

Be kind to yourself.

You are not your thoughts.

You are more than just your body.

You have time.

You can do hard things.

Direction is more important than speed.

Rest is also productive.

It's ok not to be ok.

You can cry it out.

You are worthy of love.

Protect your peace.

One day at a time.

Enjoy the space between where you are and where you want to be.

Life is actually beautiful.

**Giovanna Bongiorno**  
**ALSA Equity and Wellbeing Officer**  
**Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Commerce (Finance)**  
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# WHAT DOES PRIORITISING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING LOOK LIKE?

In a society that places high value on productivity, the line between working hard and 'toxic productivity' has become blurry. As assessments pile up and deadlines draw closer, prioritising our mental health always seems to be the first thing to suffer. With full-time university, work, extra-curricular commitments, socialising, and getting enough sleep, it is no surprise that finding balance as a law student can seem impossible.

The stereotype that law students need to be in a constant state of work can be severely harmful to our mental health and wellbeing. Prioritising rest is essential to maintaining your motivation throughout the year. Unlike assignments, relaxation is not something you can procrastinate.

While prioritising your mental health and wellbeing can look different for everyone, here are five tips that have helped me throughout university:



## **I Find Your “Third Place”**

I have recently learnt about the importance of “third places”. These are places outside of your home, university, or work that enable you to connect with others over a shared activity or interest. Third places can provide an important outlet both mentally and physically. The routine of showing up to the same place each week, sharing a smile with a stranger, and connecting over something that doesn’t involve deadlines provides a mental reset that is difficult to replicate elsewhere.

Personally, my ‘third place’ is my weekly exercise class. There is something about seeing the same people every time and having this unspoken accountability to each other that keeps me going. It not only provides a place to switch off mentally, but the endorphin release put me in a great mood for the rest of the day or evening. Other third places could be your local coffee shop, the beach, a book club, a dog park, a volunteering group, or even an online forum such as Discord and Reddit.

## **II Time Manage, But Make It Flexible**

Like many others, I thrive on a schedule and have a special bond with my Google Calendar. There is something satisfying about the colour-coded blocks scheduled to the hour that scratch an itch in my Type-A brain. Naturally, I’m always thinking of the next step. However, when we become consumed by being productive, we can ignore the signs of exhaustion and the need to slow down. This can lead to feeling guilty or shameful in times of rest.

It is important to find ways to be organised which don’t become unhealthy obsessions. Allowing flexibility in your schedule and factoring in dedicated time for self-care can help combat those feelings of having to be productive.

### **III Setting Boundaries At Work**

Work can be a tough thing to balance as a law student. There will inevitably be times when you're called in to work extra shifts or stay back late to help finish urgent tasks. Whilst working is paramount to building connections and gaining experience, it is equally as important to implement healthy boundaries.

This may look like reducing your hours during busy study periods, logging out of your work email from your personal devices, or even being more honest about your capacity levels throughout the workday. Try not to take on more than you can commit to finishing and be honest about your progress. This will help you avoid overcommitting yourself at work and feeling obliged to work more than necessary.

### **IV What Is Bad For The Body, Is Bad For The Mind**

If you have seen a 'law student starter pack' meme online, I'm sure that it included photos of all-nighters, under-eye bags, energy drinks, and lots of coffee. While I have had my fair share of coffee dependence, long-term use can lead to higher anxiety and erratic mood swings.

Consequently, it is essential; to find creative alternatives to caffeine and sleep deprivation that keep you focused and engaged. While coffee is still a necessity in my life, I try my best to reduce my intake to a maximum of two per day and only after midday if it's essential. Additionally, going to sleep and waking up at similar times each day can help with fatigue levels.

## **V Find Ways To Socialise That Won't Drain Your Battery**

While going out with friends to eat or drink are great ways to stay social and destress, they can often create an additional mental, physical, and financial burden. Alternatively, try implementing ways to socialise that are low-stress and high-comfort, to allow space for your mind to recharge. Activities as simple as watching a movie, cooking dinner with your friends, or even having a game night are great ways to socialise without the added stress of going out and recovering the following day.

...

Treat your mental health like a battery that needs to be recharged daily. Prioritising a small amount of time each day can be the difference between feeling in control and out of control of your mental state. Above all, acknowledge that you are human, you are doing the best that you can, and your success is not defined by your productivity.

**Katie Walker**


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# KNOWING WHEN TO SAY NO

How many times have we said “yes” to people or situations when we really wanted to say “no”? It happens all too frequently in my life; I constantly agree to help or spend time with others when I still have my own tasks to complete. Saying “no” may be challenging for numerous reasons: for example, an eagerness to please, fear of what people may think of you, a desire to be helpful, or a longing to not disappoint others. On the other hand, we are immersed in a culture of self-care and mindfulness where we are expected to ‘put on our own oxygen mask before helping others’. In other words, to help others, you need to take care of yourself first. This may entail saying “no” to certain people or requests that would cause you to spread yourself too thin.

Saying “no” is a skill that we must master as it allows us to advocate for ourselves and our own mental health. It also places the decision about how we spend our time and energy back into our own hands. Naturally, most of us want to please those with whom we have a relationship; we want people to like us and view us as socially accommodating. Saying “no” may feel like you are rejecting a relationship with a group or individual and disappointing those whom you are trying to please. Instinctively, humans are social creatures that relish being perceived as kind, helpful, and accomplished. We do not want our “no” to be interpreted as rude, unhelpful, selfish, or incompetent. Learning to be honest about the demands in our life and time limitations, establishes boundaries to take greater care of our own wellbeing. In turn, this protects us from feeling burnt out and empowers us to become the best version of ourselves.



As law students and soon-to-be graduates, it can be daunting to say “no” when asked to assist or complete additional tasks for fear of being seen as uncompromising. One way to gain confidence in saying “no” is to practice doing so in low-stake situations. For example, saying “no” to joining friends for a drink after work when an assignment deadline is looming, may help you feel more comfortable saying “no” in other situations. Remember that it will take time to build the confidence to say “no” but practice makes perfect. By having the confidence to say “no”, you facilitate the opportunity to say “yes” to tasks that will contribute to your professional and personal development. This will allow you to protect your productivity and ensure that the quality of your work is not impacted by trying to do too much. The last thing anyone wants to do is stretch themselves too thin by saying “yes” to too many things. Being stretched too thin could affect your ability to deliver on what you have promised, thus impacting your performance and wellbeing.

Ultimately, learning to say “no” will bring us a sense of empowerment. It will ensure that we take on tasks that can be completed to the best of our ability without negatively impacting our own health and wellbeing. By taking care of ourselves and our schedule, we can help others to the best of our ability when time allows and without overwhelming ourselves. By practising saying “no”, we learn to identify what to say “no” to, which puts us in the ‘driver’s seat of our own life’.

**Sigrid P. Eckhart**  
**Juris Doctor**  
**RMIT University**



# TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR THOUGHTS

There are many aspects of life that an individual cannot control. However, one area that every human being can take the reins over is their mind. Your thoughts affect your actions which have the ability to impede on your success. In this article, I will split the discussion on the power of positive thinking into four sections. The first will discuss the science behind the human brain, what it consists of, and the chemicals behind thoughts. The second will discuss the negativity that consumes individuals' thoughts. The third will echo and extend on how to control the mind with the consumption of negativity. Finally, the fourth will focus on the power of positive thinking and how self-talk can aid in everyday life for all individuals.

## **The Science Behind Brains**

It is too common for individuals to be consumed by their thoughts and let their inner negativity consume their day instead of acting on it. Let's talk briefly about the source ... The Brain. Dr Jordan B Peterson discusses the processes of the brain when someone is thinking. He explains that the prefrontal cortex is the most evolved brain region and serves our highest order cognitive abilities. It is, however, the most sensitive to the effects of stress exposure. There are different components of your brain such as the prefrontal cortex, hippocampus, neurons, and neurotransmitters which are all involved simultaneously. The nerve cells in the spinal cord, namely, motor neurons will trigger and send an impulse down their axon which travels to the muscle and causes the desirable action. This is for a physical action that an individual wants to do.



Neurons release brain chemicals that generate electrical signals to other neurons surrounding them. These electrical signals spread creating thought formation. Scientists have uncovered that the part of the brain that becomes more active when people think about themselves is the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC). This part of the brain can also be active when people think about others. It gets more complex as people grow and get older.

### **Negative Thoughts**

Unfortunately, negative thoughts develop far quicker than positive thoughts. This phenomenon can potentially hold an individual back from achieving the goals and living the life that they want to. Often, people feel powerless against such destructive patterns. This can cause individuals to feel stuck in the limbo of fear and anxiety. Interestingly, one of the main causes of negative thinking is a lack of organisation. Many individuals feel a sense of peace when their lives are organised. However, when life becomes disordered, the lack of control can trigger a nasty cycle of negative thought patterns that are difficult to break free from.

### **Mind Control**

For decades, methods of mind control have existed and been utilised by various professionals. Technological advancements in the current age have allowed individuals to receive a rather peaceful mind in an efficient manner. One such example is Smiling Mind – this is a unique tool, developed by psychologists and educators, purposed to bring balance to your life. The platform creators suggest that by completing 10 minutes a day on the app, individuals will be empowered to rewire their thoughts and bring positivity into their day. Additionally, Healthline provides a good structure to deal with unwanted thoughts. You can utilise this by identifying the thoughts you want to change, accepting unwanted thoughts, attempting meditation, changing your perspective, and focusing on the positives in life.

## **Positive Thinking/Self-Talk**

Positive thinking will help with stress management and can improve your health. Mayo Clinic states that ‘positive thinking doesn’t mean you ignore life’s less pleasant situations [rather,] you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way’. Self-talk is one way that one can implement positive thinking. Whenever you are consumed by an emotion, it is important to talk out loud and accept that you are thinking of whatever emotion you are feeling.

Furthermore, it is crucial that you reinforce positivity when talking out loud. In his podcast, Dr Jordan B Peterson stated: “don’t do nothing. Hope comes from pursuit and you're anxious because you need to specify a path. You have no hope, and you are anxious if you do nothing – denial is not the answer”. This notion is crucial because, as individuals, once we are frustrated and consumed by negative thoughts, there is potential that the brain indicates to not do anything and to wallow in that thought. However, it is important to not do that, but rather to fill your mind with hope.

This is the power of positive thinking. If your mind is able to be consumed by negativity, it is certainly possible to flip the narrative and fill it with positivity.

**Harsika Manoranjen**  
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**Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Commerce**

# BACHELOR OF LAWS WITH AN UNDECLARED MAJOR IN HUSTLE CULTURE

Alongside the anticipated nerves I – and no doubt everyone else – had about going to law school, I recall that I was particularly excited by the prospect of meeting my people. By that, I mean people who had similar interests and values to me. People who were hardworking, passionate, and self-confessed nerds during high school. People whom I expected to just click with.

Clearly, I was not mistaken in this belief that I would be surrounded by people who were just like me. One of my earliest memories of law school is an introductory lecture centred on wellbeing, where the lecturer pointed out that all incoming law students were united in coming from the top of our class at high school and being perfectionists with the typical Type A personality traits i.e., most of us were ambitious and organised workaholics. However, this introductory lecture also brought to light what should have been a glaringly obvious implication, yet perhaps wasn't: I was surrounded by people just like me.

Perfection is hard to achieve in law school, especially as we are surrounded by some of the brightest thinkers. We cannot all be the best. In a field where graduates are seemingly endless and graduate positions are contrarily limited, we need to learn to differentiate ourselves from our future colleagues. Little did I know, but my welcome to law school had also been an introduction to what would become my immersion in hustle culture.

Hustle culture is the extremity of humble hard work; it emphasises the notion that one should be constantly working if one wishes to be successful. Superficially, embracing hustle culture during university can be seen as a tool to get you ahead in your legal career, making you stand out amongst your peers by highlighting how you aren't afraid to put in the work – almost suggesting that you are afraid to not put in the work.

However, what draws the line between being a hardworking person with a balanced lifestyle and being a victim to hustle culture? Whilst hustling can fulfil its goal of leading to success, there are healthier ways to achieve satisfaction in your studies. Hustle culture creates extreme self-imposed pressure, leading to anxiety, stress, and eventually burnout – all of which contradicts the definition of success.

Upon reflection, meeting most of my now friends from law school in first year started with a conversation that focused on assessments, readings, or the latest round of a skills competition, rather than hobbies or what we did on the weekend. After all, the latter appeared to be a redundant topic of conversation as it was assumed that we all spent our weekend buried in our textbooks. Furthermore, people become known by their remarkable achievements in law school, rather than their names: “Did you hear that they won the Beginners Mock Trial Grand Final?”.

As I am currently in my fourth year of studying, I have had my fair share of exposure to hustle culture and its negative flow-on effects. What was initially an enthusiastic attempt to differentiate ourselves, quickly turned into an unrelenting drive to ‘get our foot into the door’. Nowadays, my peers and I have entered the next phase of law school’s ‘hustle culture’ in considering clerkship applications and looking ahead to our graduate job prospects.

Beyond my friendships in my own cohort, I have been fortunate to have met, befriended, and mentored many younger students over the years, all of whom have similarly become immersed in hustle culture. Nonetheless, it never fails to surprise me when the first question asked by a nervous, yet passionate, first-year student is either ‘How do I get a job with a Big Six Firm?’ or ‘What WAM do I need to attain a graduate position?’. Simply settling into law school invariably becomes quickly replaced by the endgame of ‘making it’ in the industry, because such traits of high work ethic, drive, and motivation are ingrained into law students. These traits make it characteristic that law students tend to love the discipline of hustle culture and the supposed trade-offs of ‘getting ahead’ they gain from embracing it. Nevertheless, one question begs to be asked: are you really getting ahead if your success comes at the expense of your wellbeing?

Whilst differentiating ourselves from colleagues is not necessarily a bad thing, we need to focus on pursuing things that make us as individuals happy, rather than blindly obliging to hustle culture. As law students, we need to contribute to deconstructing the idea that we must be constantly ‘hustling’ away at work to be successful. We need to embrace taking the time out of our busy schedules to intentionally rest and recover as this is vital to progressing in the legal industry.

It is important to strive towards success and fulfillment in our professional careers, yet not at the expense of our mental and social needs, as these are equally essential to our well-being. Working without limits and balance is nothing short of an unhealthy and unsustainable approach to pursuing success.

As I am now well-accustomed to the pressures of law school, I can identify when I am burnt out and need time to recharge. I have also learnt the importance of checking in on my friends, who are also bearing the burden of expectations to comply with hustle culture, and encouraging them to take a step back when they need it. After all, we cannot expect to be constantly work-focused and performing at our best when we neglect rest.

Therefore, whether you are in your first year of university, or you are approaching the final stages of your degree, remember that non-stop hustling is not the way to achieve fulfillment. Your efforts in university are seen and valued. Do not be afraid to take some time off for yourself to rest and recharge when you recognise that you need it. Finally, remember that your law school community is here to help you navigate the crazy expectations and internal pressure that come with studying law.


The objective fact is that perfection is hard to find in school. As such, rather than chasing some idealised standards of perfection one might not ever achieve, focus on achieving fulfilment during your time in law school. Remember you are surrounded by some of the brightest thinkers, but you are also one of the brightest thinkers yourself. You are enough and you always will be. Hustle or not, you have well and truly earned your place at law school and the industry is lucky to have you in it.

**Emily Calbert**

**UNSW Law Society Vice President (Education)**

**Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)**

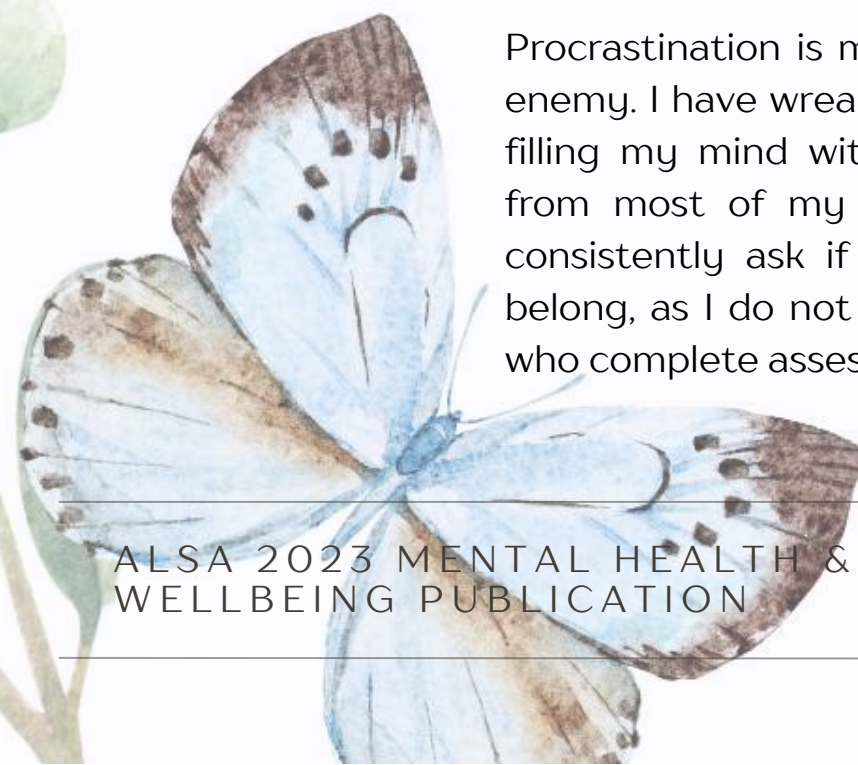
**University of New South Wales**




# ORGANISATION AND PROCRASTINATION: ARE THEY POLAR OPPOSITES?

I like to believe that I am a Type A person by default. In my mind, everything has a place on my 'to-do' list; it is all organised and every possession has a home. This sounds SUPER ordered, doesn't it? Whilst my psyche appears structured, my practicality is seemingly not. When it comes down to physically doing the things on my to-do list in a timely manner, it is just too difficult!

Is an assessment due one month? That is PLENTY of time; I better not start writing it now. That skin cancer check appointment I have put off for months? I may as well put it off for even longer and send thoughts and prayers to my body! I have never submitted, or even begun, an assessment well before it is due. The deadline could be so close, and I would still flatly refuse to open the document containing the instructions, until the day it is due.



Procrastination is my best friend and my worst enemy. I have wreaked havoc on my own life by filling my mind with guilt that I am 'different' from most of my peers. My work colleagues consistently ask if the legal sector is where I belong, as I do not fit into the mould of people who complete assessments well in advance.



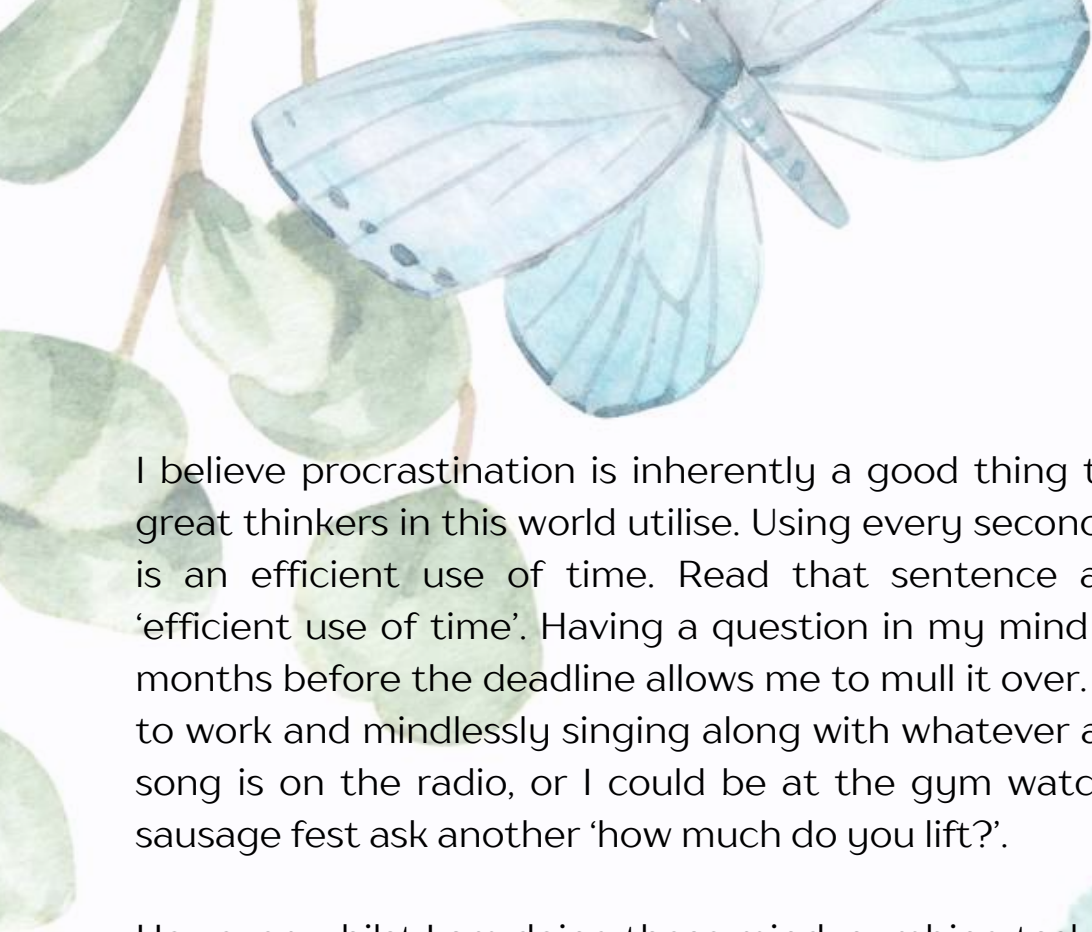
Apparently, I am not Type A through and through. Consequently, I worry that I am not doing it the way everyone else is and fitting into the norm. However, to those naysayers, I give them the concept of 'mulling'. Unfortunately, I am not talking about mulling a beverage on a Saturday night. Rather, the type of mulling I propose refers to the concept of deeply considering something for a long duration of time.

In both my work and university life, I am one to take the time to mull over questions and tasks at hand. My brain can somehow sit on this for weeks, or even months, and generate 3289382646 ways to potentially solve the problem. This has led to what my professors have dubbed, 'seriously creative' discourse. By giving myself the extra time that my peers do not require, I have created space for myself to think outside of the box.

Imagine you have already read a question. The first potential solution that comes to mind is typically what you would implement, right? This way of thinking has already led to an average response. Yes, you might be able to spruce it up a bit by adding in fancy, big words, and spend the time interweaving your argument throughout. But realistically, have you already done a disservice to yourself by not fully exploring the unknown? Going with whatever 'fits' or comes to you quickly is not necessarily the best way to move forward.

Procrastination has typically always been viewed to be a bad thing, a '...self-regulatory failure'; something to avoid at all costs. Scholars across the globe lecture on how to 'stay on top of your workload' and how to 'produce more in less time'. However, is this simply contributing to a capitalist ideal? Why is self-optimisation such a goal? Why do we feel guilty when at rest? Why do we feel like we need to be producing more and more, and working ourselves to the bone all the time? Are you asking yourself if there is another option that can allow for a better use of your time?



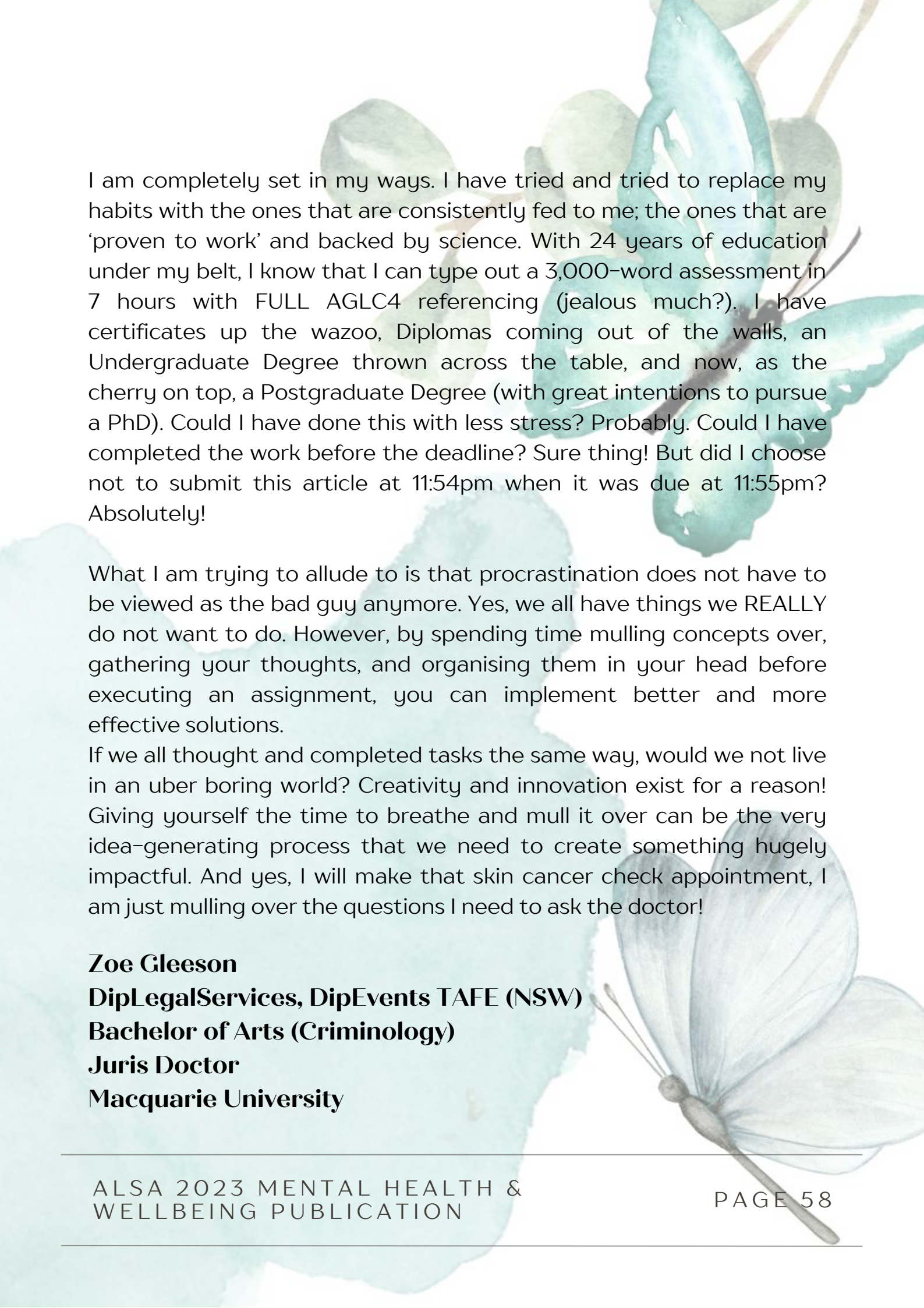


I believe procrastination is inherently a good thing that many of the great thinkers in this world utilise. Using every second up to a deadline is an efficient use of time. Read that sentence again. Yes, I said 'efficient use of time'. Having a question in my mind over the span of months before the deadline allows me to mull it over. I could be driving to work and mindlessly singing along with whatever abhorrent Top 40 song is on the radio, or I could be at the gym watching an absolute sausage fest ask another 'how much do you lift?'.

However, whilst I am doing these mind-numbing tasks, I am constantly thinking about potential answers to the question/s at hand. I am generating and fusing potential options together to create a well-informed and educated answer. I may be physically writing the thing that is due, mere minutes before the deadline, but I have already formed the response/s in my head throughout the last few weeks.

It is at this point that my guilt starts to diminish. Organisation and procrastination do not have to be incongruent. If I procrastinate, it does not mean I am disorganised. In reality, my mind is organised – I am aware of every single deadline, my workspaces are tidy, and my schedule is tightly structured. Having this level of mental organisation allows my thoughts to flow freely.





I am completely set in my ways. I have tried and tried to replace my habits with the ones that are consistently fed to me; the ones that are ‘proven to work’ and backed by science. With 24 years of education under my belt, I know that I can type out a 3,000-word assessment in 7 hours with FULL AGLC4 referencing (jealous much?). I have certificates up the wazoo, Diplomas coming out of the walls, an Undergraduate Degree thrown across the table, and now, as the cherry on top, a Postgraduate Degree (with great intentions to pursue a PhD). Could I have done this with less stress? Probably. Could I have completed the work before the deadline? Sure thing! But did I choose not to submit this article at 11:54pm when it was due at 11:55pm? Absolutely!

What I am trying to allude to is that procrastination does not have to be viewed as the bad guy anymore. Yes, we all have things we REALLY do not want to do. However, by spending time mulling concepts over, gathering your thoughts, and organising them in your head before executing an assignment, you can implement better and more effective solutions.

If we all thought and completed tasks the same way, would we not live in an uber boring world? Creativity and innovation exist for a reason! Giving yourself the time to breathe and mull it over can be the very idea-generating process that we need to create something hugely impactful. And yes, I will make that skin cancer check appointment, I am just mulling over the questions I need to ask the doctor!

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# DIVERSITY IN THE LAW

The twenty-first century has seen a turn in social perspectives allowing for greater inclusion of diverse community members within the workplace. This article dissects the level of diversity within the legal profession in Australia, specifically concerning gender, culture, and ethnicity.

## **Diversity In The Current Legal Landscape In Comparison To History**

Diversity refers to the ‘differences between people and how they identify in relation to key areas including, but not limited to, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, age, and disability’. According to the Solicitors Regulation Authority, on average, seventeen percent of lawyers are Black, Asian, or of a Minority Ethnic origin. Asian lawyers comprise twelve percent of such, while Black lawyers comprise two percent. The Law Society of NSW reported in 2020 that twenty-eight percent of practising solicitors in the state were born overseas, and about one percent of solicitors identified as Indigenous Australians. With regards to higher positions within law firms, the diversity decreases even more – larger firms have reported only a small percentage (eight percent) of ethnically diverse partners.

While this may not seem like a large percentage, alarmingly, it is sign of increasing diversity. Between 2001 and 2020, the diversity of immigrant solicitors practising in NSW increased from twenty-two percent to twenty-eight. The 2014 National Attrition and Re-Engagement Study found a disproportionate representation of men in the legal profession, particularly in higher positions. However, in 2020, practising female solicitors in NSW became the majority at fifty-three percent. Nationally, the Equitable Briefing Policy, conducted by the Law Council of Australia, has yielded improvements in the proportion of briefs that Briefing Entities have given to female barristers, from twenty percent in 2016–2017 to thirty-one percent in 2019–2020.

Perhaps the low diversity statistics within the law may be attributed towards the culture of exclusion with which our society has battled historically. Taking the perspective of feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith, who has developed an understanding of the relations of ruling within our society whereby a tradition and history entrenched in discrimination now informs the hierarchies seen in the everyday world, this rings true.

As aforementioned, the history of diversity in the legal profession has not been particularly favourable. After all, it was only relatively recently that the Barrister's Admission Rules were amended to remove the prohibition of admission of 'aliens' to the bar, with South Australia being the first Australian state to do so in 1975.

### **Why Does Diversity Matter?**

According to a Thomson Reuters article, diversification in law firms encourages the consideration of issues that might otherwise be overlooked due to a lack of understanding. Diversity equates a team with a wider global experience and multicultural identity, which allows for an invaluable perspective not afforded by a single-cultured entity – research has shown that diverse groups tend to be better at decision-making and solving complex problems in general.

Furthermore, diversity within a work environment promotes the feeling of inclusion, support, and acceptance, which consequently builds motivation for improved job performance and productivity. This also promotes staff retention, as employees who feel valued and included are more incentivised to stay in their role longer compared to where they may feel alienated instead, which would solve the issues of the cost of recruitment and the opportunity cost of losing talented team members.

**Tania Toh**

**Policy Submissions Director of UNSW Law Society**

**Bachelor of Law / Bachelor of Arts**

**University of New South Wales**

# REMEMBER...

Worrying won't change the outcome.  
Their opinion of you is irrelevant.  
It's natural to outgrow people.  
Their behaviour is the answer that you need.  
You create your own reality.  
Be the change you want to see.  
Take a deep breath.  
Be patient.  
Expect nothing and appreciate everything.  
Fill up your own cup.  
Do the things that scare you.  
Life is too short.

**Giovanna Bongiorno**  
**ALSA Equity and Wellbeing Officer**  
**Bachelor of Laws / Bachelor of Commerce (Finance)**  
**Curtin University**



# TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

The transition into a university degree is daunting for everyone and can rapidly take a toll on your mental health. This is why it is important to have some tips and tricks up your sleeve when beginning your degree to ease the anxieties that your university experience brings.

## **Tip One: Organisation**

As cliché as it sounds, organisation is the key to avoiding common university catastrophes. A huge adjustment regarding the university lifestyle is that you must be self-sufficient and disciplined early on to build long-lasting habits. A key hack of mine, as a serial assessment neglecter, is utilising a physical and online calendar. Within my calendar, I write the due date for assessments, and weekly reminders before the assignment is due, that way I have a constant reminder that the assessment due date is coming up. Additionally, keeping weekly lists of what you need to prepare for the week for each unit can be a useful trigger to ensure you stay on top of your work.

Class schedules can also be stressful to organise, especially if you have extra-circular commitments or are working. One way to assist with this is to schedule your classes as soon as registrations are out. Your studies must come first, which is easier said than done. Therefore, finding a flexible employer throughout your degree is paramount for your well-being. Otherwise, talk with your unit coordinator as they may be able to adjust your class timetable.




### **Tip Two: Get Involved**

When starting your degree, you may seek to reduce your extra-circular commitments to avoid unnecessary stress, especially in your first year. However, they can be where you learn the best tips for your studies. For instance, by joining the Curtin Student Law Society I learnt about clerkships, recommended units, and built myself a support system that was invaluable for my well-being during uni. However, if extra-circulars are not your niche, nor do you have time for extra commitments, just attending class is a great way to get involved that many people overlook. When you attend classes, you strengthen your likelihood of doing well in a unit and position yourself to build a strong network of peers.

### **Tip Three: Set Realistic Goals**

Naturally, as a law student, you are likely an overachiever who wants to maximise your potential and do all that you can during your studies. This is a great mentality but can lead to easy burnout. This is why it is important to set realistic goals. A common error is to overcommit and expect yourself to spend every day studying, which is not realistic long term. Therefore, a useful tip is to set simple goals, i.e., a time slot weekly for each unit to catch up on any readings/lectures but keep time frames realistic to ensure you can maintain them each week.




Most students expect to be achieving the grades that they did in high school or within another degree, but this is not always the case. Personally, adjusting to law-style writing and assessments has been a somewhat frustrating journey of trial. Alternatively, try to set long-term goals throughout your studies. For example, your first-year grades may not be the best but if you aim to improve your second-year grades to be slightly better and track your improvement from then onwards.

Working full-time and being a part of a committee shows a tenacious spirit but may be unrealistic. If you are finding work and other commitments overwhelming, do not be ashamed to scale back, as your priority should be your wellbeing and your degree.

#### **Tip Four: Prioritise Self Care**

I have mentioned that university should be your priority, which is correct to an extent, but ultimately your well-being comes first. You cannot complete a degree without looking after yourself. I like to have specific days in the week, if I can, where I dedicate them to watching Netflix, seeing a friend, spending time with my fur-baby, or doing something that makes me happy. During times like exam season or the busy assessment period, it is easy to forget about yourself. However, little adjustments, like scheduling a five-minute break every hour of study, can ease the tension during these difficult times. Do not be scared to relax!





### **Tip Five: Manage Your Time Effectively**

Law is a degree that involves a large amount of material which can easily become overwhelming. Consequently, it is important to communicate with your unit coordinator about what you should focus on when approaching the unit materials. Organising reading materials into mandatory and optional can be helpful when approaching busy assessment periods. This way you won't get bogged down in the weekly readings when you have pressing assignments due. When approaching your readings, highlight the key points and try to note the overall bigger picture to see how the material fits together, rather than getting caught up in nuisance details.

In conclusion, these are just five tips for approaching your degree, but the best advice is to talk to those around you. Remember that those 'silly' questions you may be too afraid to ask in class, your peer next to you is probably thinking the same thing. Also, it may be intimidating talking to alumni or older students, however, they have been in your position before and can therefore provide invaluable advice about how to approach your studies. I wish you all the best and good luck!

**Tasha Catalano**  
**Sponsorship Director CSLS**  
**Bachelor of Laws**  
**Curtin Law School**

# FINANCIAL WELLBEING & SUPER IN THE EARLY STAGES OF YOUR CAREER

Starting your career is a very exciting time of life. Those years of study have finally paid off and anything is possible. Although retirement planning may not be a top priority at the beginning of your career, taking some initial financial steps can help you ensure that your superannuation is working for you.

- Check that your employer is paying the correct amount of super into your nominated fund.
- If your employer chose your super fund, check whether its the right one for you.
- Consolidate multiple super accounts into one to avoid paying fees on multiple accounts.
- Make voluntary contributions on top of your employer's contribution. If you set up good saving habits early on, they will stand you in good stead for the rest of your life – and the more you have in your account the more you also benefit from compound interest increasing your balance.



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- Set income and superannuation savings goals.
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# TAMING THE CRITIC WITHIN

Imposter syndrome is a ubiquitous issue in the legal profession. It doesn't discriminate based on one's level of expertise. I have witnessed lawyers with years of experience speak of their struggle with this mental condition. It is no surprise that most law students experience it too.

Imposter syndrome is an internal dialogue that feeds off fear and anxiety, constantly taunting you with proclamations centred around self-doubt. It tends to linger frequently amongst diverse groups and hits at great force. Mothers, first generation university students, those with an illness or disability, and those from a low socio-economic background are amongst those worst affected. Imposturous feelings can cause anxiety and stress, and stress correlates to poor mental and physical health.

## **Your Inner Critic Reinforcing Self-doubt**

Imposter syndrome establishes its roots deep within your nervous system and feeds off socially prescribed perfectionism. It can erode your confidence, cause anxiety, and have you believing its lies: that you are inadequate or incapable of meeting the demands required of a lawyer. Law students tend to buckle down in intense exam preparation to achieve HD-level grades. Negative accumulation of anxiety usually results in a great outcome, which they associate with a reinforcing belief that their achievement was illegitimate. Consequently, the cycle continues.


One study found that on-campus-based students had higher levels of imposter syndrome, likely due to social forces and the pressure of participation requirements. Online-based students felt they could control social perception and judgement by limiting their communication and participation in class.

Unconscious gender bias driven by toxic positivity can further drive imposturous feelings. For example, referring to a working mother as 'Superwoman' drives a stigmatised belief that all women should cope with working life and raising children like a superwoman. It sets a high bar for all to jump, thus invoking stress and anxiety.

Imposter syndrome is a mirror that reflects our inner-critics' deepest negative beliefs of ourselves. Negative beliefs and emotions invoke the brain to act for self-preservation. The potential negative outcome is a threat to your well-being which your mind wants to avoid. On the flip side, positive emotions broaden your sense of possibilities. You can build new skills, you put yourself out there, and positive outcomes reinforce your efforts. Creating a positive cycle is beneficial to your mindset and opportunities.

### **At University**

Psychological principles reinforce the goal of high grades through reward systems. Law students strive towards perfectionism and often compete with themselves for HD-level grades. We are a competitive bunch with a strong mindset and a belief that the sky's the limit. The shining golden badge lingers in our minds as a reward for all our hard work.



The fact that we come from different circumstances with different obligations makes it essential to point out why we shouldn't compare our goals and achievements with other students. Grades don't demonstrate how hard a person works or how intelligent they are. High grades can often allude to a supportive and optimal environment, which many don't have.

### **Strategies To Tame The Subconscious Critic**

Self-reflection is important. Therefore, you should consciously deconstruct the negative assumptions of your perceived self-worth by acknowledging your achievements in relation to your goals. It is important to understand that imposturous feelings are normal within the legal profession and enact strategies to deal with them.

Additionally, don't take criticism from someone you wouldn't take advice from. University professors are skilled at providing constructive feedback. Avoid the habit of social comparison because it is arguably the most self-destructive habit you can build. Engaging in social comparison also constrains you from being your true self. The human mind calls upon the unconscious bias of 'group think' in social situations, where the desire for social consensus overrides an individual's critical thinking skills, backed by fear of expressing an unpopular opinion. The desire for social conformity can limit your confidence to voice new ideas and only reinforces feelings of self-doubt.

For me, being an online based student and caring for children concurrently tends to invoke the imposter syndrome anxiety because I perceive my productivity as constrained by the obligation to multitask. Task-switch costs are known to decrease productivity and accuracy, so this is a common fear for parents studying remotely.

I find peer support from fellow students, the meaningful advice that comes from whining profusely at my very patient mentors (thank you Graeme and Chris), and moving that subconscious voice to my conscious mind to analyse its validity immensely helpful.

Your inner critic is a demon perched on your shoulder, whispering beliefs of self-doubt. Comfort zones become your norm, and as you try to step out of them, you do so by invoking the yardstick of social comparison to be better, which keeps you in an anxious cycle of negative self-reflection. Given that stress and anxiety are common in the legal profession, we must be kind to ourselves and remember that negative self-talk reinforces the beliefs of our perceived limitations. As law students, all we can do is our best in the circumstances we find ourselves in. Positive self-talk and beliefs will broaden your sense of possibilities, open your mind, and allow you to build new skills. This will pave the way for you to become limitless in learning and achieving future goals.

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**Bachelor of Laws**  
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# WHEN FAITH COLLIDES WITH THE LAW

When one's religious beliefs clash with the legal system, it can be a challenging and confusing experience. For many people, their religious faith plays a significant role in their mental health, education, and how they perceive the legal system. In this article, I will explore the intersection of faith and the law, how religious beliefs impact mental health and education, and how legal professionals can better understand and serve their clients from different religious backgrounds.

## **Influence Of Religion On The History Of Law**

The legal system is a complex and multifaceted system of rules and regulations, designed to ensure justice and fairness for all individuals. At its core, the legal system is focused on upholding the rule of law, protecting individual rights, and promoting social order.

Religious faith can play a similar role in promoting justice and fairness. Many religious traditions emphasise the importance of treating others with respect and compassion, as well as upholding principles of honesty and integrity. By living out these values, individuals can promote a more just and equitable society.



Most religions can be categorised under either the monotheism theme or the polytheism theme. One embraces the idea of divine revelation containing prescriptions purposed to be implemented in human legal and political reasoning (e.g.: Christianity and Islam). The other absconds the divine from earthly political and legal paradigms in order to permeate them with relativising spirituality (e.g.: Hinduism and Buddhism). The various contributions explore the historical development of relevant strands of religious thought, as well as the way in which they articulate themselves in the present-day diversity of a secularised and globalised environment.

Regardless of the type of religious structure individuals may follow, faith is often a deeply personal experience, but it can also be a powerful way to connect with others. Many religious communities provide a sense of belonging and support, as well as opportunities to engage in service and charitable work. By sharing their faith with others, individuals can build stronger relationships and foster a sense of community. This sense of community also plays a significant role in the context of the legal system and can help to build empathy and understanding, as well as promote a more inclusive and equitable legal system.

### **Spirituality and Managing Stress**

Religious faith can play a substantial role in shaping the mental health of law students. On the one hand, religion involves beliefs, practices, and rituals related to the transcendent. On the other hand, spirituality is a broader concept, which includes the personal quest for understanding the answers to the ultimate questions about life and its relationship with the sacred or transcendent. Using these definitions, an individual could have high levels of spirituality even with low levels of religiousness. Several studies have shown that religious coping is proven to be crucial in contributing to the decrease in depressive symptoms and can increase one's self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Religious teachings can offer guidance to law students as they confront life's challenges. However, religious beliefs may also exacerbate mental health issues. Individuals that possess extreme beliefs may experience guilt or shame for not meeting religious standards, causing them to feel inadequate or self-loathing. Furthermore, cognitive dissonance can arise in individuals who struggle to reconcile their religious beliefs with their legal trajectory, leading to stress and anxiety.

Law students should recognise the diversity of religious beliefs and how they shape people's perspectives. By gaining knowledge about different religious traditions, law students can better understand their clients' viewpoints and develop cultural competence, promoting more inclusive and equitable legal practice. It is also important to acknowledge that religious beliefs are not static and can evolve over time. As law students grow and learn, their beliefs may change, resulting in new insights and perspectives. This evolution should be celebrated, as it can foster personal and professional growth.

### **Widening Scope of Religious Understanding and Clients**

While many people hold strong religious beliefs, there are also those who do not identify with a particular faith tradition. However, even for those who do not hold strong religious beliefs, it can be valuable to explore different religions and learn from their teachings. For example, one commonly identified barrier to the provision of pro bono legal services is the mismatch that can arise between the skills and knowledge of lawyers willing to undertake pro bono legal work and those required to effectively address the needs of pro bono clients. These skills and knowledge may not necessarily be legal.

For legal professionals, it can be especially important to learn about different religious traditions. Lawyers are better equipped to serve clients from diverse backgrounds if they understand their unique needs and perspectives. This can help to promote a more inclusive and equitable legal system, ensuring that all individuals have access to justice and fair treatment under the law.

These relationships can also be forged when firms or practitioners provide legal skills training to lawyers in community legal organisations in areas such as statutory interpretation, consumer credit, and contracts, extending to starting from the root by reaching the law students through their law school programs. This leverages a firm's expertise to assist community legal organisation lawyers with practical issues which confront them while benefiting lawyers who may have limited resources to attend external training sessions but need to ensure they are kept up to date with new developments in case law and legislation.

### **Conclusion**

When the law collides with faith, it can be a challenging and confusing experience. However, by finding a balance between one's religious beliefs and the legal system, individuals can effectively navigate the challenges of daily life, promote justice and fairness, and build stronger relationships with others.

It is also important for individuals to remember that while religious beliefs can play an important role in their lives, they should never be used to justify harm or discrimination towards others. The legal system is designed to protect individual rights and promote social order, and it is the responsibility of all individuals to uphold these principles, regardless of their religious beliefs. By finding a balance between one's religious beliefs and the legal system, individuals can effectively navigate the challenges of daily life, promote justice and fairness, and build stronger relationships with others. By embracing diversity and promoting inclusivity, legal professionals can better serve their clients, building a more just and equitable society for all.

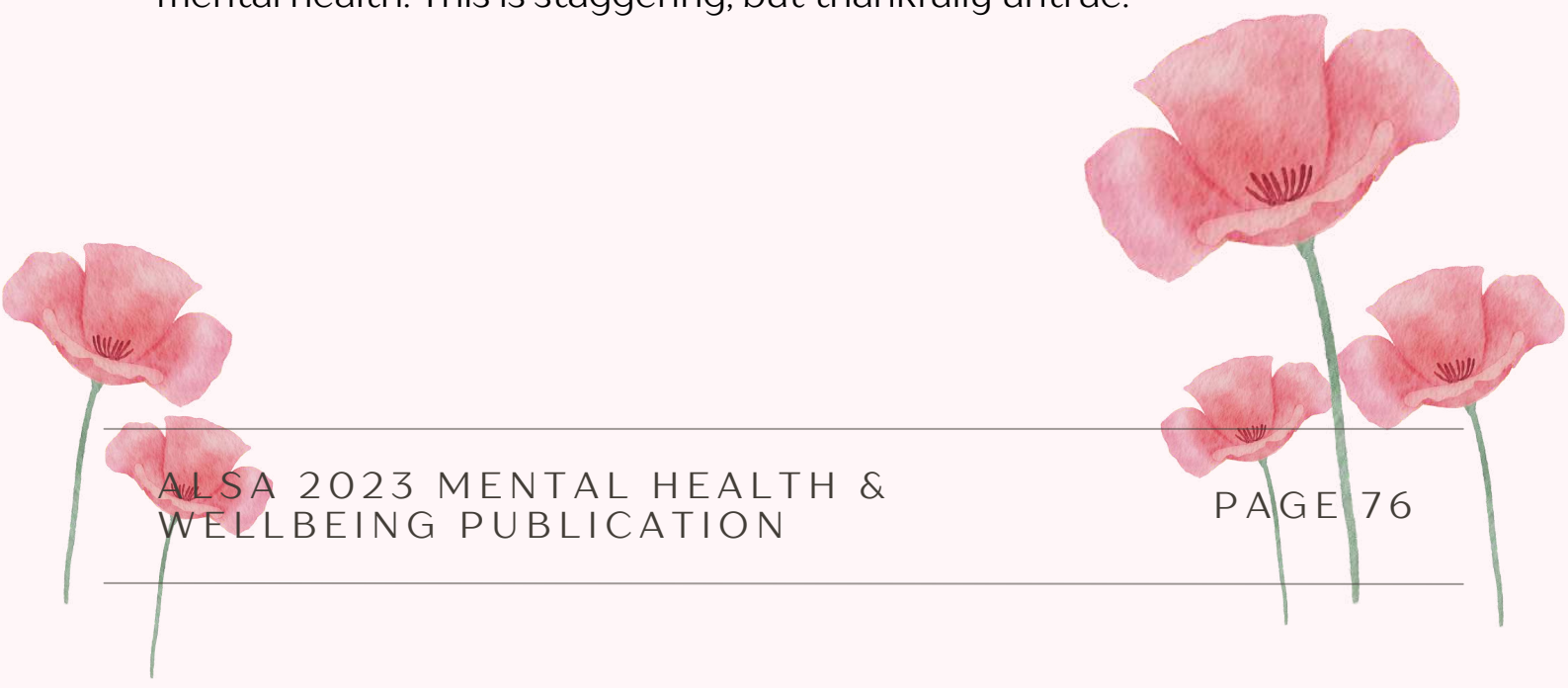
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# THE NON-NEGOTIABLE

Throughout the journey of Law School, students are educated on the vital concept of negotiation and how it comprises a fundamental component of legal practice. From negotiating a company acquisition, injury compensation, a parental dispute, workplace rights, or even a newly proposed law, negotiation is a key skill that law schools aim to teach their students.

However, something that is not as widely spoken about is the constant negotiation a law student must have with themselves as they try to balance study, work, and personal life throughout their career. Not all law students get told that a highly important aspect of their studies and future career as a legal professional is their mental health and wellbeing. Yes, you heard that correctly – your mental health, alongside your physical health, should always come first! If not, then juggling the balance of leisure, study, and work is going to become terribly difficult.

At this point, you may be thinking that such an idea is all well to say, but the reality is that the long hours, high expectations, and pressures of law school sometimes demand us to sacrifice our mental-wellbeing. I have heard students directly acknowledge and accept that to be a successful lawyer in some industries, it will come at a cost to your mental health. This is staggering, but thankfully untrue.



Success can be defined in many ways; for example, reaching your goals whilst maintaining a healthy balance in your life where your mental health is not being negatively impacted. One way of getting the balance right is to start placing the standards of your mental health on the same level as your physical health. For example, you wouldn't keep walking on a broken leg, would you? So why would you keep pushing on a task that is causing extreme stress? They are the same thing, but sometimes mental health can be less visible and understood which makes it tricky to prioritise. Nevertheless, your mental health should take precedence on your priority list.

The right balance is different for everyone. However, what is most important is that your balance enables you to reach your goals and succeed in life, all whilst remaining physically and mentally healthy. So next time you feel your mental health slipping down your priority list, remind yourself and the world around you that it needs to shuffle back up to the top: your mental wellbeing is non-negotiable.

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# WARNING: IT IS TIME TO EMBRACE INDIVIDUALITY

*“No price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself.”*

– Fredrich Nietzsche

You compare yourself because of a tribal tendency that links your behaviour to your prospects of survival. There is great survival value in observing what others are doing; on a competitive level, it challenges you to be better than your counterparts. However, there is also value in learning from others and incorporating those findings into your own skillset and work ethic. Despite this, sometimes the tribe you are placed in can be ‘overwhelming’. This term was first phrased by philosopher Fredrich Nietzsche who described it as a warning signal for the need of embracing your own individual uniqueness.

I believe this is more relevant in contemporary society, as the tribe has become unprecedentedly larger through technology and social media, allowing people to compare themselves to the world, and allowing the world to stare right back at them. Everyone knows about Photoshop, and the ‘unrealistic’ lives shared by their friends, family, and favourite celebrities, but they do not use this to better themselves – even if that was the intention. Nietzsche’s found that forms of comparison ultimately lead to one destination: envy, resentment, and a feeling of deep inadequacy. This was before social media and the technological landscape of today, making comparison arguably unavoidable every time you pick up your phone.

The frequent viewing of other people's comparatively better lives can create an inadequate perception of self. And it's no wonder – who would want to reveal their weaknesses and down days to the world? It's important to consider this phenomenon when you engage in comparative behaviours, however, this conscious consideration is easier said than done. The lesson in this is not to believe that everyone you see is worse off than you are, or that you are any better than the people around you. You are not. The point is that you are incomparably different.

Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst who studied the relationship between words, symbols, and their communicative meaning. Lacan's work proposes that it is impossible to entirely understand another human being as the mind is limited by the words in language. He also notes that these words are insufficient to demonstrate how we feel. Why is this relevant? Well, these symbols and words also apply to social media – it doesn't matter whether we are verbally communicating with a partner or virtually communicating with a celebrity in the comments of their social media post, your awareness of the other person is always limited.

Comparison is often a deep and subconscious means of self-validation. However, Nietzsche purported that the way out of the pit of comparison is "self-exploration and self-mastery". The only thing you stand a chance of being sure about is yourself, and that is hard enough if you are true and honest. The deep sense of inadequacy found through comparison is also a contributing factor to imposter syndrome – the feeling of self-doubt despite being evidently competent.

*"Every great man is an actor of his own ideal."*

– Friedrich Nietzsche

We should all be imposters at some stage in our life – it’s a rewarding experience that signifies an improvement in your skillset and status. Anytime you change environments or careers, you are placed in a situation where you will need to learn something new. The chances that you have been faking your competence the whole way along and somehow gotten to one rewarding moment by miracle is very unlikely. The imposter feeling is a natural response to the new environment and situation of sheer unfamiliarity of the space you are in. The real faker is the one who says they do not feel it.

If you reveal your ignorance to a competent person, they will recognise you are a beginner and provide you with the answers you need to begin your journey of being less of an imposter. “There are no silly questions” is a phrase often quoted by teachers, but I think what that really means is that if you have been paying attention, the chances are that it is a perfectly reasonable question and one most likely shared by peers. Therefore, asking questions is arguably the cure for imposter syndrome.

Confucius said that “the man who asks a question is a fool for a minute, the man who does not ask is a fool for life”. I believe that this is an important aspect of being an imposter as it symbolises a pit in the universal learning curve that everyone navigates throughout their careers. A smart person understands that they will never know all the answers and thus, admires those who bravely ask questions.

Let me encourage you to embrace the uncertainty of unfamiliar situations and recognise them as an opportunity to continue your pursuit of self-mastery. Improve yourself and then celebrate. And then do it all again.

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# FIVE TIPS TO GET THROUGH THE HIGHS (AND ESPECIALLY THE LOWS) OF LAW SCHOOL

There is no denying the fact that completing a Law degree is hard. There are late nights, early mornings, and what seems like a never-ending number of assessments to complete. You need to be time efficient to get it all done (or at least to have no life, which is not always an option).

There is a massive amount of pressure to get good grades and it's often easy to lose perspective on what is really important (for example, that one bad mark on an assignment isn't the end of the world). Keeping in mind that achieving your goals shouldn't come at the expense of your mental health, here are five tips to get through the highs (and especially the lows) of Law School.

## **I Check In With Others**

The best advice I received at the start of my Law Degree was to make connections at Law School. One reason for this is that you may be working with the same people once you graduate. But even more importantly, making friends at Law School will give you a support group to get through the rough times.



This means that when the pressure feels overwhelming or you've psyched yourself out about a particularly difficult assessment, you have people you can talk to who are likely going through the same experiences as you.

Honours can be quite isolating, particularly at the dissertation stage, so during my Honours year, our cohort made a Facebook group to vent about assessments, research topics, and anything else we felt like. It was nice to know I had support from my peers and it was really helpful to be able to keep in touch with each other to make sure everyone was ok (particularly when the marks for our assessments came out).

## **II Check In With Yourself**

In addition to checking in with others, I'm of the belief that you also need to check in with yourself. This could be as simple as taking time for yourself to go for a walk or to take a break and get a coffee (even if it seems basic, your future self will thank you).

Checking in with yourself also means making sure you're not falling into traps you know will trigger your mental health (like leaving everything to the last minute or not getting enough sleep).

Law students (myself included) tend to be perfectionists and while this can be a positive attribute it can also become a roadblock to achievement if left unchecked. It is easy to become obsessed that you have submitted work with mistakes in it (like an errant comma or an erroneous footnote). I personally learnt to let it go and found that putting things into perspective helped me to move forward and focus on the next task to be completed.





### **III Make Time for Exercise**

Exercise relieves stress. It's as simple as that. But when there are deadlines looming, it can feel counterintuitive to stop working and start moving. I can say from experience, however, that exercise was a necessity for my mental health during my Law degree.


As someone who was guilty of leaving assignments to the last minute and then having to work non-stop until the deadline, I had to learn to manage my time so I could exercise. If I didn't, it would make my stress levels worse and I would find myself being less productive.

I also know it sounds clichéd, but exercise improves mood. The times when I least wanted to go running were the times I benefited from it most. In addition to the endorphins, I found getting out into nature was very therapeutic. I also got into weight-lifting and found that it made me feel both mentally and physically stronger. The key is to find something physical that you enjoy doing and that makes you feel good. You won't regret it.

### **IV Take Time to Meditate**

A few years ago, I did a course in meditation and found it gave me a sense of calm (in that I fell asleep in every session). I left thinking that meditation may not be for me. But during the LLB and my Law Honours year, I changed my attitude completely.

It started when the Curtin Student Law Society organised meditation sessions. These were facilitated by the Dean and Head of Curtin Law School, Professor Robert Cunningham, who has practised Vipassana meditation for many years and meditates for two hours a day.



I attended these sessions when I was under immense pressure with assessment deadlines, and initially wondered if there was something more productive I could be doing with my time. But the simple act of focusing on my breath for an hour was much more beneficial than I realised. At the end of each meditation session when I opened my eyes, I would feel energised and ready to get back to work.

I now try to meditate for about 15 minutes a day and even that short amount of time is enough to help me reset. Next time you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, set an alarm on your phone to meditate (even 5 minutes is beneficial) and close your eyes. It's as easy as that.

### **V Spend Time Doing Something Not Related to Law**

Don't let your Law degree take over your life. Not only is it a bad idea for your mental health but future employers like lawyers who are well-rounded and have a range of interests. Find time each week to do something that sparks joy. The point is to have balance in your life and to create time for yourself.

Ask yourself what you love to do or what gives you a sense of purpose and then make time to do it. During my Law degree, I would take time away from my laptop by either getting into my creative zone or having a picnic amidst nature. It doesn't have to be much but doing something not related to Law will make a huge difference to your overall mental health.

I hope these tips help you make the most of your time at Law School in the best headspace possible!

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# A NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Have you ever felt like a number? Have you operated as if you were a human-doing rather than a human-being? Have you concluded that no matter how diligently you worked, you couldn't possibly be everything that you needed to be? Have you deduced that the harder you tried to hold it all together, the easier everything seemed to fall apart?

I've been there.

I know what it feels like to believe that my efforts would amount to nothing; that I would never be good enough; that the late nights, early mornings, extra shifts, and personal sacrifices were all in vain; and that there was no point to any of it. I know what it is to feel worthless, hopeless, helpless, and small; to feel like the previously pessimistic whisper in the back of my mind had become so loud that it couldn't be silenced, and worse, that perhaps the voice was right.

We label this mindset anxiety, imposter syndrome, burnout, or stress. We blame its prevalence on social media, our comparative culture, the unrealistic expectations of our family members, or the impossibly high standards that we hold ourselves to.

However, the root of it all is fear, and the truth is that **fear is a liar.**

Out of all the wisdom detailed in this publication, my hope is that you would remember this one truth:

*You are enough, just as you are.*

You are not your mistakes. You are not your failures. You are not your flaws or imperfections. You are not defined by your grades, or who you know, or what you look like, or where you've been, or what you have, or what you've done. You are not too early, or too late, or too young, or too old. You are not alone, or forgotten, or unworthy, or abandoned. You are not your title, or position, or bank statement, or CV. You are more than that.

You have a purpose. You are here for a reason. You are destined for greatness. You are on time. You are strong. You are completely capable. You are an overcomer. You are unique. You are seen. You are full of creativity. You are surrounded by people who want to support and champion you. You are blessed. You have everything that you need. You are beautiful. You are worthy. You are loved. You make others smile. You are inspiring. You have so much to be proud of.

*You are enough, just as you are.*

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