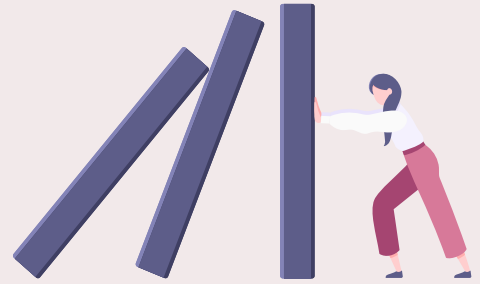


GET THE MONKEY OFF YOUR BACK

HOW CAN LAWYERS CULTIVATE THE ESSENTIAL SKILL OF RESILIENCE?



The legal profession is no stranger to stress, pressure and demanding workloads. Lawyers often find themselves grappling with a heavy load of responsibilities, tight deadlines and high stakes. In this high-pressure environment, the metaphorical “monkeys on your back” can be all too real – the burdens, stressors, limiting beliefs, distractions and obstacles that hold individuals back and inhibit peak performance and positive wellbeing.

Resilience is the catalyst that empowers individuals to face the monkeys on their back and is intrinsically linked with wellbeing. Research consistently demonstrates that resilient individuals tend to experience lower stress levels, enjoy better mental health and report higher life satisfaction.

So how can lawyers cultivate this essential skill of resilience?

The starting point is self-awareness. Research has found that individuals who possess a high level of emotional intelligence (EQ), which comprises self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, tend to demonstrate remarkable levels of resilience and self-efficacy. This is because self-awareness, the cornerstone of EQ, equips individuals with the ability to recognise and understand their own emotions and reactions, ultimately empowering them to effectively deal with the “monkeys” that weigh them down.

It also necessitates a high degree of self-reflection and a commitment to brutal honesty with oneself. In a profession that often demands unwavering confidence, acknowledging one’s weaknesses, limitations and areas for improvement can be challenging but is essential for personal and professional growth. This level of honesty enables lawyers to identify and address the things holding them back with greater precision and effectiveness. Self-awareness empowers us to make informed decisions, harness our strengths and address our weaknesses proactively.

Our ability to lead ourselves and effectively respond to setbacks is deeply influenced by our beliefs, which in turn, shape our subsequent actions and vice versa. Do you embrace challenges, seeing setbacks as stepping stones for growth? Are you willing to take on new responsibilities that push you beyond your comfort zone? By cultivating a growth mindset – one rooted in resilience, adaptability and a thirst for learning from experiences – you can nurture personal leadership qualities that propel your professional growth and uncover new aspects of yourself.

SNAPSHOT

- The “monkeys on your back” symbolise challenges hindering performance and wellbeing in lawyers. Self-awareness uncovers these monkeys.
- Fostering a growth mindset, prioritising self-care, setting boundaries along with seeking help is transformative and leads to satisfaction, fulfilment, and personal growth.
- Taking small actions yields big results, and keeps the monkeys away.

To combat the burden of work overload and lack of work-life balance, prioritising self care is not a luxury but a necessity. Have you considered strategic breaks during your workday for mental recharge? Like going for a short walk, stretching exercises or mindfulness meditation. How might regular exercise fortify you against stress, even if it is small pockets of 10 minutes throughout the day? Do you set clear boundaries between work and personal life, such as designating specific “offline” hours and creating a dedicated workspace at home. Are you kind to yourself? Self-care is the foundation on which sustained high performance is built, ensuring you have the mental, emotional and physical vitality needed to excel consistently.

Often underestimated on the resilience building journey is the transformative power of seeking help. In the demanding world of

law, lawyers can sometimes find themselves playing superhero in an effort to achieve optimal outcomes for clients, and their own personal wellbeing can take a backseat. How frequently do you lean on your support network to share the weight of your challenges? Are you open to seeking professional help when necessary? These questions hold the key to staying strong amid adversity because, as experience shows, getting trapped in our own thoughts rarely leads to positive outcomes.

Remember, the path to professional excellence is paved not only with legal expertise but also with a profound commitment to resilience, self-awareness and self-care. This enables us to be the leaders of our life.

So, if you are currently feeling the weight of the monkeys on your back, focus on taking action – no matter how small. It’s the little things that make the biggest difference in any given day or moment, and over time, the powerful antidote you’ve been looking for to get the monkeys off your back and experience greater satisfaction, fulfilment and personal growth. ■

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