



# MSLAW Academic Support

## Successful Strategies for Beating Law School Burnout

- Don't forget the rest of your life, and don't let law school become your whole life. Law school can certainly make you feel like your whole life has been thrown off balance, but maintaining some sort of balance between your law student life and the rest of your life is absolutely essential.
- Treat law school as you would treat a job. For example, if you are going to law school during the day, then prepare to spend your morning in classes and your afternoon studying—then, take the evenings off and tend to the rest of your life. This way, you'll make productive use of the time you allot to your studies and still have time for everything else.
- Recognize that unhealthy stress can come from unhealthy attitudes and anxiety about the work, as well as unreasonable expectations. Law students must keep their priorities straight and identify any beliefs that cause anxiety. Set attainable and realistic goals for yourself. Sure, it's easy to make it a goal to make top grades, but realistically, 90% of the class won't be in that coveted 10%. So, if your sole goal is to make it to the top, you may be setting yourself up for failure. Instead, focus on non-competitive and achievable goals, such as learning as much as you can and doing your personal best.
- Part of what makes law school seem so out-of-balance is that students receive feedback so infrequently, and some students deal with that by over-working. Fundamentally, work-life balance has to do with your internal experience: You have to figure out what matters to you and make sure you make time for it.
- Leave time for yourself. It's essential to stay grounded in who you were before you came to law school. Pick something to do just for yourself – whether it's volunteer work or exercise or just time alone – and make sure you include it in your schedule.
- Recognize that maintaining balance as a law student is extremely important, partly because doing so will better prepare you to maintain work-life balance when you graduate. The practice of law has long had a reputation for lack of balance. Eighty-hour work weeks, high billable hour quotas, and work atmospheres that are not being conducive to work-life balance have been the norm, though many in the legal profession are striving to change that around. Therefore, it's important that students have reasonable

expectations for themselves both in law school and beyond, and to establish good work-life balance habits as a law student.

## **Tips for Carving Out Time for the People in Your Life**

Law school may mean throwing your life out of balance, but it should not make you neglect those you love—the people who were a big part of your life before you decided to go to law school. It's essential that you nurture and nourish those relationships that matter to you despite the time constraints law school will put on you. Remember: law school will only last three or four years; your friends and family are with you for life!

Though you may not have as much time to spend on your relationships as before you went to law school, consider the following tips for maintaining quality time with friends and family:

- Carve out some time for those who matter. Sure, you may have six hundred cases to read and brief by next week, but you have to make time for your relationships. Schedule time with friends and family as you would schedule any task for school.
- Set priorities. Your time is limited, as is your energy. Figure out which relationships matter enough for regular and continuous contact and nurturing—and which ones you might not want to spend so much time on.
- Involve your friends and family in your life as a law student. Invite friends to lectures that are open to the public; show your parents around campus; and practice your oral arguments on your partner.
- Don't let the law – and talking about the law – consume your relationships. When you're expected to live and breathe legal concepts for three to four years, it can be hard to distance yourself from those legal concepts when you're around “laypersons.” Law students are notorious for talking shop. You can share your exciting law school experiences, but recognize that not every friend and family member will be interested in everything you do. Don't assume that Aunt Myrna wants to hear the elements of adverse possession—and definitely don't feel compelled to recite them to her if she just wants to give you an update on your cousins.

Excerpted from *Law School Revealed* by Ursula Furi-Perry, Esq. (Jist Publishing, 2009).