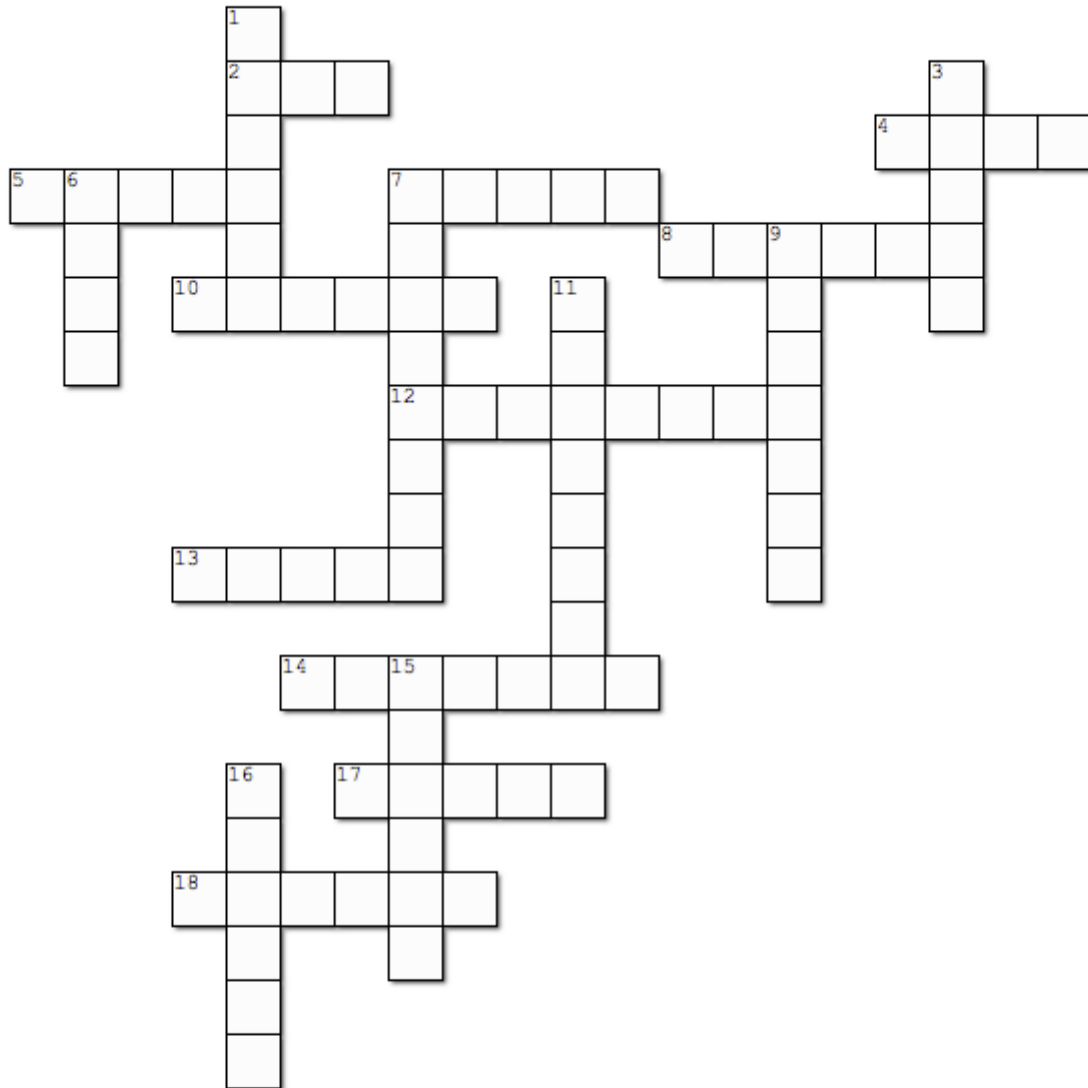


The Real Who's Who



Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Maker

Across

- 2. The Federal Minister for health.
- 4. Composer who just turned 330.
- 5. Author of 'The Female Eunuch'
- 7. Winner of the most recent Oscar for Best Actress.
- 8. Known as 'Australia's greatest short story writer'.
- 10. The newest High Court justice.
- 12. 2015 Melbourne GP champ.
- 13. _____ the Grouch
- 14. A little worried about her sketches. (Ask a 2nd year)
- 17. German folklorists.
- 18. The first on-screen James Bond.

Down

- 1. Outgoing ODI cricket captain.
- 3. Heading in his 'own direction'.
- 6. Last person to be hanged in Australia.
- 7. One of the three kings.
- 9. Fictional inventor of the toaster strudel.
- 11. Bought chocolates, owed a car? (Ask a 1st year)
- 15. Just sacked from the Queensland Labor Party.
- 16. Asterix & _____.



DE MINIMIS

A newspaper for the students of Melbourne Law School. Established 1948. Revived 2012. Made officially unofficial 2015.

Volume 6, Issue 5

Tuesday, 31 March 2015

Tune in, turn on, don't drop out Practicing mindfulness at law school

Someone once told me that law is a fast moving train that waits for nobody. Even first year students, who are still somewhat bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, will be able to appreciate its relentless nature.

Since starting law school, my life has never been busier (and my soul never more ashen). Frantically trying to organise my limited waking hours between my studies, work and internship usually leaves a solid three-and-a-half minutes per week to feel a pang of guilt for diligently neglecting my family, friends, puppy and sanity.

Yet paradoxically, it was during this most hectic and intense time of my life that I came to appreciate what Pico Iyer, a famed travel writer, calls 'the art of stillness'.

His novel, *Adventures in Going Nowhere*, explores the lives of those who practice stillness daily and who have gained an unmatched richness from it – from Leonard Cohen to Tibetan monks.

How many of you are reading this and simultaneously planning your week's grocery shopping, or (for you lucky souls still enveloped by the warm comforting embrace that is living at home) contemplating the next episode of *House of Cards*?

The benefits of mindfulness – being fully present in the current moment



Meditation: Not just for monks.
Photo credit: User:Tevatrapas, Wikicommons.

– are vast. It can increase concentration, ameliorate stress and anxiety and improve overall mental health and wellbeing.

Practicing mindfulness means engaging with 'the here and now' and letting go of any past memories or future worries, plans and thoughts. This can be achieved through meditation, with a concentrated focus on breath, bodily sensations, thoughts and emotions.

Leonard Riskin, an American law professor specialising in mindfulness and ADR, is a dedicated propo-

nent of the benefits of mindfulness for lawyers and law students. He found that the detachment one can achieve through mindful observations of emotions and thoughts can lead to increased patience and non-judgmental discernment in future law practice.

Mindfulness, he found, encourages lawyers to 'see things as they actually are' through a lens of clarity and equanimity.

Research at UNSW has shown that the highly competitive, pressure-cooker environment that is law school leads to 1 in 3 law students suffering from a mental illness.

However, according to the most recent Law Student Wellbeing Survey conducted at Melbourne Law School in 2013, the figures here are far higher.

The survey found that 49 per cent of respondents recorded a score of moderate or higher on at least one scale: depression, anxiety or stress. These results were similar to the findings in the 2011 and 2012 wellbeing surveys. Students suffering from anxiety scored highly in the following areas: not coping with workload; assessment stress; perfectionism and worry about job prospects.

Continued on the next page...

Wellbeing

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS AT LAW SCHOOL

Continued from the front page

But I think the most alarming finding of the survey was a pervasive lack of knowledge surrounding issues of mental health. In particular:

- Of the students experiencing high levels of psychological distress, 48 per cent said that they do not have as much information about mental health and wellbeing as they need.
- Between one quarter and one third of students would not know *where* or *when* to refer a friend in Law who was experiencing problems with stress, anxiety or depression.
- Of the students experiencing high levels of psychological distress, 53 per cent were not confident that they could identify when their stress or anxiety levels are too high.

The survey noted that an improve-

ment in the areas of positive relations with others and self-acceptance would likely reduce law students' overall psychological distress. Mindfulness, and other CBTs (cognitive behaviour therapies) can be a useful first step in addressing these disturbing statistics and facilitating healthy relationships with others and with ourselves.

According to Kate van Hooft, MLS Wellbeing Adviser, there is a direct correlation between assessment stress, worrying about the prospective job market and mental health issues.

She believes that at the law school, assessments are the 'only readily available metric by which you can compare yourself to others and then work out how likely you are to get a job later', despite it being a 'flimsy' and destructive one at that.

Furthermore, the increasingly competitive and hostile job market has seen mental health issues amongst law students contemplating bleak future career prospects soar.

In regards to the sizeable number of students losing connection to their selves and initial motivations for studying law, Ms van Hooft contends that 'there's no antidote other than for every student to one day realise

on their own that their marks were only a small part of the entire tapestry of their humanity'.

And although mindfulness cannot solve all the world's problems, the clarity and perspective it affords one's mentality is a certain stepping-stone to one day realizing the above.

'I don't have the time' is the most common excuse for avoidance.

Firstly, that is a lie – if you spent a few less minutes on Facebook each day would your social life wilt and die? Of course not: because it has already.

Secondly, apps like The Smiling Mind and Headspace – which have meditations as short as 5 minutes to as long as 45 – make it easy for the time poor to tune in.

If you believe that you do not have a spare five minutes in your day to engage with the present moment, you probably need mindfulness in your life now more than ever.

So, is your mind full? Or it is mindful?

Stephanie McHugh is a second-year JD student.

Satire

CONFESSIONS OF A CAREERIST

Updating the 'extra-curricular' heading of my resume is the only experience that gives me anything approximating pleasure any more. Everything else is dust.

Genuine human interactions have given way to something far more satisfying: wondering, at any given point, what the person standing in front of me can do to help me flesh out my CV.

There is, to paraphrase a personal hero of mine, an idea of David Allinson, but there is no real me. Only a resume, something illusory. And

though I can hide my cold gaze, and you can shake my hand and feel flesh gripping yours, and maybe you can even sense our lives at law school are probably comparable...

I simply am not there.

Readings, and attending seminars (once my only source of self-betterment) have ceased to satisfy me. Only the relentless pursuit of avoiding them remains.

My hunger to volunteer for increasingly absurd numbers of humanitarian organisations is insatiable. Last week I promised to help mentor recently arrived refugee children during the difficult transition into Australian societyand *last* week I really intended to do that.

The exhilaration I feel at taking on a new responsibility is matched only by the gut-wrenching relief I experi-

ence when I avoid that responsibility by pretending I have 'too much Uni work to do'.

Continued on the next page...

DE MINIMIS IS...

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Tim Matthews Staindl

Continued from the previous page...

The best part about being in a prestigious law program: everyone assumes you're busier than they are. Especially when it's deliberately the only thing you mention when someone asks 'how are you?'

My absolute *faavorite* part of volunteering is when someone thanks me for my time, knowing that I just told them how valuable my time is (I find bleeding-heart lefties are the *best* listeners). This experience internally validates my decision to let that same person do that job *alone* in a month or so. That is, if they aren't snowed-under by reading applications for my replacement.

This week I'm going to be driving food vans around to help feed some of society's most vulnerable people. Next week? Who knows. Maybe I'll start a law school society for the advancement of all of the ethnic minorities who, because as a class they are busy working 7 days a week or whatever, lack the free time to do as much work for the Oaktree Foundation as me. But I *deserve* that free time. I went to *two* free barbecues for Oaktree. It was emotionally exhausting to pretend that I cared about their values and vision for Australian society. But hey, you don't get something for nothing.

And before you start wagging your finger at me: I worked really hard at private school! I mean, sure, when



"Social conscience? Of course I have one... I studied Arts."

Photo credit: Editor.

you look at how much academic support I got to get to where I am now (that is, when I wasn't playing polo at the school's privately owned hobby farm) I might have had a *little* leg-up. But no one ever stops to think about how hard it is to read Plato in Greek after all the champagne they serve at bi-weekly Grammar school sailing regattas. The hangovers you get on Veuve Clicquot are just the *worst*, aren't they?

That might sound modest, but I can't take all the credit. I derive a tremendous amount of spiritual strength from my favorite author, Ayn Rand: 'to say "I love you" one must first be able to say the "I"'. That's beautiful, isn't it? I remind myself of it every time I lie in an interview in response to the question "why do you want to work for us?"

But it's not like I'm taking advantage of them. In order to function these

small, well-meaning organisations *rely* on people like me to do a few days of work due to the crippling volunteer attrition rate that apparently exists in the not-for-profit sector.

And don't pretend that *you* don't do it as well. You *love* to do this. You just might not like the fact that I'm honest about it. And I suppose I should thank you: this has been cathartic for me. But I have to finish here. I have to get to Footscray Community Legal Centre. I have an interview there at 5. I was supposed to be meeting my moot team (our submission was due *hours* ago—LOL!) but I just YOLO'd that shit.

Oh, but before I go ...do you know anyone at Malleeson's who I could name-drop on my cover letter?

David Allinson is a second-year JD student.

Don't like the content? Write your own!

De Minimis is written by, and for, the students of Melbourne Law School.

We welcome any and all quality writing that might interest our readers.

If you have insights into the student experience, the legal industry, events on campus, politics, movies, or even fashion, send an email to the editor:

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