

Panel Discussion: Mindfulness in the Law School Environment

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Mindfulness in the Law School Environment **Introduction by Erika George****

A 2018 Gallup report on the global state of emotions found that fear, sadness and anger are on the rise around the world.¹ Perhaps an increase in the reported experience of emotions associated with anxiety and depression should not come as a surprise—there are real reasons to be worried about the state of the world. On a daily basis we are exposed to distressing news whether it is information about the existential threat posed to life on the

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1 See Rob Picheta, *The World is Sadder and Angrier than Ever, Major Study Finds*, CNN (Apr. 25, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/25/health/gallup-world-emotions-index-scli-intl/index.html>; Mac Slavo, *The World is Sadder and Angrier than Ever*, THE DAILY COIN (Apr. 30, 2019), <https://thedailycoin.org/2019/04/30/the-world-is-sadder-and-angrier-than-ever>; Kristin Houser, *New Research: The World is Sadder, Angrier than Ever Before*, THE BYTE (Apr. 27, 2019), <https://futurism.com/the-byte/world-sadder-angrier-emotions>.

planet presented by climate change and extreme weather events,² or a climate of intolerance and xenophobia fueling a resurgence of white supremacy,³ or acts of terrorism targeting people of color,⁴ religious minorities,⁵ and members of the LGBTQ community,⁶ or economic insecurity,⁷ or police brutality,⁸ or gun violence.⁹ There is cause for concern.

- 2 See, e.g., Christopher Ingraham, *Two New Studies Warn that a Hotter World Will be a More Violent One*, WASH. POST (Jul. 16, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/07/16/two-new-studies-warn-that-hotter-world-will-be-more-violent-one/?noredirect=on>.
- 3 See, e.g., David Choi, *Hate Crimes Increased 226% in Places Trump Held a Campaign Rally in 2016, Study Claims*, BUSINESS INSIDER (Mar. 23, 2019), <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-campaign-rally-hate-crimes-study-maga-2019-3>.
- 4 See, e.g., Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, *'I'm the Shooter': El Paso Suspect Confessed to Targeting Mexicans, Police Say*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 9, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/09/us/el-paso-suspect-confession.html>; Andrew Theen, *Umpqua Community College Shootings: Killer's Manifesto Reveals Racist, Satanic Views*, PACIFIC NORTHWEST (Sep. 8, 2017), https://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/2017/09/umpqua_community_college_shoot_3.html; *Munich Shooting: Gunman had Ideological Motivations, Say Experts*, DEUTSCHE WELT (Oct. 4, 2017), <https://www.dw.com/en/munich-shooting-gunman-had-ideological-motivations-say-experts/a-40793915>.
- 5 See, e.g., Campbell Robertson, *11 Killed in Synagogue Massacre*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 27, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/27/us/active-shooter-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting.html>; Jill Cowan, *What to Know About the Poway Synagogue Shooting*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 29, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/29/us/synagogue-shooting.html>.
- 6 See, e.g., Ralph Ellis, Ashley Fantz, Faith Karimi, & Elliot C. McLaughlin, *Orlando Shooting: 49 Killed*, CNN (June 13, 2016), <https://www.cnn.com/2016/06/12/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting/index.html>; Jonah Bromwich, *What is Atomwaffen? A Neo-Nazi Group, Linked to Multiple Murders*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 12, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/us/what-is-atomwaffen.html>.
- 7 See, e.g., Spriha Srivasta, *The U.S. Bond Yield Curve has Inverted. Here's What it Means*, CNBC (Mar. 25, 2019), <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/25/the-us-bond-yield-curve-has-inverted-heres-what-it-means.html>; Aaron Blake, *Trump's Trade War Could Cause the Crisis His Critics Feared*, WASH. POST (Aug. 26, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/08/26/what-will-trump-do-if-his-trade-war-implodes-his-critics-may-not-like-answer/>; Donna Borak, *Five of the World's Biggest Economies are at Risk. Here's where the U.S. Stands*, CNN (Aug. 18, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/17/politics/recession-risk-trump-economy/index.html>.
- 8 See, e.g., Justin Hansford, *5 Years After Ferguson, We're Losing the Fight Against Police Violence*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 9, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/09/opinion/ferguson-anniversary-police-race.html>; see also, Amina Khan, *Getting Killed by Police is a Leading Cause of Death for Young Black Men in America*, L.A. TIMES (Aug. 15, 2018), <https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2019-08-15/police-shootings-are-a-leading-cause-of-death-for-black-men> (reporting on study measuring the mortality rate associated with police violence and the public health effects of police violence on communities and finding long term physical and mental health hams extend beyond original victim).
- 9 See, e.g., Andrew Blankstein, Pete Williams, Rachel Elbaum, & Elizabeth Chuck, *Las Vegas Shooting: 59 Killed and More than 500 Hurt Near Mandalay Bay*, NBC (Oct. 1, 2017), <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/las-vegas-shooting/las-vegas-police-investigating-shooting-mandalay-bay-n806461>; Madeline Holcombe, Holly Yan, & Mark Morales, *New Details Emerge in the Virginia Beach Mass Shooting that left 12 People Dead*, CNN (June 3, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/02/us/virginia-beach-shooting-sunday/index.html>. At the time of this initial writing the world had yet to experience the racial justice uprisings in the wake

Lawyers are not immune to emotions. Indeed, legal work can often involve emotionally charged issues. It was lawyers who responded to the humanitarian crisis created at the U.S. southern border by seeking to represent children in immigration enforcement actions and to challenge conditions of detention.¹⁰ Lawyers also deployed to airports across the U.S. in the aftermath of a travel ban that left people from Muslim majority countries in legal limbo.¹¹ Lawyers have and will continue to play a critically important role in society. Members of the legal community must be prepared to do the important work that a rapidly changing and increasingly polarized society urgently needs of the profession.

A 2016 study of 13,000 lawyers conducted by American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation found that approximately 28 percent struggle with depression, 19 percent anxiety and 23 percent stress.¹² The study found “younger lawyers in the first ten years of practice and those working in private firms experience the highest rates of problem drinking and depression.”¹³ At least one study suggests that 40-70 percent of disciplinary proceedings and malpractice claims against lawyers involve substance abuse or depression.¹⁴

According to a 2016 Survey of Law Student Well-Being including over 3,300 law students from 15 different law schools, 43 percent of law students surveyed reported binge drinking at least once in the prior two weeks and one-quarter were deemed at risk for alcoholism.¹⁵ The study found that 23

of the murder of George Floyd or the global COVID-19 pandemic that disproportionately impacted people of color in the United States. If anything, there is even greater cause for concern. See, e.g., Oxiris Barbot, *George Floyd and Our Collective Moral Injury*, 110 AM. J. PUB. HEALTH 1253 (2020); Ariel R Belasen et al., *Tracking the Uneven Outcomes of COVID-19 on Racial and Ethnic Groups: Implications for Health Policy*, 11 J. RACIAL & ETHNIC HEALTH DISPARITIES 2247 (2024); Ahmad Khanijahani et al., *A Systematic Review of Racial/Ethnic and Socioeconomic Disparities in COVID-19*, 20 INT. J. EQUITY HEALTH 248 (2021).

10 See Christina Jewett & Shefali Luthra, *Immigrant Toddlers Ordered to Appear in Court Alone*, USA TODAY (June 27, 2018) <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/06/27/immigrant-children-deportation-court/739205002/>; Caitlin Dickerson, *Migrant Children Are Entitled to Toothbrushes and Soap, Federal Court Rules*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 15, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/15/us/migrant-children-toothbrushes-court.html> (“a group of lawyers told reporters they had observed distressed migrant children held in cramped, dirty conditions and without sufficient food or clean water at a Border Patrol station”).

11 See Jonah Engel Bromwich, *Lawyers Mobilize at Nation’s Airports After Trump’s Order*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 29, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/29/us/lawyers-trump-muslim-ban-immigration.html>.

12 See NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON LAWYER WELL-BEING, *THE PATH TO LAWYER WELL-BEING: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE* 7 (2017), <https://lawyerwellbeing.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Lawyer-Wellbeing-Report.pdf> [hereinafter *The Path*]; see also ABA, *Study on Lawyer Impairment* (Jan 18, 2019), https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/research/colap_hazelden_lawyer_study/.

13 *The Path*, *supra* note 12, at 7.

14 *Id.* at 8.

15 *Id.* at 7.

percent of law students surveyed had mild to moderate anxiety and 17 percent reported experiencing some level of depression.¹⁶ Among other things, lawyers identified “a narrowing of values so that profit predominates,” incivility, social alienation, sleep deprivation, job dissatisfaction, and work-life imbalance as problems in the profession.¹⁷ Put simply, many lawyers and law students are not well.

Problems of incivility, social alienation and work-life imbalance are perhaps compounded for people of color in the legal community. Racism remains a reality in the legal system and in law schools.¹⁸ Not only are people of color on the receiving end of intentional and explicit racist comments and conduct, implicit bias and ostensibly neutral policies and practices frequently can result in unintentional racial discrimination.¹⁹ Moreover, innocuous mistakes that are incessant—such as confusing people of color for one another—an irritant overtime can prove injurious.²⁰ These discriminatory instances, statements or actions that are regarded as indirect, subtle, or unintentional are called micro-aggressions and they can impair relationships or result in “racial battle fatigue.”²¹ People of color are disproportionately more likely to experience race-based trauma and even post-traumatic stress disorder from experiencing racism.²² Stereotypes that celebrate the resilience of people of color who persist

16 *Id.* at 7.

17 *Id.*

18 See, e.g., MEERA E. DEO, *UNEQUAL PROFESSION: RACE AND GENDER IN THE LEGAL ACADEMY* 39-42, 47-50 (2019); see generally, DERRICK BELL, *RACE, RACISM, AND AMERICAN LAW* (6th ed., 2019) (1984). See also, Andrew M. Duehren, *Police Investigate Vandalism on Portraits of Black Law Professors*, HARV. CRIMSON (Nov. 20, 2015); Jeremy Bauer-Wolf, *Racist Incidents at Colleges Abound as Academic Year Begins*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Sept. 22, 2017). Derald Wing Sue et al., *Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 62 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 271 (2007).

19 See Jerry Kang et al., *Implicit Bias in the Courtroom*, 59 UCLA L. REV. 1124 (2012); DANIEL KAHNEMAN, *THINKING, FAST AND SLOW* (2015).

20 See, e.g., William A. Smith et al., *You Make Me Wanna Holler and Throw Up Both My Hands! Campus Culture Black Misandric Microaggressions, and Racial Battle Fatigue*, 29 INTERNATIONAL J. QUALITATIVE STUDIES IN EDUCATION 1189 (2016); William A. Smith et al., *‘Assume the Position... You Fit the Description’: Psychosocial Experiences and Racial Battle Fatigue Among African American Male College Students*, 51 AM. BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST 551 (2007).

21 See Derald Wing Sue et al., *Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice*, 62 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 271 (2007) (“Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities.”).

22 See, e.g., William Wan, *Racism has Devastating Effects on Children’s Health, Pediatricians Warn*, WASH. POST (Aug. 2, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/racism-has-devastating-effects-on-childrens-health-pediatricians-warn/2019/08/02/ce5fc96a-b313-11e9-8f6c-7828e68cb15f_story.html (reporting on policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics drawing on 180 studies to include specific recommendations for health care providers); Michel Martin, *Racism is Literally Bad for Your Health*, NPR (Oct. 28, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/28/560444290/racism-is-literally-bad-for-your-health>;

and are professionally successful despite bias and barriers—such as a “strong black woman” or a “model minority Asian”—can serve to minimize the adverse mental-health effects of exclusion and micro-aggressions overtime.²³

It doesn’t have to be this way. We can do better and we would be much better off professionally and personally were the legal community to appreciate well-being as a priority. The National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being has urged leaders in the legal profession to act. Our panel at the 2019 National People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference considered the potential contribution of “mindfulness” and contemplative practices to solving some of the problems confronting the profession concerning lawyer well-being.

What is Mindfulness?

At its most basic, the practice of mindfulness aims to still the movement of the mind by bringing compassionate awareness and attention to the present moment.²⁴ Mindfulness is a contemplative practice that invites personal introspection and reflection. While there are many different forms of contemplative practices such as journaling, visualization, meditation, and yoga—these practices share a focus on self-awareness.²⁵

A growing number of quantitative and qualitative studies support the efficacy of contemplative practices. Contemplative practices have been shown to significantly improve health by reducing stress and increasing well-being.²⁶ Reducing reactivity to stressors can strengthen the immune system. Brain-imaging studies suggest that meditation can cause physical changes to the structure of regions of the brain that are involved in emotional regulation and cognitive processing.²⁷ Studies have shown self-regulation gains even after

Monnica T. Williams et al., *Assessing Racial Trauma within a DSM-5 Framework: The UConn Racial/Ethnic Stress & Trauma Survey*, 3 PRACTICE INNOVATIONS 242 (2018), <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fprio000076> (“Many ethnic minority groups experience higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to their European American counterparts. One explanation for this is the differential experience of racism, which can itself be traumatic.”).

23 See Threads of Solidarity: WOC Against Racism, *Filling Our Cups: 4 Ways People of Color Can Foster Mental Health and Practice Restorative Healing*, MEDIUM (July 26, 2017) <https://medium.com/@SolidarityWOC/filling-our-cups-4-ways-people-of-color-can-foster-mental-health-and-practice-restorative-healing-64e5e7584127> (advocating for the normalization of mental health as a social justice issue and culturally competent mental health care services).

24 See PATANJALI, *THE YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI* 90 (Alistair Shearer trans., 1982) (describing the practice of yoga as “the settling of the mind into silence”).

25 DANIEL P. BARBEZAT & MIRABAI BUSH, *CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: POWERFUL METHODS TO TRANSFORM TEACHING AND LEARNING* 10 (2014).

26 *Id.* at 23.

27 *Id.* at 29

short periods of meditation practice with certain types of practice have been shown to increase capacity for social connection and empathy with strangers.²⁸ Contemplative practices also promote self-compassion which can alleviate forms of anxiety and depression.²⁹

Contemplative practices have been used effectively in health and healing programs.³⁰ It stands to reason that some of the stressors associated with the practice of law could become easier to navigate or alleviated to some degree. As Gullu Singh who teaches mindfulness to other lawyers explained, bringing mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques to the practice of law enabled him to “rest and recalibrate” and depersonalize interactions with difficult people.³¹

Why Introduce Mindfulness into the Law School Environment?

My own mindfulness journey started with yoga. I came to contemplative practices completely by chance. As a first-year law student plagued by my perfectionism and feeling frustrated with a law school environment I experienced as alienating, I started skipping classes while I sorted out whether I wanted to continue my studies. I spent my days walking and wandering. One day I came across a community yoga class already in progress and joined in. Most yoga classes conclude with Shavasana, a final relaxation pose.³² After the deep relaxation experience in the yoga class, I felt less frustrated. I returned to my law school classes and continued to attend yoga classes. After law school, I became a certified yoga instructor. As a law professor, I have taught yoga as a contemplative practice for over a decade.

Some law students experience the law school environment as competitive and contentious. For many students the curricular content is unfamiliar, and the classroom culture can be anxiety inducing. The pressure to perform may be especially pronounced for people of color and first-generation law students. Often such students are not benefited by social capital, sponsors, and mentors willing to guide them.

Rhonda Magee, a professor of law and internationally recognized thought leader on integrating mindfulness into higher education says her students are troubled by how disconnected their learning experiences are from their lived experiences—especially when the ways in which the legal system impacts

28 *Id.* at 31

29 *Id.*; see also Ellen R. Albertson et al., *A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Brief Meditation Intervention*, 6 *MINDFULNESS* 444 (2014), <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12671-014-0277-3>.

30 *Id.*

31 Gullu Singh interview July 31, 2019.

32 In Shavasana or corpse pose the individual reclines on his or her back with arms and legs extended. See, e.g., YJ Editors, *The Purpose of Corpse Pose*, *YOGA J.* (Apr. 12, 2017), <https://www.yogajournal.com/practice/the-purpose-of-corpse-pose> (“In Corpse Pose, we symbolically “die” to our old ways of thinking and doing. The normally perceived boundaries of body image dissolve, and we enter a state of blissful neutrality.”).

their lives differently due to race, gender or socioeconomic class seem to be systematically ignored.³³ For Magee, “race and our reactivity to it are worthy of being brought with skillful engagement into mindfulness practice.”³⁴ She argues that mindfulness meditation and complementary contemplative practices may help us to dismantle racism by enabling us to better understand the types of attachments and aversions that fuel racism as we work to minimize our reliance on racialized categories to assess the character of others.³⁵

How to Introduce Introspection and Contemplative Practices into the Classroom?

When introduced into the law school classroom, contemplative exercises can be used to advance a range of learning objectives. For example, meditation can be used to “facilitate focus and concentrated attention on a topic” or to cultivate compassion or a sense of connection to others.³⁶ Faculty interested in introducing contemplative practices should first establish their own practice and become aware of their beliefs and biases. Contemplative practices can help faculty better prepare to respond to challenging classroom dynamics when difficult topics are being discussed. The introduction of contemplative practice works well when students trust their professors and are secure enough to try a new approach to discussion, so establishing a strong connection with students is important.³⁷

Introducing contemplative practice into the law school classroom can be as simple as an invitation for students to take a moment to pause and observe their breath cycle or sensory perceptions to focus attention. Self-introspection should not be imposed but rather invited. Students should not be pressured to practice, nor should faculty prescribe a particular practice. A growing number of resources are now available to aid individuals in the legal profession that are interested in establishing their own practice and introducing contemplative practices in learning environments.³⁸ While mindfulness can help individuals

33 Rhonda Magee, *Mindfulness Plays a Role in Educating Lawyers to Confront Racism*, ABA J. (Aug. 1, 2016), http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/mindfulness_confronting_racism. Professor Magee is the author of numerous articles on mindfulness in legal education. See Rhonda V. Magee, *Educating Lawyers to Meditate?*, 79 UMKC L. REV. 535 (2011); Rhonda V. Magee, *The Way of ColorInsight: Understanding Race and Law Effectively Using Mindfulness-Based ColorInsight Practices*, 8 GEO. J. L. & MOD. CRITICAL RACE PERSP. 251 (2016).

34 Upaya Zen Center, *Rhonda Magee on Developing Mindfulness of Race & Privilege in Systems* (July 31, 2019), <https://www.upaya.org/2019/07/rhonda-magee/>.

35 *Id.*

36 BARBEZAT & BUSH, *supra* note 24, at 11.

37 *Id.* at 72.

38 For resources on mindfulness in the legal profession and in higher education, see generally, Association of the Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, <https://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/acmhe>; Mindfulness in Law Society, <https://mindfulnessinlawsociety.com>; Jurisight, <http://jurisight.com>; Warrior One, <https://warriorone.com/team/gullu-singh/>. See also, Scott L. Rogers, *The Mindful Law School: An Integrative Approach to Transforming Legal Education*, 28 TOURO L. REV. 1189 (2012).

cope with legal education and the practice of law, it remains imperative that leaders in our profession be mindful of how their choices contribute to the creation of institutions that are inconsistent with well-being.³⁹

To be sure, most law professors are not trained professional therapists. The conventional law school experience has not been consistent with self-care and contemplation for many students or faculty. Nevertheless, law professors occasionally do become trusted mentors for students. Through the introduction of contemplative practices thoughtful law professors can transform pedagogy in ways that could advance transformation in the legal academy, the profession and the world.

Erika George: Good morning and welcome everyone to this panel. I actually think it might be fitting to start with a moment of contemplation. So, if I can invite you to just roll your shoulders back, root down through your sits bones, exhale fully and allow your eyes to close or pick a point of soft focus out in front of you. And then bring your awareness and attention to your breath. Finding first your inhale and identifying where you first experience your inhale in the body. It may be at your nostrils, lower down in your diaphragm, or in your chest or abdomen. Wherever that point of inhale origination is for you, you'll expand and make it into a sphere, you're slowly exhaling to release. Inhaling, inviting the body to open. Exhaling, allowing the skin to soften, the shoulders to ease down and bringing your awareness and attention back to the breath. Inhaling fully, exhaling fully. And then blink the eyes open and return to us and welcome.

Hi, I'm Erika George. I'm a professor of law at Utah. I'm joined by two of my colleagues and today we wanted to spend time talking to you about "Mindfulness in the Law School Environment."

So here we are, in a law school. We are legal educators or students of the law. Since you've been through law school, or are in law school or a law faculty member, I don't need to tell you that there are pressures involved in this practice, in our profession, and in our personal lives. This panel will be devoted to talking about mindfulness, its role in the law school, its role in our lives, what it can do for you, and perhaps what it can do for others. This panel was not my brainchild, this was actually birthed by the women sitting to my right. Since we didn't include biographies, I am going to invite each of them to introduce themselves. You'll hear from them a bit about the role of the practice, generally the role of the practice internally, and the science

39 Cf. Funie Hsu, *What is the Sound of One Invisible Hand Clapping? Neoliberalism, the Invisibility of Asian and Asian American Buddhists, and Secular Mindfulness in Education*, in *HANDBOOK OF MINDFULNESS: CULTURE, CONTEXT, AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT HANDBOOK OF MINDFULNESS* 369 (Ronald E. Purser ed., 2016) (considering how secular mindfulness programs applied in schools may unconsciously advance neoliberal marketization of public schools by advocating calm in the face of widespread economic and racial inequality and by instructing a sense of individual responsibility instead of accountability and structural change); Hettie O'Brien, *How Mindfulness Privatized a Social Problem*, *NEW STATESMAN* (Jul. 17, 2019).

behind it. And then I will turn and talk about applying that practice in the context in which many of us may operate, and then we will turn it to you for a broader conversation. I'll also add that later this afternoon, we will be doing a practical practice and offering ideas and advice on how you may incorporate mindfulness into your personal and or professional life. Our first speaker will be Kellyn McGee, who joins us from Savannah.

Kellyn McGee: I'm Kellyn McGee. I'm glad you all came to the panel. I am a professor at Savannah Law School. I teach Civil Procedure, Professional Responsibility, and courses in Alternative Dispute Resolution. I am also a certified yoga teacher, so I also offer yoga to our students and to our faculty. What we are talking about today is very important, certainly in our lives as faculty and law students. What I am going to talk about is what the legal profession is doing about mental health and well-being. Before I went to the law school, before I entered academia, I actually prosecuted discipline cases. So, I saw some cringes in the audience. Yeah, that's what I did for a number of years. As I mentioned, I teach Professional Responsibility, and so, I am still very involved with the disciplinary rules and regulations. So, I have been watching what the profession is doing about wellness and well-being and there is a significant movement going on right now. In 2016, a few studies were commissioned. One was commissioned by the American Bar Association's Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP). The Betty Ford Foundation also commissioned a study, involving about 13,000 lawyers, in which it found significant responses relating to problematic drinking. In an anonymous survey, lawyers admitted that they would consider themselves problem drinkers. They talked about the stress relating to our profession, how they handle stress or not handle stress, how they deal with our workloads and the anxiety and stress coupled with all that comes with being a lawyer. And it is quite stressful. Another study in 2016 surveyed 15 law schools and about 3,300 law students. Of that study, 17% of the students admitted that they had some level of depression, 14% experienced severe anxiety, while 23% reported moderate or mild anxiety. I don't know any one law student that has mild anxiety. I remember being in law school, and mild was probably not the word I would use, but nonetheless, 23% of students reported having mild or moderate anxiety. Of the students that were surveyed, 6% reported that they had serious suicidal thoughts within the past year before this study. As to alcohol use, 43% reported binge drinking at least once in the two week period prior to the study, and that it was a regular occurrence for them. Nearly a quarter of those students that said they experienced binge drinking at least once, 22% reported binge drinking at least two or more times during that period. One quarter fell into the category of being at risk for alcoholism and should have been recommended to get further screening. Following that study in 2016, the ABA's CoLAP, the National Organization of Bar Counsel (NOBC), who are the regulators of lawyers, and the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers (APRL), who either represent people facing the bar regulators or lawyers who are generally interested in professional regulation,

got together and started the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being. In 2017, the participating entities submitted a report and recommendations following research for that year between the two studies and starting the task force. That report made recommendations to stakeholders including judges, legal employers, bar associations, professional liability carriers, and law schools. This report can be viewed and downloaded on lawyerwellbeing.net, which is a good website because it also gives you a map of what each jurisdiction is doing within their own states. I would say maybe a third of the states have done something, by either looking into having a task force, or already implementing a task force. So you can click on the state and see what they are doing, and if there is a website affiliated with the state's well-being, that is also provided. For example, Georgia, where I am originally from and began practicing before I went to Savannah Law School, does have one. So the report gave recommendations to these shareholders and I am going to focus on what it recommended for law students, because I could be here all day talking about the report itself because it is quite lengthy. But I want to give you first some recommendations, generally, that the report provided. These are recommendations regarding law students. One is to require law schools to recreate well-being education as an accreditation requirement by making it a part of the required curriculum. Another one is to adjust the admissions process to support law student well-being. This includes looking at how we ask about mental health history on law school applications and how we ask about it on applications for admission to practice. The report suggested adopting rules for conditional admission based on someone's mental health history. It also suggests that regulators add well-being related questions to the MPRE. So that means you would need to have, I think, a focus of well-being in the curriculum in order to add it to the MPRE. And I think not just in Professional Responsibility, but certainly in that course, but in other courses you can talk about well-being. I think particularly if you are going to be representing people, that is going to affect your mental health more than others; if you are representing criminal defendants, if you are representing families or involved in a family law practice, you are going to be having emotional responses probably to those clients or those cases at least. So those are some recommendations regarding law schools. Specifically, to the law schools, there are about eight or nine recommendations. One is to create best practices for detecting and assisting students experiencing psychological distress. And under that recommendation, it suggests providing training to faculty members relating to student mental health and substance abuse disorders. It also suggests adopting a uniform attendance policy in order to detect early warning signs of students in crisis. Students may not realize that, yes, the ABA has a rule on class attendance, in which students are allowed to miss no more than 20% of the class hours in any class in any semester to be eligible to sit for the examination. So that is why we take attendance. But from a different perspective, we can also see when students are missing classes to assess whether something may be going on with that student. For example, if the student is missing my class, but also missing Professor Boothe Perry's

class, the school as a whole can look at what is going on as opposed to “*Oh she’s just blowing off PR.*” Instead, we can look at this as “*Oh, she’s blowing off all of her classes, what’s going on?*” So that is one of the reasons behind the recommendation for an adoption of a uniform policy for taking attendance, because you can actually see what is going on or see that you need to look into what is going on with the students who may be missing classes. Another recommendation is to provide mental health and substance abuse disorder resources. Those three were under the category of creating best practices for detecting and assisting students. Another one is to assess the law school’s practices and offer faculty education on promoting well-being in the classroom and empower students to help fellow students in need. I am directing this particularly to the students in the audience, you all see students who you think are in trouble. One of the courses I have taught that I have really enjoyed was a seminar that I wanted to call *Lawyers Behaving Badly*. But my dean didn’t want that on the students’ transcripts, so we called it *Advanced Topics in Legal Ethics*. But everybody in the school called it either *Lawyers Behaving Badly* or *LBB*. It was a seminar where the students had to write a paper. Some students suggested that the course be required as part of the curriculum, because not only did we talk about the rules that we have to abide by, but we went over why people are in trouble in the first place. And it does not start once they start practicing, but you see it beginning in school. One student wrote a paper and when he was presenting his draft, he talked about how everyone says law school gets easier after the first year. He pointed out the irony in this, stating that it actually gets more stressful after the first year. During the second year, students are looking for jobs and have more advanced courses. During their third year many students are still looking for jobs, while also trying to get ready for the bar and preparing to leave the law school environment. He talked about how the stress actually builds up over the course of those three years. In that class, we talked about all the things that students see. For example, the huge Adderall problem or drinking in class. Drinking alcohol during class. Yeah. They talked about specific instances, when they would say, “Oh yeah, he was drunk when...”

[Audience] Audible gasps and questioning looks.

[Audience Member] So the students are reporting that that is what happened?

McGee: They reported it in this course.

Audience Member] Right.

McGee: But they are not reporting it to anyone else, yes.

[Audience Member] So then as a faculty member, if somebody comes to tell me that, what exactly is it that I am supposed to do?

McGee: I think it’s difficult because the students are telling me in confidence that the person is drunk. But I can say to that student who is telling me, “I’m going to talk to this student.” You should first talk to the student, and then you may need to talk to administration or you probably should talk to

administration about it. But it's not that it's just one student coming to class drunk, I mean, it's groups of students who are going out to drink before class.

George: Is this a night class?

McGee: Afternoon classes after lunch.

Nicky Boothe: And not just drinking, but drug use.

McGee: I mean, the Adderall problem is huge.

[Audience Member] As a faculty member, if I am seeing that somebody is absent all the time, I am reluctant to ask "Why?"

McGee: Well, that is why I think you can tell the Dean of Students and the Associate Dean.

George: And this [exchange on substance abuse] speaks to the need for the recommendations in the ABA study report, because often we are not trained, we are not equipped, we are not therapists, but we are well positioned to spot trouble, right? So, we know that the generation of students we are teaching have higher rates of anxiety, they are more attached to their digital devices, they've got different and more pressures in a way that is amplified. We are realizing we would be better served to be better equipped to identify and address challenges. So, this will all wrap into our conversation about what it is we are observing, being in a space where we can observe, where we can hold and create space to address these kinds of issues.

McGee: I think it is probably easier for me to say that I will talk to the student because I have been a Dean of Students. So you know, I have tissues in my office and I can have that conversation with them. But I think that yes, more training for faculty as to what the school wants the faculty to do if they see someone come into class inebriated or if you believe that there is drug use or something. There should be more training for faculty to know what to do when it comes to who should we talk to about that and do we reach out directly to the student? Okay, so we have discussed including well-being topics and courses on professional responsibility. Another recommendation is to commit resources for onsite professional counselors. We have someone who is not on site, but they can call the number anytime and I think they are supposed to get maybe three free sessions a semester. But three years ago, we got a call from our CFO who said they were taking away our psychologist, because a student had gone every week for 14 weeks. We have 14 weeks in the semester.

George: That means they needed it.

McGee: She absolutely needed it. But I also think she was doing it when she was in undergrad. So this was just her normal, she was going to see her therapist. But we were paying for that. So they advised us in January that they were cutting this off. We cannot cut it off, what about these other students? We needed to figure out another way and we did figure out another way. But yeah, she was going for 14 weeks and that had taken away the funding that the school had for it. So the recommendation is to have someone onsite for the students. Under the recommendation to facilitate a confidential recovery

network and provide education opportunities on well-being related topics it specifically recommends providing well-being programming during the 1L year by creating a well-being course and lecture series for students, and conducting anonymous surveys related to student well-being. I think you can absolutely do that. I think students would be honest if you do it anonymously. You probably would need to do it a few times a year to check in with where students are. Here is another one, discourage alcohol center social events. I know that our school and other schools have started prohibiting student organizations from paying for alcohol at events. They do not let student tuition funds pay for the alcohol in events. Part of that recommendation also says that if there is alcohol there that the professors should not be drinking alcohol. I live in Savannah where the “go cup” is what happens in Savannah. We are a very small city with a very small legal community, so everybody knows each other. But that also has encouraged different types of relationships that our faculty have with students. So you would see our students and faculty at a bar together quite frequently. And so I don’t know how that would have gone over, this no-alcohol policy. But we had some issues when I was Dean of Students for three years. At our Thanksgiving, probably during my second year as Dean of Students, the school provided food and we also said we would do wine and beer and it was open to everyone’s family for Thanksgiving. We provided the turkey and all that but the students had a sign-up sheet to volunteer to bring in sides and desserts. Someone put shots on the list and our Dean scratched shots off. It was put back on the list again and scratched off again. The SBA President was so upset and came to me saying she told the person she cannot bring shots and she was very upset about it. I told her not to worry about it and that we would take care of it. She asked what we were going to do, and the one thing that I always say to her and some other students is “Not your circus, not your monkeys. We have this, don’t worry about it.” This student brought shots anyway. And we saw this line forming behind the security desk, so the security guard knew about it. There was this room behind security, and we saw a line of students going in to get the shots. This was in the building at the front door, so they did not even hide it. Our Dean would frequently see beer bottles just everywhere I mean it’s...

[Audience Member] So what happened?

McGee: We shut it down.

[Audience Member] How do you do that?

McGee: Our Dean went and confiscated the cooler.

[Audience Member] Okay. Were there other consequences to the students? You do not have to say what they were, just yes or no.

McGee: [Shakes head “no”]

McGee: So we have this report and it is great, but I think there is a glaring omission when I see it. It does not have anything as faculty as a stakeholder. It talks a lot about faculty training, and what we should do to support our students. And of course, we want to support the students. I mean, we are

there to do that. But it does not talk about our well-being and how we are supposed to deal with these issues ourselves. We also need some centering and mindfulness and all these practices as well for ourselves. My school is closing, and this year has been kind of tumultuous, but in this academic year, our Associate Dean had a massive heart attack and died on the second day of classes. So from that we were Dean-less. Our Dean, I am a part of a branch that is four hours away, and the Dean of the School said, "Oh, I can be the Associate Dean four hours away." So we had no one on campus. At some point I said to one of my colleagues, "We don't have any proper care of faculty here." He's like, "Yeah, we have to do it ourselves." We just need to focus on how we do that ourselves because we are also doing it for the students. So we have to make sure that we are making a point of it. The other thing I am going to say is that Virginia has already added a comment to its competence rule, Rule 1.1, about wellness. The comment to the rule states:

A lawyer's mental, emotional, and physical well-being impacts the lawyer's ability to represent clients and to make responsible choices in the practice of law. Maintaining the mental, emotional, and physical ability necessary for the representation of a client is an important aspect of maintaining competence to practice law.

This is the comment that Virginia has already adopted. Georgia's disciplinary rules committee has also adopted it, but it still has to get to the Supreme Court.

I want to make another point regarding faculty. I think that faculty should be a part of this report of recommendations. But I think no one thought about it because they assumed that faculty are lawyers so they are covered. But we are not because not all of us are members of the bar. And those who are may not be members of the bar in the states that they are teaching in. So they are not getting the resources from that Bar Association, through being a member of the bar there.

George: Alright, so we now have some foundation for what the types of challenges there are in our institutions. That was challenging. I think back to law school, and I look at my yearbooks, and there's alcohol in every picture. In our first week of orientation, there was probably more talk about anxiety and depression than other topics, which is a problem in our profession, as well as the medical profession. In medicine there is now an appreciation that preventative health and wellness can incorporate elements of mindfulness to good result. So, thank you for laying the landscape of the troubles that we must traverse. Next we will turn to Nicky Boothe Perry to help us navigate the landscape.

Boothe: Good morning, everyone. I am Nicky Boothe. I am the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Florida A&M University College of Law. I have been a law professor there for 14 years and I teach Professional Responsibility, Torts one and two, and an Ethics and Professionalism seminar. I have also

taught the Guardian Ad Litem Clinic and Consumer Law. I am going to talk a little bit about why this panel was even created and how it would be practically applicable to us as law professors and also to our law students.

Approximately 2011, I went to a SESW People of Color Conference in Fort Lauderdale. I just happened to be by the room . . . I needed something to do for about an hour. And there was a panel going on in there. I was not particularly interested in it, but I went in to kind of kill time. They were talking about contemplative practices, which I had not really been exposed to before. And I thought, "Oh, this is some kind of meditation, some kind of touchy-feely stuff and they're going to make me go find a crystal or something like that." At the time I was experiencing a pretty tumultuous period in my life. I was going through a very life-changing time period in my family. So I sat in that conference session and realized the conversation was about different types of practices that revolved around mental health, well-being, and being able to be in a space where you could just take a moment to be in the moment. I was quite intrigued as it was still very practical for that practical side of my brain. That conference sparked my interest and I began researching the practice. As a Professional Responsibility professor, I am always talking to my students about their moral compass. As lawyers we have the ethical rules which we all have to adhere to. But we also have to check our moral compass to determine if abiding by the floor of the ethical rules is enough, or if there is something above and beyond that floor that should be done to satisfy our moral compass. This lends to the discussion of professionalism which is an overarching topic in my Professional Responsibility classes. So I started doing a little bit of research and recognized that perhaps my students could benefit from some of the practices that I was doing in my own personal life. It might help them cope with whatever they are going through in law school and also help them with that moral compass as they learn to apply the ethical rules.

Studies show that although students entering law school have the same national average of depression and stress, the rate increases sharply in the first year. And you can imagine why, right? They are under pressure to get good grades, to survive the curve, to participate in extracurricular activities, and just to try and stay in school. Without intervention, what happens is these increasingly depressed law students end up being these increasingly depressed and stressed out lawyers. In fact, the horrific statistics show that the problem persists or increases once they become lawyers. As Professor McGee was saying, the problems start in law school. So what can we as law professors do to try to help? The ABA and state and local bar organizations have recognized the need for increased student well-being. In addition, just recently a group of 13 students, presidents of different student bar associations at different schools including Columbia, NYU, University of Chicago, and Yale, signed a pledge and submitted it to the law school communities. The pledge reads in part:

Popular culture reinforces damaging law schools' stereotypes that law school must be a grueling and overwhelming ordeal

to adequately prepare students for legal practice. The tolerant student's health has become an accepted characteristic of law school life, rather than properly recognized as an impediment to our success.

They state further:

We say to our effective peers, you are not alone. We say to all our friends and colleagues, we can do better. Of course, students or practitioner health is not a necessary byproduct of a rigorous legal education. It needs to be treated as the scourge of the profession that it is. Students left behind are not failures of personal strength

...

This illustrates that not only is the profession recognizing the need for some help with student well-being, but the students are crying out for help also.

As faculty members our job is to educate our students. Of the statistics that Professor McGee pointed out with the binge drinking and students who were depressed, what I found particularly interesting was that a number of the students who reported depression, a vast number of them, were diagnosed with that depression once they got to law school. As it relates to the impact that law school has on students' health, one of the recommendations is that we have an ABA standard regarding well-being. That would be excellent. However, until we have that standard, I believe we have a standard that already speaks to our obligation in the legal profession to assist our students with their well-being. Standard 301(a) of the ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools states:

A law school shall maintain a rigorous program of legal education that prepares its students, upon graduation, for admission to the bar and for effective, ethical, and responsible participation as members of the legal profession.

You cannot be effective and responsible (and probably difficult to be ethical also) if you are suffering from depression or engaging in damaging behavior as a result of that depression. Therefore, as part of our obligation to meet Standard 301 we should be doing more for our students beyond the pedagogical and practical legal experiences we provide. In addition to general resources that we may offer at law schools (many of which were recommended in the report), as law professors we need to think about what we can do in our own individual classrooms that speaks to Standard 301 to help our students actually become effective and responsible participants in the legal profession. One of the challenges for us as law professors, is not just to teach the students the substantive knowledge in the classes we teach, but to teach the "whole" student lawyer. Integral in teaching the whole lawyer inevitably includes the students' mental health. This is where mindfulness steps in (more on exactly

what that is in a moment). Mindfulness can be very impactful to our students because it speaks directly to the stress levels that Professor McGee referred to. There are a number of neuro-scientific studies that support the use of mindfulness as a tool for us to help develop this “whole” law student who will eventually become this “whole” lawyer.

The neuro-scientific studies revolve around the production of our stress hormones. Science explains that stress levels increase two particular hormones: cortisol and adrenaline. It also instigates our fight or flight response. This fight or flight response is implicated by a portion of our brain called the amygdala. If a person stays in a constant source of stress, he or she will experience deleterious effects on his or her body. Without question everybody knows “if I have stress, I need to reduce stress or I’ll develop high blood pressure or other stress-related conditions.” Certainly, stress has been proven to cause heart disease, weight gain, anxiety and a host of other mental and physical illnesses. Studies evidence that a mindfulness practice (and it is a “practice”) will cause a reduction in the levels of those two stress-related hormones: the cortisol and the adrenaline. After an eight-week course in mindfulness, MRI scans of participants revealed that the amygdala appeared to shrink. As the amygdala shrinks, the prefrontal cortex which is associated with your higher order brain functions such as awareness, concentration and decision making, becomes thicker. As the prefrontal cortex grows, stress levels and the “fight or flight” response portion of the brain will shrink. The result is that the connection between the amygdala and the rest of the brain gets weaker, while the connections between those areas associated with the attention and concentration get stronger.

At a bare minimum we want our students to be able to pay attention and concentrate on the subject matter while they are in class. In addition to the increased prefrontal cortex activity, there are other additional benefits to the decreased level of cortisol including improved functioning of the immune system, alleviation of suffering from chronic pain, the limitation of expression genes associated with inflammation, and a deceleration in the rate of cellular aging. How about that? The slowing down of the aging process is just a little added bonus! Mindfulness has also been used because of the neuro-scientific effects. The practice has been used to treat conditions such as addiction, obsessive compulsive disorder, personality disorder, and even difficulty sleeping. Scientific reasons support why this is something that we know can help our stressed-out law students, and really help us also.

I think Erika is going to speak a little bit more about the faculty and our own self-help and well-being. We have to help ourselves because unhealthy people cannot contribute much to the health of others.

[Audience Member] You mentioned the eight-week course, was it a course of how to do mindfulness or was it a course that you were engaging in mindfulness?

Boothe: They were just tracking eight weeks of people practicing mindfulness.

[Audience Member] Okay.

Boothe: So what is mindfulness? Mindfulness is a form of contemplative practice. It has been defined as “the ability to be in the present moment fully, intentionally and non-judgmentally.” So we can use a mindfulness practice to cultivate skills, mental qualities that can be helpful, of course, in the legal profession, but also in the classroom by allowing students to let go of distractions, manage their stress and other emotions. Stressed out students don’t learn very well. Mindfulness also aids in accepting others openly and compassionately. As law professors, we strive to teach our students cultural competency. Mindfulness can help with that learning process as it is the ability to pay attention in a particular way, on purpose in the present moment, and without judgment about how you are doing it. It is helpful to students not just to be able to concentrate in class, but when they are faced with some type of dilemma, which as lawyers you are going to have some type of dilemma whether it’s ethical or otherwise, they are able to stop. So S-T-O-P is actually an acronym I use. They are going to stop, they are going to actually “S,” stop for a moment, “T,” take an assessment of what is going on, “O,” observe everything, and then “P” be able to proceed in an appropriate manner. So that just took me how long to say? Five seconds? But those five seconds gives you a moment to just stop, be in the moment, determine what is going on, and then proceed instead of just being very reactive as we normally are as lawyers. There are studies that have noted that students whose minds and hearts have been formed by contemplation of self as well as the world are much more likely to become the kind of ethical actors we need at a time when, especially now, basic human values are so expendable. Particularly, in this current social and economic climate, law students need to not just gain the knowledge that we have to teach them in classrooms, but to obtain a profound understanding of why they are learning the pedagogy; and how their participation as lawyers impacts both societal and legal processes. As such, law students need to possess the tools to be able to understand and apply the substantive material that they are learning. One of the ways we can help them do that is by incorporating things like mindfulness into the curriculum and into the classrooms. During our Q & A, I will share how I do mindfulness in my classroom: it literally takes no more than 90 seconds. Yes. 90 seconds. It is quick, but it has made such a profound difference. It is certainly not just the “touchy feely” concept I initially thought it was. It is backed by neuro-science and proven to be a resource we can use to help our students.

George: Okay, so Phyllis, you were asking what is mindfulness? So when we began this session, what was your experience?

[Audience Member, Professor Phyllis Taite] It was calming.

George: We stopped.

[Audience Member, Taite] Because I listened to what you were telling us and directing us to do.

George: Okay, which was what?

[Audience Member, Taite] Which was to close our eyes and you were giving us direction on when to breathe, how to breathe, in and out. And so for me, that was easier as you were directing me.

George: Okay? Because otherwise?

[Audience Member, Taite] Obviously it is something I could have done on my own.

George: Sure, sure it was. We all breathe. And I don't mean that to be facetious. But in a way, I just want to make this real. Mindfulness is not a big deal. We have all had moments of it. And we have not been aware of it likely because we are not told to pay attention. I really liked the way you put it. It is paying attention, taking a moment to be in the moment. Now, many of us just do not have the time to do that. So we are at National People of Color Conference, and in the tradition of CRT, critical race theory scholarship, I am going to share a story or my narrative of how I came to a contemplative practice. It was when I was a law student. I was a crazy stressed-out law student. So stressed out that I was going to quit law school. And I had actually stopped going to classes and I was wandering around the undergraduate campus of my law school and stumbled into the gym where there was a yoga class happening. Now, I don't know what happened between when the class started and when the class ended, but I came out of savasana, which is the final relaxation pose in yoga, and I couldn't remember why I was so mad at the world. I couldn't remember why I was so upset. I was much less stressed and then found my way back to the classrooms where I was supposed to be learning Constitutional Law. And I now teach Constitutional Law, and I teach Human Rights law. I teach cases concerning affirmative action, abortion, gays, guns, in a conservative, predominantly white institution in Utah. I also teach Human Rights and I cover genocide and atrocities. These are really challenging topics to teach to any audience, anywhere. But they are things that I deeply care about. So, to have some kind of equilibrium, I realized I needed some centering to be able to move forward. Like many people, I think I came to mindfulness, which is simply taking the time to take some time, because I was forced to find it in a way. And then it was mind-opening for me. But for many years I approached mindfulness as coping. I want to talk about what it is to be a person of color in academia, whether we are at a predominantly white institution or historically Black university or Hispanic serving institution. When you are an individual in an institution where you may find value misalignment, that can take you to a place where you want to be out of the present moment because the present moment is just that unpleasant. What mindfulness enables you to do is regain some self-sovereignty, some self-centering, simply by being still and not letting any external distractions or detractors that are bringing you down, get in and get internalized. It is not

providing armor, but it is growing stronger. So, I what wanted to offer, in my remarks a bit about making the change from coping to actually changing things. I was just in a panel on Meera Deo's new book about inequality in our profession, and one of the things that I think underlies many of the interviews in her book were feelings of imposter syndrome and of isolation. Mindfulness is not a fix for everything, but it gets you into a space where you can find solutions to problems, and you can authentically identify what those may be. So, I wanted to talk about the role of centering and preparing for teaching. My two colleagues have talked about how mindfulness informs our service to the profession and service to our students. I am going to be "selfish" and talk about how you serve yourself first, in order to be of service to others. Situating yourself first is just being. I say mindfulness is easy because it does not ask anything of you other than to breathe, and to be. We are our knowledge workers; we teach people who will be service providers. People are working less with their bodies, but often we embody our thoughts and emotions. If we are working with our mind, our mind must be settled enough or still enough to be able to move forward to be able to create and to generate ideas. Before we can talk about applying mindfulness in a professional setting, I think it is critical that you have a personal mindfulness practice, or other contemplative practice. Broadly by contemplative practice I think that we are all meaning to describe is simply being, stopping, and being present. Some of us do that through moving meditation and yoga. Some of us do that through sitting and breathing. Some of us do it through silent meditation. Some of us may even do it through writing. There are contemplative practices of reflection writing and close reading. All of these can be translated and brought into the classroom and our professional settings. Maybe even before a meeting, we take a breath, and we breathe and center before we talk to our colleagues. Get yourself first grounded in a personal practice, can take as little as literally five minutes a day when you get up in the morning or before you go to bed at night, just taking three breaths, experiencing yourself in your body and releasing and letting go. I actually do not do a lot of mindfulness in my teaching. I may take a moment—on the more challenging days of constitutional law where I know it's going to be difficult—to invite students to just take a breath, I might not even have them close their eyes, it depends on the culture of the community in the room I have in any given year. But where I have been able to introduce elements of the kinds of concepts that we want to cultivate in mindfulness is through compassion practice. I invite students to imagine different perspectives of the parties when we are reading a case, imagine yourself in the role of the plaintiff or the defendant. What if everyone wants to be healthy, happy, safe and secure? What might have gone into how these facts played out? And students can find that interesting. So inviting empathy increases understanding and comprehension. The reason, primarily, I believe you need a personal practice just to be able to bring any of this into your professional life is that you need to be centered enough to be able to create, I won't use "safe space", but I would like to use resilient space, or space where we can exchange and respect one another. A critical part of the mindfulness practice is observing and being

in your body, but without judging it. And I think that is very tough for us as lawyers in particular, because we are taught to categorize, to discern and to judge. So that is the most challenging piece. And students have a great radar or detector for inauthenticity. So this requires some vulnerability on your part if you are going to bring mindfulness into a space, you have to be centered, confident and courageous enough to do it. But once students see you willing to make that step, even the most resistant are more likely to follow along and to try because you have been willing to take a risk. That makes it a place where they also can take risks as well.

I am drifting a little bit, but I wanted to cover breath awareness, body awareness, being centered, and being a model for what we would like to see in the profession. What I would love to see, for those of us practicing mindfulness, and the many others that I hope we can invite, is not just to have this be stress relief/coping but impetus for improvements. I think if enough of us collectively are doing this work, we can influence others to maybe change their perceptions of what is possible for improving the classroom climate. I do have one colleague, Clifford Rosky, at the University of Utah, S.J. Quinney College of Law who started courageously teaching a seminar on mindful lawyering. He has agreed to let me share some of his syllabus with you. You will see he has selected texts that speak to wellness and well-being, and he's also found two studies that showing that not only does mindfulness help people to cope with racism, but it also helps people to be less racist. The Loving Kindness or Metta Meditation is helpful. It is also what I sometimes have great difficulty with still to this day. But Metta starts from the premise of offering-- you start with somebody you love very much, and you wish upon them what you would wish for yourself. You wish for them health, well-being, security, safety and ease. Then you go to someone who you are indifferent to, maybe it's your Starbucks barista in the morning, somebody you see but that you don't have a strong opinion up or down about. You extend to them the same well wishes. Then you go to the difficult person, which is likely the person you will see in the faculty meeting. We all have our difficult people. That is a more difficult practice. Then you go to yourself. I have had my students do this and then we debrief. Time and time again, I have had students tell me that going to themselves was the hardest part. Which may speak to some of the challenges we are seeing with well-being and burn-out in the profession. But over time, if you do that enough, I swear to you, the most annoying person in your world can become a different person. I think some of it is maybe we get what we give, and they were giving a slightly different thing, if we are in a space where we can think more positively about those more challenging people. Rosky concludes, his class with some writing on what it is to be thinking about your professional development over the course of your career from a place where you are centered, not competing or conforming. Not reacting to what student got what offer from what firm, you know, sitting next to you. Instead ask where is it that you want to be? And how do you want to show up in your practice and in your life? I am hopeful that if we explore these techniques and strategies

more in our profession, we can make big progress on the kinds of things that we care about. So, I am very grateful to Nicky Boothe for putting this together and I just saw Dean Camille come in who is our partner, a practitioner and longtime supporter of this kind of work. Yes, there can be stigma, perhaps that is too strong a word, but there are certainly skeptics and there are critics. Still, lawyers are often also evidence based. Evidence is being marshaled and showing that contemplative practices and mindfulness can make a difference. We do know that we need changes. I feel like my students are more stressed than they were 10 years ago. As our cultural environment changes, and the social context in which we are operating in changes, that is privileging a kind of dismissiveness of others, denial of humanity, mocking, anger and outrage addiction in our general society, I think this can be almost a way of vaccinating our students against some of that if they can have a place that they can go within to find some more centering so they are not swayed by the more strong emotions of rage and hatred. Mindfulness is not about getting away from or out of emotions, but it is getting to a place where you can observe without judgment and figure out maybe what the source of that discomfort is and why it is hurtful—so then we do not turn to drugs or alcohol. So, it is a way of being present. It is a process and sometimes a painful one, which is why I recommend very strongly that you have your own practice before you try to bring in strategies in any systematic way. Certainly, just taking a moment and inviting students to breathe should be basic enough to not cause too much trouble and also may get some students to find peace.

My final piece of this, trauma informed engagement. For some students closing the eyes might or being silent might be triggering if they felt silenced by somebody else who is more powerful or dominant. Our students are going through a lot. I am teaching for the first time ever a skills class with a practitioner who does our Mediation, Negotiation Alternative Dispute Resolution. It tends to be on the more “touchy feely” side of the spectrum of law school classes. We asked the students to write about a “difficult conversation” and I graded those papers. Our students are having some difficult situations that I would not have known about. I have been asking the students if anyone asks them or talks to them about their wellness. They want this sort of thing. However, I think there is a lot of shyness and reluctance for us to provide it. Some of that is because we do not have the training. It does not seem central, but it is absolutely critical. I think it is almost foundational, and we ignored that for far too long. I am hopeful that with the new leadership that we have across law schools, we can have these conversations. But it still feels like a small club of folks. I am glad that so many of you were here today and I look forward to having a conversation with you about how we can apply and carry this forward.

Boothe: Thank you.

Boothe: Really quickly about these mindfulness programs and the course proposal that your colleague has. There are schools all across the country who have mindfulness-based courses, some of them even for credit. Law schools such

as, Berkeley Law, University of San Francisco School of Law, City University of New York School of Law, University of Buffalo, Missouri, Vanderbilt. . . the list goes on! The University of Miami has a whole Mindfulness in Law program. They have a director of the Mindfulness Center. They have courses for credit and others that are not for credit. Clearly, mindfulness practice in law school is not just something that we are just talking about here at this conference. Law schools have recognized its importance, and resources are available for use to incorporate these practices in law school classrooms. There are syllabi that you can use if you want to propose courses. You can join the Mindfulness in Law Society. mindfulnessinlawsociety.com has all kinds of resources. They do a Mindful Monday. So there are resources to help you if it is something that you really want to incorporate either for yourself as a personal practice or in your law school classrooms.

George: So the colleague who teaches the mindfulness class at Utah, Cliff Rosky, he does Mindfulness Mondays for our students at lunch on Mondays.

Boothe: Any questions?

[Audience Member] So, law school itself seems to me to paint the exact opposite energy that mindfulness is proposing. So even the thought of it as well, while I deeply believe in it, I can see where even the thought of doing and engaging in it among students would be a trigger. This is because students will likely be thinking that they could be doing something else or they cannot relax and inhale. When you try to do yoga and mindfulness your brain is saying, I should be reading for Evidence. The thought of mindfulness itself serving its purpose at the site of contestation seems itself to be problematic. I have a class on leadership, and I framed it differently and did not use the term mindfulness per se. Rather I framed it from a leadership perspective focusing on taking control of your own life kind of thing. That is what law school really is, about a competitive space and being competitive and being on top, but part of that is knowing you and knowing the matrix that you are in and making changes. So what I am wondering is if it is a question of branding it differently, because for those students who are triggered, fight or flight, and for me, mine manifests with students fighting and quite literally, with the Dean saying that so and so admitted to, in class to being a drug addict, or she would pause in the middle of the class and I was doing that deliberately to show to mirror how one can control even in the midst of performing. But that is interpreted in itself as weakness, different from what you see from other faculty members or being contemplated that pause means that the drugs were kicking in or quite literally. And so I wonder in branding, mindfulness itself, is it a question of branding, changing the culture...

George: [Acknowledging many audience members who were eager to ask questions but suggested Dean Nelson have an opportunity to take the floor] Dean Nelson is here.

[Audience Member, Dean Nelson] I just want to say a couple of things. First of all, I want to say it is wonderful to see so many people in this place

you know, this is in and of itself progress and therapy. So many people search and recognize that we need to start thinking more holistically about how we live in this space together, I'm not sure about the branding, but I will say that I think mindfulness, however you come at it through whatever your sort of wisdom or spiritual or secular tradition is, makes you a better person. I don't know if it is a branding exercise as much as it is that it has the potential to be a recognition that many of us are often in any given moment, thinking of the 10 things that we should be doing right now. Or the 18 things that we wish we had done differently. In any given moment we are just not here. As a professional, that is not our highest competence; in the courtroom and the transactional setting, in the boardroom, in any space, when we are teaching, we are thinking about something else. We are thinking about if we paid that check, or about taking our children to soccer practice that night. These things, personal or professional, in any given moment we are checking our phones and people are leaving us. How could we be our most excellent person? Our most the serious advocate serving our clients? Our minds are not present.

The other thing I think that conceptually might help with this approach and recognition is that so much of mindfulness, at least for me, is also about how we are so reactive. It is not like actually we have to count to ten, but conceptually, it creates a gap. That we are not just reactive, we can respond. The breathing helps, but I think we sort of think about it as there's so much coming at us, especially as people of color, that it is almost like people want us to react without thinking because then they've got us, right? There's so much that punctures us in any given moment that I think having an awareness of all this stuff flying at us, whether it's in the atmosphere, the competitive settings, and all this forced sort of bravado that is the law, allows us to sit and see that. And we can judge it but not judging it helps it to not live with us in detrimental toxic ways. I just think there is a way in which, conceptually, we give ourselves room to be better, and responsive in a more thoughtful, contemplative way. At the same time we also are anchored in the present to be our best selves as opposed to being in a million different places at any given time. As a legal educator, as someone trying to create space institutionally to build these structures and room for this conversation, I don't think it's a branding, I think it's a recognition that this makes you a better professional, and a better person. It elevates what you can do in any given time in pretty much every way.

George: Okay.

[Audience Member, Teri McMurtry-Chubb] So I actually wanted to deepen what Dean Nelson I think is getting at. I am asking this question as someone who does have a personal contemplative practice, but I wonder, I mean, the trauma response is to separate one's mind from one's body in order to navigate a difficult situation. Law school is a traumatic environment and it's at its best, is what Dean Nelson was trying to achieve. But most of our institutions are not that. And so I am wondering about the ethics of introducing mindfulness without the resources to a population that is experiencing a

traumatic response. That is, if you ask a lot of our students who are dealing with financial pressures, discriminatory pressures, or just trying to navigate a space by turning off parts of themselves and that is how they get through it. They are white knuckling it through it. But to have to feel all the feels, as we say, in the moment, what are the ethics of doing that if we are not endeavoring to make the environment less toxic?

George: Right, yes.

[Audience Member, Teri McMurtry-Chubb] Or the environment itself in which the class occurs. For example, if I am teaching in my Social Justice Lawyering class, and we are dealing with some aspect of discrimination, and I am talking to the students about this, but then I tell them that now they are going to go out of this room, which is a very safe environment, and they going to be in what I affectionately call the Confederate Third World, where they are going to be in this space where no one is affirming them and there aren't resources now to help them get through that when they are experiencing all of it.

George: That's an excellent answer.

McGee: Okay, what I was going to say to the question about branding, and this might get to what Teri was talking about too a little bit, I'm thinking about the report from the lawyer well-being and it is just training for faculty. But it also says onsite resources; psychological help on site. I also think that with regard to the branding issue, I don't think it's one class. I think that as the report says, from the National Task Force, it's the community of having it from the beginning. We are introducing mindfulness at 1L orientation, but it is not just introducing it there and having a mindfulness class, but let's have seminars that they are required to go to throughout the year, throughout all three years. I am not saying that every class ought to be talking about or taking the 90 seconds to do some kind of mindfulness training, but it should be throughout the curriculum. Someway, somehow, we need to be talking about this well-being of the lawyer, and not just focusing on getting the case done or doing the work for someone else. You have to do this first. A lot of people, and I do not like this analogy when it comes to mindfulness or well-being, but a lot of people have said, it's like in an emergency where you are instructed to put the mask on yourself before you help someone else. I don't like that because that is an emergency situation. The plane is crashing. We cannot wait until the plane is going down to say, let me put on the mask first. And I am saying that as faculty. We have to do it before we get to that and so it needs to be a part of our practice. It needs to be a part of the curriculum and needs to be a part of the school. It cannot just be, oh, well, in my third year, I'm going to take this mindfulness class, but rather how do I deal with the trauma of being in that Constitutional Law class when people have been calling me these names. Or I am the only black person in the class and everybody's looking at me when it comes to talking about the *Dred Scott* case or *Plessy*. It cannot be then, we cannot push this off. I think it needs to be indoctrinated throughout the whole curriculum and throughout the whole profession. I am glad that we are seeing

all of these state bars that are doing things and have a very big focus on this because of this report that came out, but I think it needs to be ingrained in the profession, and in the school. It needs to be in orientation and throughout the curriculum for everyone. I think that we do need the resources in the schools to help faculty know how to incorporate it and look at it.

George: Okay, I see three hands, but I'm going to turn to Nicky because I think she wanted to speak directly to this point. And then I'll say something about branding and how they are dealing with it.

Boothe: So in a perfect world, in my perfect world, mindfulness would be part and parcel of every single class and every single law school. That is not happening, and it is probably not going to happen right away. However, I think it is critically important to start thinking about changing the culture, right? That is kind of what Kellyn is saying. Incorporating it as much as you can into the curriculum, but starting where you can. If we can get enough of us to start it in our classes, it can and will be contagious. On average I have 70 to 80 students in my class each semester, so I am touching at least that many students. I do the mindful, I call them "moments" (even though they are a minute and a half), because I want the students to be focused in the moment. These mindful moments we do in class are centered on gratitude: allowing the students a few "moments" to be grateful for getting to where they are and knowing that they can keep pushing forward for what they need to do. I started with mindful moments in my class, which I have been doing for maybe three or four years, and now I have students that are getting ready to take the bar and they're like, "Hey a group of us are getting together. Can you do some mindful moments for us?" The mindful moments have created a demand from the students. They are emailing me before class, asking if we can please do a mindful moment because we are doing our legal research and writing papers and we need some mindful moments. So you start where you are and get more people to start where they are and eventually we will hopefully get to a point where perhaps the ABA agrees that well-being has to be a focus of law schools. Studies show that successful lawyers are the more professional lawyers. To be the most professional lawyer, you need to be able to be still and be ethical. As such when I go to teach Torts I can say here are the learning objectives for the class: we are going to learn about intentional torts, negligence, etcetera, and I am also going to teach you a tool that can help you be a successful lawyer. That tool is mindfulness.

George: That is the branding. Just a quick point, I do not use the term mindfulness. I will talk about professional and personal efficacy. It is unfortunate, but you meet people where they are. We teach law, but we also teach students. You teach who you have, so everyone wants to be better. I think, you know, whatever our ideological differences, they are there because they want to be better versions of whatever they are imagining, right? This is a way to be more effective. So it is an instrumentalist introduction. But if it lands, it then becomes effective. Frankly, I think it does make my life easier because then they are less in reactivity to me as that you know, "feminazi," whatever

they're imagining, right? So it really can be helped along. On the ethics of introducing this, I actually have been talking to my colleague, cause this is his first time teaching this. He has a mindfulness practice and he is working towards certification. And we refer things down to the Dean of Students. We do have counseling services available. I just sent a note to my Dean of Students about an essay that I received in my mediation negotiation. I think more thought needs to go into it. So thank you for raising it. But I would be very uncomfortable if I were inducing greater trauma. For myself, personally, I am not teaching this in the law school because I think you are absolutely right about the environment. It is very counter to the environment as it is. I think that can be changed and shifted if we have tone from the top and the right leadership in place. But I would shudder to think about this across the curriculum, some of my colleagues trying to lead mindfulness exercises. It's hard for me to envision now, maybe it's possible. So, I am just hoping that it offers a measure of solace and some strategies for students who can benefit from it.

[Audience Member] So my question is kind of a compilation of something you said with that directly. I remember you talking about the survey and I want to know, who is conducting a survey? Then, what do you do with it? To Teri's question, now that you know this information, that for me seems like you have a duty now to do something with it. I definitely do not think I am equipped to deal with it. I am just learning about this stuff on my own. But in also trying to make sure that we are trying to get it across the curriculum, in my mind, I do not see how that is going to work unless somebody from the outside comes in and kind of trains us in what to do. But even then, I am not sure that I would be comfortable directly dealing with it once the student presents with something.

Boothe: I think there has to be some recognition that some people will not be comfortable, right? Regardless, you might not be comfortable right now. Who knows, you do your own mindfulness practice and you might become comfortable. But there are other people in the law school who you can refer the student to. There should be some policy or procedure, a chain of command, so to speak, for student referrals. Therefore, if a student presents with something, and you are not comfortable with it, you know who to refer it to. Maybe it is another colleague or maybe it is the Dean of Students, but there is someone. I don't think it has to be that now you are obligated and now it is causing you stress and you actually have your own practice now just to deal with the stress of having to deal with the stressed student coming to you. Because that really would not be the goal. So I think there would be a way around that.

George: Okay, yes?

[Audience Member] Hi everyone, as a student and as a former student of psychology, I think I am more comfortable than the average student having these types of conversations. But I wonder, how do students balance the fear of tarnishing their reputation or revealing their weaknesses to professors and colleagues with the need to have these conversations in class? I know, some

of it has to do with if the culture is there, then we are going to be more open. But as a student, I do not feel the culture is necessarily there in larger classes. So how I think we live with this fear that our reputation is everything and we cannot ever mess up, we cannot ever fail, and we cannot ever have a weakness. So we have them but we do not want to tell our professors. We do not want to tell our future colleagues.

[Audience Member] Is there a presumption that mindfulness is the raising of trauma in the open?

McGee: No, no.

[Audience Member] So this is about, for some people, depending on how things go to your body scan, the contemplative moment and what comes forward.

George: Right, exactly.

[Audience Member] And then what we deal with and how we support.

McGee: A couple of studies conducted in 2016 showed that one of about 3,300 law students, or 43%, have experienced depression or suicidal thoughts.

[Audience Member] Related to mindfulness practice?

George: No, we actually think that mindfulness would help that. But you could have someone in a contemplative moment, where something comes up, a repressed a trauma and there is still enough for it...

McGee: I just found an overview of this National Task Force, what the profession is doing now to address it.

[Audience Member] The question builds on the idea of even engaging in the practice, not even when you are engaging and something comes up. Just the idea is triggering in and of itself. The thought of being vulnerable in this space. That is where you landed, I guess.

George: Okay, because there's so many hands and I'm worried that we will run out of time I'm going to take all of the hands and then we'll try to come back and collectively find an answer to that. Yes?

[Audience Member] So we have a mindfulness class at our law school and the people who are organizing orientation are starting to introduce that as an important concept. I am wondering beyond that, a couple of ideas that have been floated are to do mindfulness workshops with outside folks or our faculty. I was wondering if people have experience with that with already seeing who is going to be resistant among our faculty colleagues to this. I think we will do it anyway, but I think there is some resistance to that. I am wondering if there are techniques to deal with that? And the other question is whether there are law schools that have mindfulness spaces in them because that is something that we are contemplating as well. I am curious as to whether there are some practices around that as well.

Boothe: University of Miami does have a mindfulness space. Scott Rogers is the director there and actually if you look on their website, they have

everything about their mindfulness program. They have a class or a program called Jurisight, that might be instructive too. So maybe you could take a look at that. We don't have that yet at Florida A&M University but I am hoping one day we will.

George: I wanted to get the other hands also and then we will come back and expand on that more, but that is excellent.

[Audience Member] So we are in the process of strategic planning and the group that I am in charge of, we are recommending adopting mindfulness. So my question talks somewhat about the leadership buying in and the resources, and who should be responsible for this. Is it better to work from the top down in adopting this? So let's say we recommend we need a mindfulness space and we have done a lot of research to see who has mindfulness spaces and it will probably happen, but who should take the leadership on that? With respect to faculty, and whether or not how you use them, I remember there was a reporter something given at AALS, and they said that we should not really refer people outside of the law school, where we recognize that there is some issue that comes up as a result of these things and that law professors should be the ones that actually deal with them because we have gone through these same experiences. So I just want some reaction to that.

George: Oh, that is frightening. Okay, I thought there was one more hand over this way. Yes?

[Audience Member] In thinking about preparing my students to become competent lawyers, like ABA 301 requires us to do, we cannot do it if they cannot learn. Again, like you mentioned, if they are stressed, you cannot make the higher brain connection. So taking a bit from even the Legal Writing Institute where folks are saying they can't, they are afraid to mention race in their classrooms, some because you know, they don't feel equipped. What time are we going to feel equipped to do something about this because I mean, for example, for students of color, the psychosocial stressors that they feel are shutting them down. We wonder about the Bar passage. If we are not getting ready and if we do not put ourselves together to try to do something about it, then what are we doing?

George: I would go back to that requires leadership and support. This is counter to how I would like the world to be. I would love to see this be grassroots. But I am in a very high hierarchical institution and I have noticed that people take their cues from leadership. So there does need to be leadership buy in, and leaders need to lead and explain why this is important, why this is a priority, and why this matters. In my experience, things then matter, to even the most skeptical. I mean, they will grumble, but it will be done now. Those are not the people I would want to be sending my students to if they really are having problems, but I think that is critical. I am very excited about what your school is doing in bringing this in.

Boothe: I think also that in addition to leadership, which is critical in getting the understanding of why this is important to our students, but when you have

student buy in, and the students put pressure on the leadership about it, that is a whole different animal of pressure of why this is important. I feel like we are getting to the point at my school where my students are saying, why aren't we doing this in other classes? And they are saying that they want to have a mindful moment more than twice a week when they see me.

George: The class that my colleague is offering, is fully enrolled. They are coming into my classes talking about what has happened in that class.

Boothe: It is not just the faculty who are resistant because when I first do it in class, of course, I have a lot of students snickering and eyes are rolling, and they do not want to do it, and they are thinking what is this crazy lady up here trying to do with us? But as we progress through the semester, usually within about three or four weeks into the semester they are asking to have mindful moments. And I say, okay, we are going to turn the lights out. Everybody is automatically ready. They need this.

[Audience Member] Why does the class become fully enrolled? I mean why did students get so interested in that class?

George: You know, I will have to ask him because I think he has to grade it. Maybe it is pass fail? I don't know. This is the first time this has been offered at Utah. Students wanted it, needed it, and like it. I have not surveyed those of them who are in it yet, but I have a lot of them in mediation negotiation. You know, some of these students are going to be Family Lawyers. I know that they are on a career trajectory where they have to understand emotions and centering. So right now, it is a very self-selected group.

[Audience Member] So I teach at the University of Miami and I can tell you that I do believe in the mindfulness program. I have seen it firsthand help a student go from where she was really ratcheted up, in terms of stress level, to now being enrolled in the mindfulness program. It is amazing for me to have witnessed it. It is a testament to it being something that is needed. Also, just the pressure that I hear students talk about with grades and jobs and all the things that they have to do.

McGee: Do faculty members go to the mindfulness space?

[Audience Member] Good question. I know I have not but I do know that Scott Rogers and others are going to be potentially in the summer.

[Audience Member] That idea where you have a center where they can go and not to me because it is a more uniform method with something who has training to help them. Somethings that you described are things we can do like telling the students to be the plaintiff in this case and then switch sides so that you can see both sides. So these are some things I am already doing and I am comfortable with that, but I am not comfortable with some of the other more overt...

George: And then you absolutely should not do it. Right, because then it's...

[Audience Member] It depends on a curriculum. I need to be doing things that I am comfortable with doing. The directed mindfulness in the beginning of the panel, I followed it, but I'm not sure I should be the one directing it because I am the one that is probably thinking about the 18 things I did not do and things I need to do. I am the example.

[Audience Member] You can start with you.

George: Okay, I see two last hands.

[Audience Member] I am more along the lines of you, where I thought maybe I was prepared for the mindfulness until I had a student that came in from work and had a full blown anxiety attack in my class. That pressure triggered other people in the class and I had to call the Dean of Students to come in. So that kind of shook my confidence in what I had thought was my contemplative practice and just seeing that student melt down with just the effects of work and school and the other classes. We have mindfulness sections which we do one once a month. So that kind of shook the foundation, of was it working? Especially for other students, because this was someone who promoted that she had it nailed down and now look what happened.

[Audience Member] So I am not sure if I understood what you said. You are saying during the mindfulness course they had that meltdown?

[Audience Member] No, it was in my class where I teach legal writing. The student had just come from work and she was trying to use those coping tools, and she just had a full blown anxiety attack in the class when she was called upon. So as someone who had been to those sessions and knew tools, so that just shook the thought that okay, well, this is something that we can help with.

[Audience Member] I graduated from WCL and was a practicing attorney for about eight or nine years as an immigration lawyer. Both my parents are immigrants and so is my boyfriend. Over these last couple of years during this administration it was very difficult for me. That is how I got into contemplative practices. I still keep in touch with the immigration community, I am still a part-time lawyer. There was a lawyer who was having suicidal thoughts and ideas, and I have certain certifications which were helpful in getting her off of that ledge. But there is a point if somebody is in crisis, that I mean, these are meant to be preventative measures before they get to that crisis. Yeah, so when they are having that kind acute situation, then they might need additional professional help, but it does not mean that the mindfulness based class is not working. It is just like a tiny little antidote. It is a band-aid getting removed at that point, but it does not mean it's not working. That person might just need additional resources.

George: And we had a concluding comment.

[Audience Member] So I wanted to come back around to the questions that you asked about the concern of what it says if you participate. I would say this, I'll speak for my students. We know that you all are freaking out, it's not a secret. So I wouldn't worry about giving your professors an indication that you need a tool like this or would like a tool like this to help you deal with

law school. Law school is stressful, lawyering is stressful, and we all realize that. So if anything, I think it says that you are acutely aware that there is a need to manage. It's professional for you to be proactive. It's a good thing. I don't think that it would be viewed as a negative thing. We don't have mindfulness practice at my school, but we are isolated from our campus. So we had psychologists come in one day a week and when the students said it was not enough we made it happen more. So we are wanting to do what we need to do to serve the students.

McGee: One last thing. If you are interested in the commercialization of mindfulness and all this, I found this when I was preparing for this panel, it is a lawyers activity and coloring book. It has crossword puzzles and all the coloring. And it comes with a little four-pack of crayons.