

The Mindful Lawyer *of the Future*

Mindfulness as a foundation for reflective, grounded and ethical practice.

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The legal landscape is shifting beneath our feet.

Tomorrow's lawyer will not be defined by technical knowledge alone. They will need reflective practice, adaptability and a steady ethical compass.

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Legal professionals in Canada report symptoms of psychological distress.

Cadieux et al. (2022)

VOLATILE AND UNCERTAIN

Technology, regulation and client expectations are accelerating.

COMPLEX AND AMBIGUOUS

Cross-jurisdictional, multi-stakeholder, ethically layered work.

HUMAN-FIRST

Clients seek lawyers who are present, attuned and trusted.

Beyond “Thinking Like a Lawyer.”

*Reflective practice has been called the meta competency of legal education.
Mindfulness is the meta competency beneath it - the upstream practice that makes reflection possible.*

TRAINED FOR

- Analytical rigour
- Adversarial reasoning
- Risk identification
- Precedent and precision
- Detachment under pressure

ALSO NEEDS THE INNER CURRICULUM

- Reflective practice
- Adaptability and beginner's mind
- Emotional intelligence and empathy
- Ethical grounding and integrity
- Resilience, presence, self-awareness

What is mindfulness?



Bringing your full attention and awareness to what you are doing and experiencing, right here, right now, without judgement.

— **Prof. Jon Kabat-Zinn**

“Mindfulness is not about being calm - it is about being AWARE.”

— **Dr. Jeremy Hunter**



PRESENCE

Showing up fully to this thought, this client, this moment.



AWARENESS

Noticing thought, emotion and reaction without judgement.



ACCEPTANCE

Meeting what is here with steadiness, not avoidance.

Evidence & Pedagogy

“Mindfulness can enhance a host of competencies related to lawyer effectiveness, including increased focus and concentration, working memory, critical cognitive skills, reduced burnout and ethical and rational decision-making.

Wellbeing is an indispensable part of a lawyer's duty of competence.”

- ABA National Task Force on Lawyer Wellbeing (2018)



Sharper pedagogical strategies

↑ FOCUS · ↑ WORKING MEMORY

Teaching from presence: pacing, attunement and meaning-making improve when we are not on autopilot.



Stronger ethical decision-making

↑ EXECUTIVE FUNCTION · ↓ REACTIVITY

A pause before reacting is where ethical judgment is strengthened; choosing responses, not delivering reflexes.



Deeper student engagement

↑ EMPATHY · ↑ EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Mindful listening builds the psychological safety that lets students take intellectual risks.

Small, intentional, actions, woven into what you already do.

Embedded mindfulness does not require a re-design as it can be built into moments.

01 Begin with a minute

A 60-second grounding practice opens a class, a clinic or supervision discussion

02 Reflect after the act

Short journaling after mock trials or client interviews: what was felt, what surfaced, what shifted.

03 Debrief the difficult

Structured pauses after emotionally charged simulations or role plays. Normalise emotions as they are at the heart of lawyering.

04 Pause before answering

Encourage a deliberate breath before responding to complex questions, ethical dilemmas or in difficult conversations

We cannot teach what we do not live.

The most powerful lessons come from our own example.

- *How do I show up?*
- *How do I breathe under pressure?*
- *Do I react or do I respond?*

THE EDUCATOR'S PRACTICE

- Hold boundaries with compassion.
- Name compassion fatigue when it arrives.
- Take the breath before you guide the room to do so.
- Model the pause you wish to teach.
- Tend your own wellbeing as a professional duty.

“ Between stimulus and response there is a space.

*In that space is our power to choose our
response. In our response lies our growth and
our freedom.*

— Viktor Frankl

*In your toolkit: Conscious Breath
5-4-3-2-1 Grounding
R.A.I.N. (Tara Brach)*



P R A C T I C E T O G E T H E R

60 seconds. Three slow breaths.

- Feet on the floor.
- Drop your shoulders.
- Inhale through the nose.
- Exhale a little longer than the inhale.
- Notice what shifts.



Global Action

Mindfulness in Law Society

Promoting wellbeing, increased focus and concentration, stress management, cultivating acceptance of others and compassion through mindfulness meditation and contemplative practices.

WHO ARE WE

- Established over 15 years ago in the US
- Secular, evidence-based
- 501(c)(3) organisation, with over 20 chapters across the US and internationally (including Australia)
- Active student division
- Board consists of 28 members across academia, private practice and wellness

WHAT WE DO

- Building a community of practice
- Connect and share resources
- Best practice for teaching mindfulness in law schools and lawyers
- Two virtual sits a week, monthly community connections, yearly retreats, faculty circle



Our goal is to develop lawyers who practise law with...

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Confidence

Grounded in self-awareness, not hubris.

0 2

Integrity

An ethical compass strengthened by presence.

0 3

Compassion

Mindful listening at the heart of practice.

TAKE ONE THING

Name one mindful pause you will bring to your next class/workshop/session.