Resiliency for Law Students: Don’t Just Survive - Thrive

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Let’s start with finding our baseline

A first year law student is very interested in criminal law. In fact, that is why he came to law school. January has rolled around and he received a grade of “C” on his Criminal Law exam. He emailed his professor to talk about the exam but he has not received a reply from the professor.

• First Reactions?
How about...

• Your Constitutional Law professor has singled you out before class begins and asks you to see her after class.

• First Reactions?
Why do we do this?
Channeling our Inner Cave Man
Hippocampus
Regulates memory and emotions.

Prefrontal Cortex
Thinking/logic/what to do/evaluation.

Amygdala
Turns on fight or flight, and stores memories of the event.

Everything is ok.

Aargh!
Consequences of Stress Hormone “Overdose”

- Cardiovascular disease
- Hypertension
- Impaired immune function
  - Decreased cell-mediated immune response
  - (Increased humoral immune response)
- Impaired neurogenesis
- Impaired memory
Consequences of Stress Hormone “Overdose”

• Loss of bone mineral density
• Loss of muscle protein
• Impaired metabolism
  • Insulin resistance (type II diabetes)
  • Increased appetite
  • Weight gain: Esp. around abdomen
• Impaired wound healing
Managing Stress for Success

• Physical Activity
• Sleep
• Nutrition
• Social Support
• Spirituality
• Resiliency Skill Development
Large body of study on Resilience Training (Positive Psychology or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) over 30 years

- **US Military**: Army’s Ready and Resilient Programs
- **Seattle Seahawks**: “Confidence comes from what we tell ourselves”
- **Law Firms**: realizing that it affects the bottom line
- **College and K-12 students**: less depression
Our Goal: Develop the positive. But how?

- Reflexive: Often negative
- Reflective: Intentional/Conscious
- Reflexive: Frequently positive (intentional until instinctual)
Thinking Traps

1. Overgeneralizing
   I am not going to be a good lawyer

2. Catastrophizing
   Law school was a mistake

3. Emotional Reasoning
   I feel like a failure

4. Personalization
   Professor must think I am an idiot

5. Magnification
   Making a mountain out of a molehill
Escape the Thinking Traps: Our “C” in Criminal Law

1. Time limited view of the problem
   One instant/happened now
2. Depersonalize the problem
   The test was hard
3. Inquisitive Mindset
   What went wrong?
4. Growth mindset
   What can I do to do better?
5. Keep perspective
   Many worse things could have happened
Interrupt the Cycle

Attune Yourself to adversity

Experience the Failure and negative thoughts

Notice the ticker tape

Identify the Thinking Traps

Recognize the reflexive reaction

Rewrite the Ticker Tape

What I wish I would have thought
Other ways to practice

• Mindfulness - Being aware of what is happening around you and inside you
• Gratitude Journaling - Train the brain to find the positive and make it easier to see the opportunities
• Gratitude Practice – Noticing the kindness of all that surrounds us
To learn more on Resiliency:

- http://resiliencycenter.com/
- http://www.cbtandfeelinggood.com/
- https://www.resiliency.com/what-is-resiliency
Resilience will not make your problems go away, but it can give you the ability to see past them.