

## What It's All About

Your stress is serious and may influence relationships with friends, family members, or significant others. Often, it may cause you debilitating physical and mental symptoms.

It is normal to feel stressed during your time in law school. In fact, in many situations, it is only to be expected. However, with attention to coping habits and overall wellness, you can learn to prevent stress as well as alleviate it in a positive way.

## Techniques for Reducing Stress

In the demanding field of law, you may become stressed about classes, exams, career paths, or your own personal life. Producing high-level work and devoting time to reading, working, and attending class can certainly be difficult to manage.

Often, overcoming stress “in the moment” is enough to get you feeling comfortable and productive again.

### **“In the Moment” Techniques:**

- ◆ Focus on steady, deep breathing
- ◆ Take a break and listen to relaxing music or go on a walk
- ◆ Make list of your tasks and break them up into manageable parts
- ◆ Work on relieving the tension in your muscles
- ◆ Think positively

It is also important to consider if changing something about your situation may eliminate stress. You do not deserve to deal with stress from an aspect of your life that is not working for you.

### **Techniques for Changing your Situation:**

- ◆ Reconsider your attitudes towards school
  - *Try to set reasonable expectations, reminding yourself that the “language” of law will take time to absorb*
  - *Resist being too hard on yourself for not meeting your own expectations*
  - *Avoid comparing yourself to others in your class*
  - *Ensure that your goals relate to your own personal ambitions and have not been placed on you by others*
- ◆ Consider your learning strategies
  - *Stay organized by using an agenda or working on the basis of priorities*
  - *Take breaks while studying to use your time and energy most effectively*
  - *Consider how you learn best by evaluating your note-taking and reading habits*

- ◆ Consider adjusting your schedule
  - *Look over your daily plan and see if it is possible to reduce wasted time or time spent commuting. Consider if breaking up or condensing activities may be helpful*
  - *Reflect on your education/career path. Consider if you are staying true to your initial desire to go to law school. Ask yourself if you need to alter your courses or volunteer activities and be open to exploring options and opportunities*
  - *Remember not to be afraid to ask for help. Professors, fellow students, friends, career advisers, and counsellors will be more than willing to help if you ask*

## **Wellness**

Stress permeates well into your daily life. Therefore, it is key to maintain physical wellbeing in order to approach stress productively.

- ◆ Exercise
  - *Focus on being physically active each week*
- ◆ Eat right
  - *Maintain a balanced diet and regular eating habits*
- ◆ Be self-aware
  - *Bring perspective to everything you do*
- ◆ Be social
  - *Experience the benefits of having someone you care about listen*
  - *Seek the company of friends outside of law school to stay in touch and keep perspective*
  - *Maintain a balance between working and having fun*

## **Recognizing Serious Distress**

Recognizing when stress has reached a particularly serious and dangerous level is critical. Everyone experiences stress and must learn how to manage it. However, for some, either the effort required to control the stress or the intensity of the stress itself is too great. Take note of the following symptoms. If you recognize these symptoms in yourself or others seek external help.

- ◆ Inability to cope with the demands of daily life
- ◆ Experience of marked decline in school/work performance
- ◆ Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- ◆ Irrational fears
- ◆ Engagement in dangerous or self-damaging activity
- ◆ Thoughts about suicide or hurting others
- ◆ Significant alteration of eating or sleeping habits
- ◆ Development of obsessive preoccupation (ex. with health or weight)
- ◆ Persistent physical ailments

## **Resources**

As mentioned above, dealing with severe stress may require seeking external help. However, seeking external help is certainly appropriate for dealing with minor stress as well. Stress breaks down energy, making it difficult for you to deal with life let alone alleviate your stress. You are encouraged to review tips like the ones found in this handout. However, you may also need personal help. Below is a list of resources.

### **Pamela Cyr – Acting Assistant Dean, Students**

Pamela is available to help students in distress. She provides personal support as well as a helpful link between you and your professors. She also provides academic counseling, reviews requests for deferrals and accommodations, matches first year students with upper year peer tutors, and makes referrals to UBC Counseling (see below).

E-mail: [cyr@law.ubc.ca](mailto:cyr@law.ubc.ca)  
Phone: (604) 822-6350  
Location: Allard Hall Room 152

Feel free to ask Pamela for copies of *The Hidden Sources of Law School Stress: Avoiding the Mistakes that Create Unhappy and Unprofessional Lawyers*, which are available in her office. This resource explains the origins of stress at law school from the point of view of an experienced legal professional and looks at positive ways of approaching them.

### **UBC Law Centre for Feminist Legal Studies Peer Support Program**

The CFLS Peer Support Program is open to ALL students at UBC Law. Student volunteers offer confidential emotional support and information about faculty, university and community services. Support is available via email or in person, either by appointment or on a drop-in basis during preset times. This service reflects a feminist, anti-oppressive framework.

E-mail: [cfls@law.ubc.ca](mailto:cfls@law.ubc.ca)  
Phone: (604) 822-6523  
Location: Room 424

### **UBC Counselling**

UBC Counselling provides a range of free counseling services for UBC students. It is also an excellent resource and referral service for professional help off-campus. Initial consultations may be scheduled by drop-in at 10:00AM weekdays.

Website: <http://www.students.ubc.ca/counselling/>  
Phone: (604) 822-3811  
Location: 1040 Brock Hall-1874 East Mall

### **Lawyers' Assistance Program**

The Lawyers Assistance Program welcomes students to utilize their resources. LAP has trained counsellors who are familiar with the demands of the legal profession.

Website: <http://www.lapbc.com/>  
Phone: (604) 685-2171  
Location: 415 - 1080 Mainland Street (Yaletown)

### **The UBC Learning Commons**

The UBC Learning Commons is an online portal for effective learning and studying strategies. It connects students with resources such as the UBC Library, AMS Tutoring, and the Office of Learning Technology.

Website: <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/>

Location: 1874 East Mall, 2303 Brock Hall

### **AMS Speakeasy**

AMS Speakeasy is run by trained volunteers who provide peer support and connect students to off-campus resources. They are there to discuss a wide range of issues, including relationship breakups, substance abuse, sexuality, and exam stress.

Website: <http://www2.ams.ubc.ca/index.php/services/category/speakeasy>

Phone: (604) 822-3777

Location: SUB 249E

### **Anxiety BC**

Anxiety BC provides a resource database for treatment of stress disorders and education on the nature of stress. It provides specific help through workshops and seminars.

Website: <http://www.anxietybc.com/>

Phone: (604) 525-7566

Location: 103-237 East Columbia Street, New Westminster

### **Canadian Mental Health Association**

The Canadian Mental Health Association promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiences mental illness.

Website: <http://www.cmha.ca/bins/index.asp>

Email: [info@cmha.ca](mailto:info@cmha.ca)

Phone: 613-745-7750

***Staying strong is the key to battling stress and  
overcoming stress only makes you stronger!***