

Tips on Emotional Health for Law Students

Studying law is demanding in terms of the amount of time you need to devote to your studies and in terms of the high standard of academic achievement that is expected from you. Sometimes the pressure that is placed on you by study, family, classmates, friends and even by the standards that you set for yourself can feel enormous. It's no wonder you feel stressed! Here are some quick and easy ways to help manage the emotional demands of being a law student:

Keep Perspective

Don't catastrophize. Whether you get an HD, D, C, P or even an N – the world will still exist tomorrow. In fact, the vast majority of the planet will not care how you went on that assignment or exam. Marks are important to be sure, but they are not a matter of life or death, sickness or health. Go look at the sky or the sea and appreciate the vastness of time and space. It may help you to see that getting a lower-than-expected mark may not be the world-ending catastrophe that you think it is.

You are not the sum total of your marks. Marks are a small reflection of how you performed on a certain task. They do not define you. They are not necessarily an indicator of how you will perform in your future career. They do not reflect the fact that you are a good or bad person, or whether you are kind, funny, generous, honest or warm.

Take Breaks

Take short breaks when you study. Sometimes when you think about all of the information that you need to remember for your exam it can feel like an impossible task. Remember that it *is* possible and that it may seem more possible if you break your study up into manageable increments. So when it comes time to study, make up a detailed plan of what you need to do and when you aim to do it. Aim to study for approximately 45-50 minutes at a time and then take a 10-15 minute break. Not only will this help to keep your mind fresh and active, but at the end of the day you'll be able to look back and see that you have actually achieved something.

Take longer breaks when you can. While it may not be possible to have a couple of days off before your exam or in the days before your assignment is due, when you do complete something, reward yourself with a decent amount of time in which you can relax and unwind. The more time you can give yourself then, the more energy and clarity you will have for when you need to really knuckle down.

Maintain Good Relationships with Friends, Family and Classmates

Remember to leave space for a life outside of study and for family and friends. If you feel guilty about taking time to study and not being able to see friends and family then it may be worth explaining to them why you have chosen to study. If the people in your life understand how important it is to you to do well at your studies then chances are they will feel more included in your decision and will be more supportive of you. If you do have to miss a few things because of your study commitments, reassure those involved that you will make it up to them and make an effort to spend some quality time with them when you can.

You have classmates in your class not competitors. It's human nature to want to know how we compare to others. Just because someone gets a higher mark than you does not mean they are better than you. It means their work was judged as better – this time. And just because one person got 78 it doesn't mean that your 74 is not still good. Compare yourself only to yourself as much as you can. Try and improve your marks or maintain them if they're already high. If you don't want to tell someone your marks then don't. It's nobody's business but your own. By the same token, if you did well, remember that others may not have. It may be hard for them to share in your joy if they're feeling bad about their own mark. It may be an idea to keep the knowledge of your good grades to yourself.

Avoid post-exam chat. Nobody comes out of an exam feeling like they nailed every item. We all have a tendency to focus on what we missed or didn't know. Talking to other people straight after an exam can make it seem like we were the only one not to do well. If you do want to talk about the exam with your peers do so when you're in a calmer frame of mind and have got a bit more perspective on your performance.

Manage Your Stress in a Healthy Way

It's important not to let yourself get overwhelmed and one of the best ways you can do that is to work out some strategies that can help you to relax and then do them regularly to avoid feeling stressed or burnt out.

Alcohol, drugs and various stimulants are not the answer. They may offer short-term benefits but in the long run they will make you feel much worse and compound your stress.

Remember that you're in Control

Don't feel trapped by what you have chosen to study. The date your assignments are due is not your decision but choosing to study *is* your decision. Just because you start a university degree does not mean you have to finish one. You can choose to leave, choose to defer or choose to switch to another degree. The word here is 'choose' and the person who makes that decision is you. Remembering that may help you feel more in charge of your life and your studies.

Deciding to complete a law degree does not necessarily mean you have to work as a lawyer. There are lots of examples of individuals who have completed law degrees and gone on to have successful careers in unrelated fields. If you're not sure law is for you then talk to the Career Development team at UNE Student Assist or to friends or family. Sometimes the people who know you best may have some good ideas for what type of career you might enjoy.

And Finally....

Be grateful! Ok so you don't have to run around singing and skipping but remind yourself how lucky you are to have this opportunity. Yes, it's hard work, but you have been accepted into law school and you are on your way to a very rewarding career. Remember that!

So we hope that some of that helps. If it didn't or if you're still feeling overwhelmed then PLEASE make an appointment and come and see us. We're here for you.

How to contact a UNE Counsellor:

UNE Student Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Phone: 02 6773 2897

Email: studentcounselling@une.edu.au or via [AskUNE](#)

<http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/student-support/counselling>