



resilience@law

# Overview

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# What is resilience@law?

- A collaboration between the major firms and The College of Law to take a leadership role in raising awareness and understanding of the nature and impact of stress, depression and anxiety across the legal profession.

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MALLESONS STEPHEN JAQUES

  
The College of Law

  
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# The four objectives of resilience@law

- **Awareness and education**

To provide law students, lawyers and partners with the facts about depression and anxiety, what the symptoms and causes can be and why lawyers may be more susceptible to experiencing depression and anxiety than the general population.

- **Remove the stigma**

To encourage a more open discussion about depression and anxiety in order to reduce the associated stigma, and to reduce this isolation and private suffering often associated with these serious mental health conditions.

- **Self help strategies**

To provide law students, lawyers and partners with steps and strategies to prevent or manage the symptoms of depression and anxiety and help build resilience for a successful career.

- **Support and resources**

To inform law students, lawyers and partners about treatment available for depression and anxiety and the support and resources available to them.

# Background



The key stages

- **2008 - Annual Tristan Jepson Memorial Lecture**
  - Brain & Mind Research Institute (University of Sydney) published "Courting the Blues: Attitudes towards depression in Australian law students and lawyers"
  - Law firms challenged about depression in the legal profession
  - What are we doing about it?
- **2009 - Depression & Anxiety Working Group formed**
  - Graduate Focus Groups
  - Developed Learning Module
  - Engaged The College of Law
  - Produced resilience@law DVD
- **2010 - resilience@law - national launch**
- **2011 - date implementing resilience@law**

# Outcomes



## 2 years' later

- 2 000+ partners and staff seen DVD
- The College of Law estimates 2 500 students will complete the learning module each year
- DVD distributed through TJMF, COL, law societies
- Law firms implemented programs
- Won 2011 AHRI Martin Seligman Award for Health & Wellbeing
- HR - Mental Health First Aid training

# resilience@law at King & Wood Mallesons

## Stage 1 - Education

- P&D staff completed 12 hour Mental Health First Aid training course
- Partners attended 2 hour Mental Health First Aid Awareness Workshops

## Stage 2 - Awareness

- DVD launched via practice group meetings
- resilience@law included in induction
- RU OK? Day, Stress Down Day, Mental Health Month, Men's Health Week

## Stage 3 - Training & Support

- Developed resilience@law intranet site - support and resources
- Changed EAP provider
- Engaged a Mental Health Rehabilitation provider
- Developing a Mental Health Tool Kit & policy
- Seminars, workshops & books
- Building Resilient Careers
- Graduate Assistance Program

# resilience@law launch presentation slides



October 2010

## What are the signs and symptoms of depression & anxiety?

### Significant change for more than two weeks

- Feeling sad or down most of the time
- Feeling overwhelmed, irritated or upset
- Feeling tired, sick and run down, no energy
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Poor concentration, indecisiveness or difficulty in thinking
- Sleep problems
- Feeling worried or anxious most of the time
- Feeling agitated and having difficulty calming down

## What might depression or anxiety look like at work?

- Coming to work late or taking days off
- Not returning phone calls and messages
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Decrease in billable hours
- Longer hours spent in the office, often alone
- A concern around performance
- Conflict with other staff
- Uncharacteristically irritable or defensive
- Uncharacteristically withdrawn or unfocussed
- Client concerns about availability or timely production of work

# What to do if you're concerned about someone

- **Talk to the person** about how they're feeling. Ask open ended questions.
- Ask how they've been lately and explain that you've noticed some changes in behaviour, emotions, thinking and/or wellbeing.
- **Listen** to what they're saying. Don't be judgmental or give advice.
- Encourage them to seek **professional help** e.g. GP, EAP or P&D.
- Encourage them to **exercise**, **eat well** and get involved in **social activities**.
- If the conversation becomes difficult, **remain calm** – don't lose control.
- **Keep in touch** and follow up, as with a physical illness
- If you're concerned someone may be suicidal ask directly "Are you having thoughts of suicide?" or "Are you thinking of killing yourself?". Do not leave the person alone. Try to connect them with someone who can help them keep safe e.g. family, friends or professional help.
- If in doubt call **000** (112 from a mobile) or go to the nearest emergency department

## What NOT to do!

- Don't pressure them to „snap out of it“ or „cheer up“. Depression is NOT a matter of „toughening up“ or „getting on with it“.
- Don't stay away or avoid them
- Don't give advice
- Don't try to solve the problem
- Don't assume the other person needs anything from you - just **listen**
- Don't tell them they just need a break - it may be the worst thing for them
- Don't encourage them to go for a drink or use drugs or alcohol to cope
- Don't discriminate - mental illness is treatable. It is not an end to high level performance and is no different to managing a physical illness.

# Where to get help or support

- **Friends and family**

- ⇒ talk to someone who will listen and make you feel heard

- **General Practitioner**

- ⇒ see a medical practitioner straight away

- **People and Development**

- ⇒ staff trained in Mental Health First Aid
  - ⇒ can provide information about how the firm can assist and support you
  - ⇒ Mallesons resilience@law intranet page

- **Supervisor/Manager**

- ⇒ a valuable support, particularly with managing work flow, work/life balance and expectations

- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

- ⇒ confidential advice and counselling for you and your family
  - ⇒ consultations over the phone, face to face or online
  - ⇒ manager support program – advisory resource service for partners/managers
  - ⇒ call xxxx (EAP provider), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – Tel: xxxxxxx

- **Emergency**

- ⇒ call 000 (112 from a mobile phone) or go to the nearest emergency department
  - ⇒ call Lifeline – 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467



# Mallesons resilience@law intrasite

Home | Shared services | People & Development | Health & Wellbeing | resilience@law

**Other resources:**  
 Health & Wellbeing |  
 Calendar of events |  
 Classes and therapy |  
 Employee Assistance |  
 Ergos |  
 Fly brochures |  
 Gyms |  
 Seminars |  
 Skin cancer checks

## resilience@law

Depression and anxiety are common across our community, with studies showing that lawyers are four times more likely to suffer from depression than the general population. This site aims to provide you with some facts about depression and anxiety related disorders; remove the stigma associated with these disorders and provide you with the support and resources that are available to you.

	<p><b>Mental Health Concerns</b>          Information about depression, anxiety, bipolar and other mental illnesses</p>	<p>What is mental illness?          Anxiety          Depression          Substance use          Bipolar disorder          Psychosis          Take a test</p>
	<p><b>Building Resilience</b>          Strategies and information to help build a resilient career</p>	<p>What is resilience@law?          What is resilience?          How do I build resilience?          Health &amp; Wellbeing          Managing stress          Risk Learning Module          Building resilient careers program          Take a test</p>
	<p><b>Support</b>          Where to go for help including free counselling services</p>	<p>Where can I get help?          How can I help someone?          Health professionals          EAP - Employee Assistance Program          Mental Health First Aid Officers</p>
	<p><b>Resources</b>          Links to important sites, our books, factsheets and DVD</p>	<p>Links          Books          Fact sheets          resilience@law DVD          resilience@law DVD booklet          resilience@law presentation</p>



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Comment on this page  
 David - Let us know what you think!



**Support others - have the conversation!**

**Support yourself - ask for help!**

# Has resilience@law made a difference?

- The 2011 Beyondblue report states that lawyers are more aware of mental health issues than they were as a group in 2009.
- Beyondblue, Black Dog Institute, Mental Health Association NSW
- Participating firms report an increase in people coming forward to discuss mental health issues – suggests some reduction in stigma
- Some firms have changed EAP providers
- Law students completing training at outset of their careers - COL
- Law societies and firms embedding resilience in L&D programs
- Firms regularly sharing knowledge and experience in this area

# Ongoing

- Mental Health Month, RU OK? Day
- TJMF annual lecture
- Resilience key to career development and mentoring programs
- L&D programs on resilience, time & matter management
- Law societies continue to drive development of awareness and understanding and through their programs
- Still a lot of work to do!
- Implement mental health awareness programs and run MHFA

# Questions



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# Mental Health First Aid is about:

- A non-judgmental **ATTITUDE** to mental illness
- **BASIC AWARENESS** of common signs and symptoms
- Willingness to initiate a **CONVERSATION**
- **TIME** to have the conversation
- **SIMPLE** communication strategies
- Awareness of **WORKPLACE AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

# Communication tips

- **Focus** fully on the speaker; put attitudes/opinions to one side
- “I” statements eg “I’m concerned....I’ve noticed...I can see that....”
- Encourage person in distress to talk; respond without reacting
- Be comfortable with silence; keep questions to a minimum
- Avoid “why?” if possible
- Allow strong emotions. Empathise “I acknowledge that you feel ...”
- Encourage person in distress to identify own solutions if possible
- Try to make the speaker feel **really heard**
- Be aware of workplace and other resources

# What not to do

- Don't discuss performance issues - park them and deal with them separately
- Don't discuss interpersonal / team issues - focus on the individual
- Don't give advice, give information
- Don't share personal experience unless appropriate
- Don't ask lots of questions
- Don't try to solve the problem
- Don't assume the other person needs anything from you - other than for you to **listen** to them

# Managing with mental illness at work

- **Be aware of your assumptions:**
  - Taking time off may not be helpful
  - Reasonable adjustments may be easier than you think e.g.
    - later start time
    - time off for medical appointments
    - education of team members (with consent)
  - Mental illness is treatable - it is not an end to high level performance
  - Managing with a mental illness is no different to managing with a physical illness
  - Are you discriminating?
- **Have the conversation!**

# Graduate Focus Group Feedback

- **Consistent feedback**
- **Cultural change**
- **Reasons for depression and anxiety included**
  - **Type of work & client demands**
    - The work is negative, worst case scenario
    - High demands, lack of control. Clients push hard and expect a fast turnaround.
  - **Lack of sleep**
    - Long hours. Lack of sleep is like a badge of honour. Fatigue feeds into depression.
  - **Relationships**
    - If you don't have outside interests you get sucked into work
    - Relationships with colleagues - you feel other people's emotions
- **Ways to maintain health, wellbeing and resilience**
  - **Communicate** - learn to say no! Want to be seen as good so always say yes.
  - **Take a break** - don't work long hours
  - **Eat, sleep, exercise, meditate**
  - **Support each other** - others need to pick up the work
  - **Have friends outside the law** (except banking). They keep you sane, you see they have a life.
  - **Have boundaries** - be strict on yourself; set boundaries early in your career.

# What could law firms do differently to try and minimise stress at work?

- **Cultural change**

- Need a cultural shift - fatigue is not a cool thing! Recognise working until 3am is not normal.
- Need a cultural shift in partners. Encourage people to say no, make it ok to say no.
- Get partners to speak about their own experiences, how they got through it, tips, help etc.

- **Change expectations**

- Change expectations; manage clients expectations.
- Some people genuinely believe that it is "good for you". Toughens you up.
- Achievement based way of working - measuring against peers, clients, billable hours.

- **Billable hours**

- Should reduce billable hours when things are quiet (GFC).
- Make it OK to go home before 8pm every night. Family difficult to 'fit in'.
- Let juniors have Blackberries and laptops - give them more control over when they go home.

- **Make it safe to speak up**

- Encourage people to speak up, ask for help or say you're near capacity.
- Build skills around being assertive "I have an important personal event".
- You have to breakdown before someone gets involved, even if noticeably unhappy.