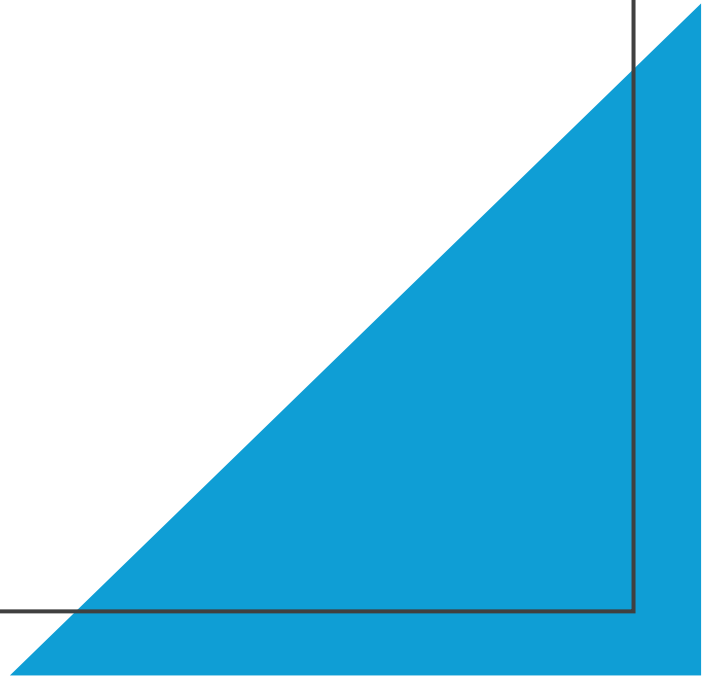


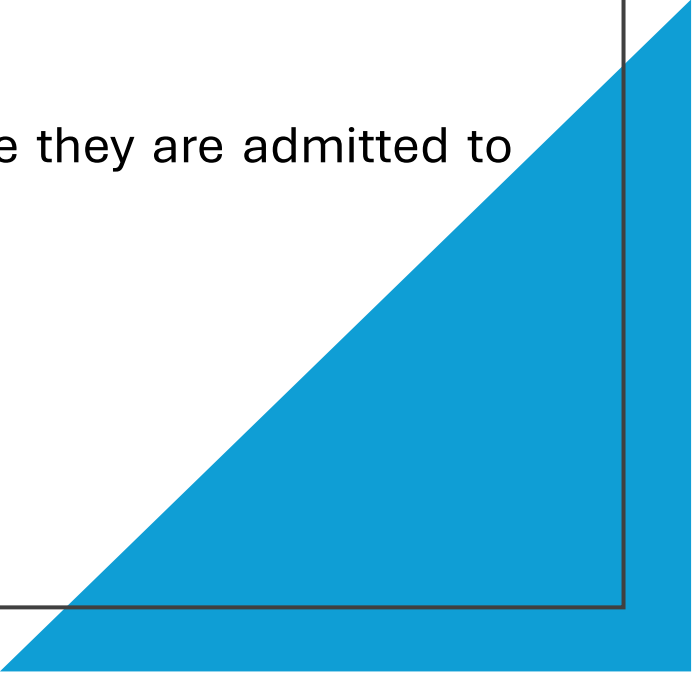
Self-Reflection and Self-Care for Emerging Legal Professionals: A Practical Legal Training (PLT) Perspective

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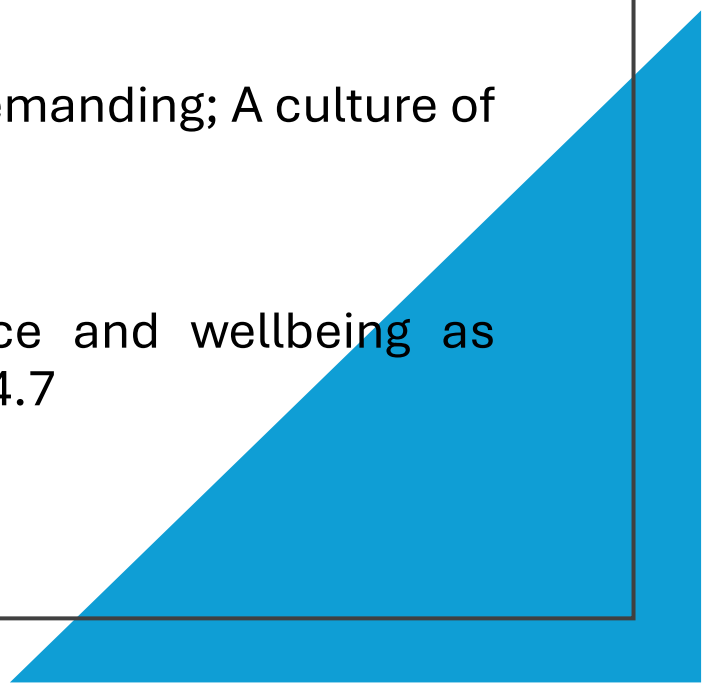
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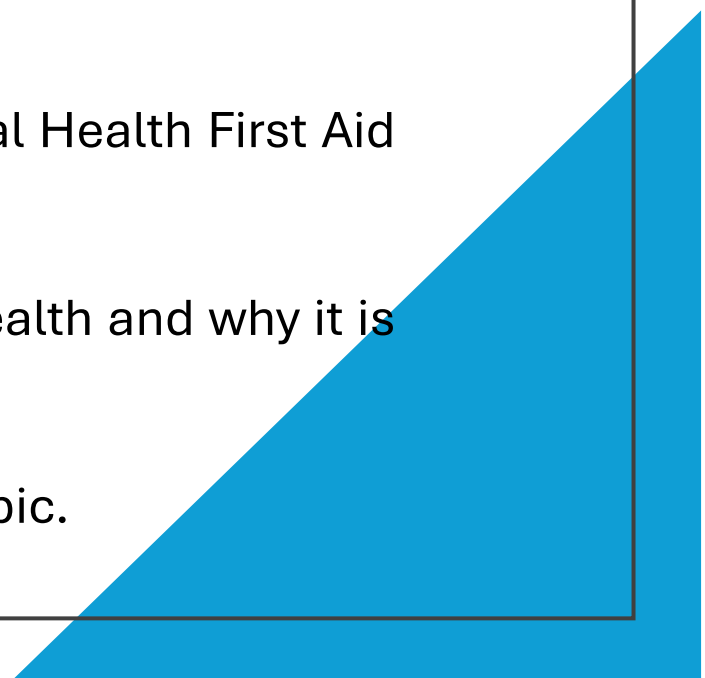
Background – Practical Legal Training (PLT) Program

- Designed to bridge the gap between the theoretical study of law at university and the practical realities of legal practice by developing the skills, competencies and professional responsibilities required of entry-level lawyers.
 - All law graduates in Australia are required to undertake PLT before they are admitted to court and allowed to practice.
 - Curtin has its own PLT program.
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Background – Practical Legal Training (PLT) Program

- Greater emphasis has been given to the mental health and well-being of legal professionals in recent years.
 - The law is a high-risk profession on this front: very stressful and demanding; A culture of ‘churn and burn’ within some firms.
 - The Australian PLT Competency Standards recognise resilience and wellbeing as important professional capacities for entry-level lawyers: Section 4.7
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Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing in the Legal Profession

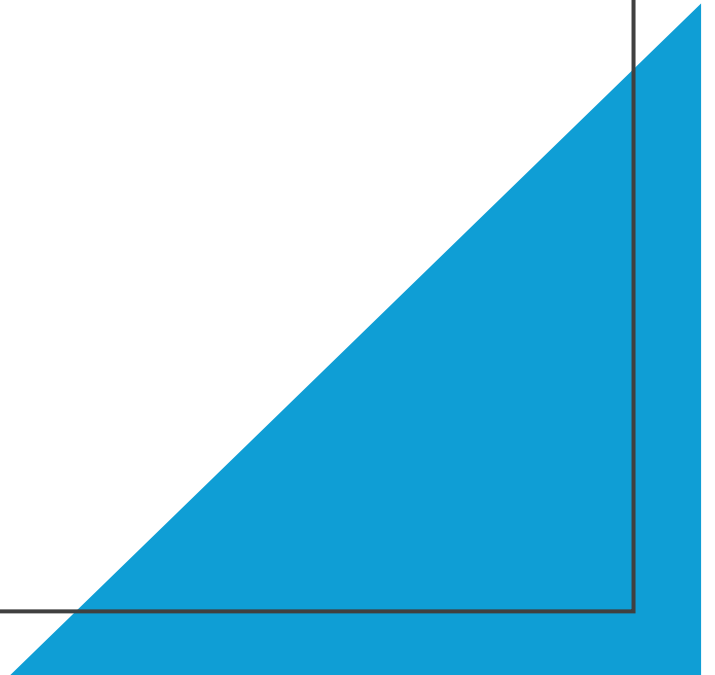
- The module I teach to students.
 - 1.5 hour workshop every cycle of the program. Have delivered 9 of these workshops over 7 years. Small group numbers – about 10-15 students per session.
 - My approach is informed by my PhD research and by my Mental Health First Aid training.
 - Start by providing a big picture perspective of mental illness/health and why it is such a prevalent problem, especially in the profession.
 - Resilience and a brief review of the research literature on the topic.
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Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing in the Legal Profession

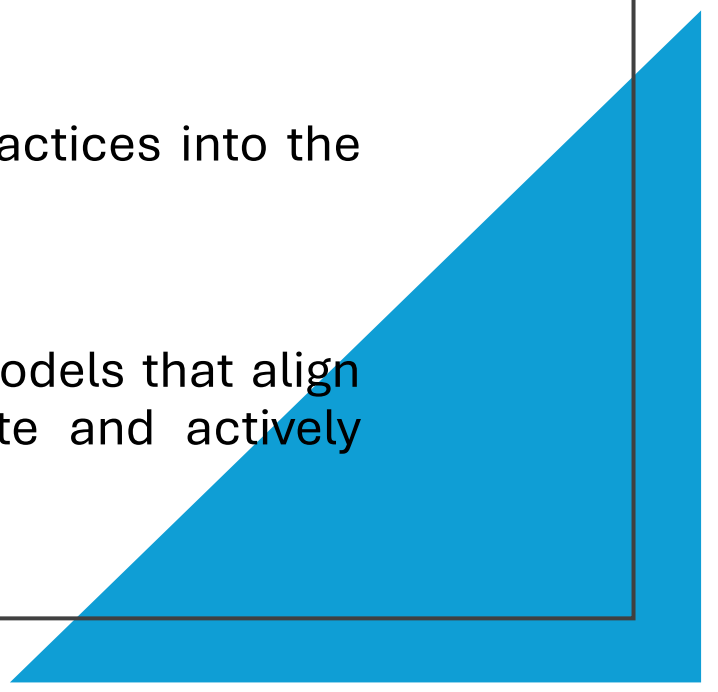
- Emphasise to students that resilience and our capacity for well-being are innate and spiritually grounded.
 - HeavyRunner and Marshall quote – *“Resilience is the natural, human capacity to navigate life well. It is something every human being has — wisdom, common sense. It means coming to know how you think, who you are spiritually, where you come from, and where you are going. The key is learning how to utilize innate resilience, which is the birthright of every human being. It involves understanding our inner spirit and finding a sense of direction.”*
- Wellbeing, and practices to cultivate it. Self-care a massive part of that via meditation, retreating to nature and exercising, among other practices.

Mental Health, Resilience and Wellbeing in the Legal Profession

- Encourage them to introspect and know themselves more authentically (beyond the level of the ego). What drew you to the law in the first place? Are you doing it as a job, career or a calling/vocation? The best and most fulfilled lawyers are those who do it as a vocation.
- Social media and digital minimalism.



Student Input

- The last part of the session I ask them four questions.
 - Generates vigorous discussion and gives the students an opportunity to discuss this in an open and vulnerable way, that they aren't ordinarily invited to in their firms.
 - Are still barriers to properly integrating well-being/self-care practices into the traditional lawyering model.
 - Try to give them hope by presenting alternate legal practice models that align with conscious capitalism movement, which better integrate and actively nurture the human component of their workforce.
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Reflections

- The students get a lot out of these sessions.
 - A valuable and necessary component of the PLT program.
 - An investment into evolving the profession.
 - Great that they get these learnings now, not after years of practice or when they start to feel burnt out or experience a break down.
 - Mental health and well-being are still things that more traditional firms give lip service to, but things are slowly changing for the better.
 - More evolved and accommodating models of legal practice are springing up, and are typically being started by those who've been disenchanted by the traditional models and want more integration/balance, purpose and fulfilment in their work.
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