Strategies for Sustainable Productivity and Personal Growth

with

BeiBeiSONG

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12:00 PM - 1:00 PM PT
• Founder of Essinova, interdisciplinary academy for human development, leadership, and innovation

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• Certified NeuroLeadership coach (brain-based coaching methodology)

• 20+ years of prior corporate and entrepreneurial experience in technology, life sciences, sustainability, financial services and media, in the U.S., China and Europe

• (Earlier in career) Licensed to practice law in China; visiting attorney with international law firms in NY and DC

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www.beibeisong.com
Not uncommon stories in the legal profession -

From young, ambitious, high achievers ...
Attorney substance use + mental health study*:

- 28%: depression
- 21%: drinking problem
- 19%: anxiety

2019 Midlevel Associates Survey†:

- “burnout” appeared 95 times (almost 2x that in 2017)
- “Mental health” 24 times (6x that in 2018)

† By The American Lawyer
... and even suicide.

Attorney substance use + mental health study*:

- 11.5%: suicidal thoughts during career
- 2.9%: self-injurious behaviors
- 0.7%: ≥1 prior suicide attempt

2016 law student survey‡:

- 21%: suicidal thoughts in their lifetimes.
- Another 6%: suicidal thoughts within the past 12 months.

* by ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs and Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation
‡ published in the Journal of Legal Education
Causes of mental health issues in the legal profession

External circumstances:
- Long work hours and constant stress
- Isolation
- Adversarial nature
- Difficult clients
- High-stakes cases / exposure to dire life situations
- Pressure for high income to pay off student debts and “keep up with the Joneses”
- Unpredictable schedules
- “Dog eat dog” work environment

Internal factors:
- Maladaptive perfectionism (“unrealistic standards of achievement + hypercriticism of failing to meet them”)
- “Superhero” expectation with no room for error or humanness
- Pessimistic thinking
- Billable hour and prestige

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Causes of mental health issues in the legal profession

_Cultural factors:_

- Mental health stigma
- May disqualify "character and fitness" requirements
- Shameful to ask for help, shameful to be vulnerable
- Lack of tools to deal with stress

“*A perfect machine for stress and burnout*”
- Arianna Huffington

_Additional challenges for minorities:_

- Biases
- Exclusion
- Isolation

Isolation is “a root cause and contributor to many of the epidemics sweeping the world today from alcohol and drug addiction to violence to depression and anxiety....”

- Vivek Murthy, former U.S. Surgeon General, “The Healing Power of Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World”
Cultural change:

• Well-being as an important part of a firm’s existence and reputation

Personal values shift:

• Self-compassion
• Examined definition of “success”
• Multi-dimensional, mind-body-spirit integrated healthy being

Emotional and Social Intelligence

Essential tools for early detection and prevention, and ultimately, well-being and thriving

DEFINING LAWYER WELL-BEING
A CONTINUOUS PROCESS IN WHICH LAWYERS STRIVE FOR THRIVING IN EACH DIMENSION OF THEIR LIVES:

- EMOTIONAL
  Value emotions. Develop ability to identify and manage our emotions to support mental health, achieve goals, and inform decisions. Seek help for mental health when needed.

- INTELLECTUAL
  Engage in continuous learning. Pursue creative or intellectually challenging activities that foster ongoing development. Monitor cognitive wellness.

- OCCUPATIONAL
  Cultivate personal satisfaction, growth, and enrichment in work. Strive to maintain financial stability.

- PHYSICAL
  Strive for regular activity, good diet & nutrition, enough sleep, & recovery. Limit addictive substances. Seek help for physical health when needed.

- SPIRITUAL
  Develop a sense of meaningfulness and purpose in all aspects of life.

- SOCIAL
  Develop connections, a sense of belonging, and a reliable support network. Contribute to our groups and communities.

Source: ABA National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being
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A poll...

How would you assess your emotional intelligence level compared to the general population?
**A check-in ...**

What have you been feeling these days?

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**Emotional cheatsheet from:**

C. Hofsetz
What we will learn today:

**Emotional Intelligence**
- “What” and “why”
- Recognizing and regulating emotions
- Self-awareness as a life skill
- Direct experience - senses, mindfulness and emotional wellbeing

**Social Intelligence**
- Key ingredients
- Threats vs. rewards in social interactions
- Authentic and effective communication
What is emotional intelligence? Why is it important?

Within oneself (thinking / behavior) + in others (influence)

• accurately
• effectively

higher EI -
• better able to resist general and mental health problems;
• better physical and mental health outcomes on average*

path to happy, fulfilled life

Sources: Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey (1990); Daniel Goleman (1996);
Key characteristics of EI and six dimensions of emotional health

SELF-AWARENESS:
The ability to perceive one's bodily signals that reflect emotions

OUTLOOK:
The ability to sustain positive emotion over time

RESILIENCE:
The ability to recover from negative emotion

ATTENTION:
The ability to screen out distractions and stay focused

SOCIAL INTUITION:
Attunement to nonverbal social cues

SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT:
The degree with which emotional and behavioral responses take into account situation context

Sources: Daniel Goleman; Center of Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Breathing exercise

- **inhale through the nose**
- **belly filled up**

Water exercise

- **exhale through the mouth**
- **belly sucked in**
Narrative Circuitry
- Thinking / Planning
- Strategies / Goals
- Memories / Stories
- Reasons / Limbic system
- Social network
- Memory system

Direct Experience Circuitry
- Senses
- Sensory motor cortex
- Insula (understanding internal mental states)
- Information / Data


life filtered; brain's default past- and future- focused
life unfiltered present moment

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Narrative

Direct experience

Mind Full... or Mindful?

Artwork from: Journal of Social and Personal Relationships

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What’s your mind like?
more natural:
- awareness of breath
- increased awareness of senses
- art, music, and poetry
- creative & conscious movement
- dancing
- sports

more profound:
- meditation
- fasting
- prayer
- travel

Paths to Direct Experience
Senses exercise (sight)

Look at and draw patterns (such as these:)

- Bouquet of flowers
- Plate with blackberries and walnuts
- Succulent plant
There are 37 known sensory inputs across 7 categories:

- Auditory (hearing)
- Tactile (touch)
- Olfactory (smell)
- Gustatory (taste)
- Visual (sight)
- Vestibular (balance & movement)
- Proprioception (body awareness)
I envision a day when mental exercise will be as much a part of our daily lives as physical exercise and personal hygiene.

- Richard Davidson, Founder and Director, Center for Healthy Minds
Effect of emotions on cognitive functions

Limbic Brain
Feel – Remember
Interact with others

Neocortex

Prefrontal Cortex (PFC)
Talk - Think - Move - Create - Learn

PFC: high level thinking processes such as
- deciding
- understanding
- memorizing
- inhibition
- recall

but small, energy intensive
and serial!

Adapted from Elaine Bailey and Ann-Marie Codori, Ph.D.

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Impact of a threat response

Impact of a Threat Response

Away
Threat

cortisol

Toward
Reward

dopamine

Perception
Field of view
Cognition
Working memory
Creativity
Insights
Collaboration
Work with others

Source: NeuroLeadership Institute
Emotional responses

How do you respond to emotions?

Suppression  Expression  Regulation
Emotional regulation

Labeling
Build your emotional vocabulary!

Direct Experience

Cognitive Reappraisal
(See differently, usually more positively, with greater understanding)

- Normalizing: how normal or typical?
- Reprioritizing: the big picture; priority ranking
- Repositioning: someone else’s perspective
- Distancing: far out time and space
- Reframing: new, positive meaning; explanation or ways to interpret a situation


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Social Intelligence
- Key ingredients
- Threats vs. rewards in social interactions
- Authentic and effective communication
Brain modules of social intelligence

Social Awareness
• Primal empathy
• Attunement
• Empathic accuracy
• Social cognition

Social / Relationship Facility
• Interaction synchrony
• Self-presentation
• Influence
• Concern for others

Image by mohamed Hassan from Pixabay.
Brain modules of social intelligence

Two keys to social awareness:

- Listening well
  - Listen mindfully
  - Listen with empathy
  - Show you are listening
- Paying attention to as many cues as you can notice, on all levels
  - Verbal
  - Physical
  - Emotional

To increase social facility (aka relationship management):

- Seek feedback from trusted colleagues and friends
- Work with a coach to build specific skills

Source: Daniel Goleman (2006)
Threats vs. rewards in social interactions

The SCARF® Model

**AWAY Threat**
- **STATUS:** Less or better than others
- **CERTAINTY:** Ability to predict outcomes
- **AUTONOMY:** Sense of Control
- **RELATEDNESS:** In-group or out-group
- **FAIRNESS:** Perception of fair exchange

**TOWARD Reward**
- **STATUS:**
- **CERTAINTY:**
- **AUTONOMY:**
- **RELATEDNESS:**
- **FAIRNESS:**

**Threat is stronger**

**Reward is better**

Source: NeuroLeadership Institute
What we learned today:

- Social awareness
- Direct experience
- Mental health issues
- Emotions
- Mental health impact
- Detection and prevention
- Self-awareness
Your reflection:

How would you assess the state of your mental health?
What from the learnings today touched you the most?
What would you do differently?
What would you commit to?

Your questions?
Wishing you a healthy, productive, and fulfilling professional life!

Coaching:
leadership | professional | career | business | creative | health | relationship | personal goals

Teaching:
• Emotional and social intelligence
• Decision making
• Business model
• Strategy

Speaking:
• Renaissance leadership

... and more.

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