

**DEPRESSION
IN AUSTRALIAN LAW SCHOOLS:
A handbook for law students
and law student societies**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Proudly brought to you by



Information partner



Special thanks to

Brain & Mind Research Institute: University of Sydney

The Honourable Robert McLelland MP

The Honourable Jeff Kennett AC

Tom Baker

Michael Beaconsfield

Michael Bonning

Verity Doyle

John Fulcher

Adam Guy

Chris Holmes

Chris Kwong

Eftihia Neocleous

Rebecca Sekiou

Lucinda Verge-Wallace

CONTENTS

Foreword	4
About depression	5
Depression, the profession, and law students	6
Identification and treatment of depression	8
Coping with stress	11
Information for Law Student Societies	15
Hosting awareness events	15
Running a mentoring program	18
Where to go for help	22

FOREWORD

Thank you to the Australian Law Students' Association for taking the issue of depression and mental health seriously.

I am sure this handbook will be of immense value to those who experience depression, those who know people with depression, and those who care for people with depression.

And for those people who at present enjoy good health, it will also help educate them about depressive illnesses.

Remember, with the right treatment, most people recover from depression.

More severe forms of mental illness, correctly diagnosed, can be managed to allow a person to live a fulfilling and rewarding life.

Good luck with your studies, but remember, good health is not a matter of luck. We must constantly avoid temptations that will harm the body or its systems and work to remain physically and mentally fit.

On the other hand, it's not a crime to be ill, but I think it's a crime not to seek help when you need it.

Read on, and enjoy.

The Hon. Jeff Kennett AC
Chairman
beyondblue: the national depression initiative

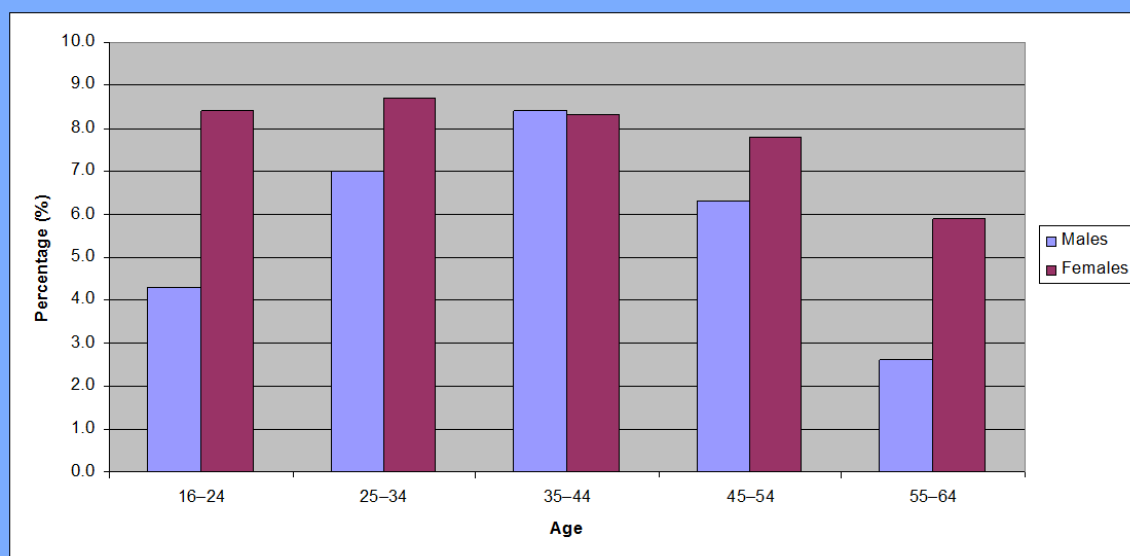


ABOUT DEPRESSION

Depression is more than just a low mood – it's a serious illness. People with depression find it hard to function every day. Depression has serious effects on *physical* and *mental* health.

Depression affects around one million adults and 160,000 young people in Australian each year; 1 in 5 females and 1 in 8 males in their lifetime. The incidence is even higher amongst law students and the legal profession. It will touch everyone either directly or indirectly. Depression reduces a person's ability to function in all aspects of their life, including work, social and home life. As depression imposes huge personal, family and financial costs, it now represents a major social and economic challenge, particularly in today's workplace.

Depression across the lifespan Source: ABS National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of results, 2007.



The 10 leading causes of healthy years lost due to death and disability in Australia Source: AIHW (2007) Authored by Begg S, Vos T, Barker B, Stevenson C, Stanley L & Lopez A. AIHW cat. no. PHE 82;

ILLNESS

1. Ischaemic heart disease
2. Anxiety and depression
3. Type 2 diabetes
4. Stroke
5. Dementia
6. Lung cancer
7. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
8. Adult-onset hearing loss
9. Colorectal cancer
10. Asthma

DEPRESSION, THE PROFESSION AND LAW STUDENTS

The statistics¹

On 18 September 2008, Professor Ian Hickie of the University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Institute presented a lecture to the Tristan Jepson Memorial Foundation, entitled '*Lawyers are Human Too.*' Professor Hickie's lecture was a startling and confronting look at the unusually high rates of depression within the legal profession, and within law schools themselves. The report surveyed almost 2,500 professionals and law students from 13 law schools nationally. The study employed research instruments which have been widely used and validated in Australia and overseas.

The results were astounding with the survey finding that:

- 41% of Law Students;
- 31% of Solicitors; and
- 19% of Barristers;

suffer from psychological distress severe enough to justify clinical assessment. Another study has shown that 11% of lawyers contemplate suicide each month.

The survey showed that law students tended not to identify the most commonly identified symptoms of depression. Law students were also found to be the least likely of the surveyed groups to seek help for depression with 38% of students stating that they would not seek any treatment as compared to 31% of solicitors and 21% of barristers claiming they wouldn't seek additional help.

Additionally, it was found that alcoholism and drug use is high amongst the profession and that substance abuse is a contributing factor for up to 80% of all complaints levelled against practitioners.

Finally, the study found that the best way to help combat depression is to get help early, allowing for more opportunity to prevent follow on effects such as alcoholism and substance abuse.



¹ For the full report, see: Kelk, N, Luscombe, G, Medlow, S and Hickie, I, *Courting the Blues: Attitudes towards depression in Australian law students and legal practitioners* (Brain & Mind Research Institute at the University of Sydney, 2009).

Why is depression so prevalent amongst law students?

Little research has been done into causes of depression amongst law students, but there are a number of theories to explain why lawyers are most susceptible to stress-related illnesses than other professionals. Most agree that a combination of nature of the job (for example, its requirement for long hours and its culture of success at all costs) and common personality traits in lawyers are at play.

In general, lawyers share two personality traits that may predispose them to depression and other stress-related illnesses: perfectionism and pessimism.² The legal profession rewards lawyers' drive to explore and investigate every tiny detail, leaving no loose threads that could be used against them or their clients. However, perfectionism can also set people up to think that whatever they do is not good enough. They tend not to enjoy the achievements. Instead they're focusing on the problems and what they see as the failures.

Pessimism is another trait that has both its positive and negative aspects for lawyers. A US study found that law was the only profession in which pessimists outperform optimists.³ Combined with a culture of success and the reality of cut-throat competition to get to the top of the ladder, those traits can create a dangerous cocktail for lawyers.⁴

Recent research also suggests that disruption of the sleep-wake cycle, caused by stress or long working hours will significantly increase the risk of depression.

² Andrews G, Hall W, Teesson M, Henderson S, *The mental health of Australians* (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 1999).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Berkley, K, *Putting the Stress on Dealing with Depression* (Law Institute Journal, March 2006).

IDENTIFICATION AND TREATMENT



Warning signs of depression

A person may be depressed if...	
<i>A person may be depressed if, for more than two weeks, they have persistent low mood and loss of interest in usual activities PLUS symptoms in at least 3 of the following categories:</i>	
Physical: Tiredness/fatigue Appetite/weight change Headaches Disturbed sleep Sick/run down	Thoughts: Negative thinking patterns “hopeless, helpless, worthless” Suicidal thinking
Behaviours: Social withdrawal/isolation Unproductive Alcohol and drug use Concentration/ memory difficulties Stopping enjoyable activities	Feeling: Overwhelmed/unhappy Guilty/indecisive Disappointed Lacking in confidence/self-esteem Irritability

Risk factors

Some events or situations have been linked with depression:

- family conflict
- isolation or loneliness
- unemployment
- having a serious medical illness
- drug and alcohol use
- changes in the brain
- having a family member with depression

Helping someone with depression

People with depression can often find it difficult to take the first step in seeking help. They may need to get help with the support of their family, friends and/or health professional eg. a doctor or psychologist.

It's not always easy to help someone who may be experiencing depression. It can be hard to know what to say or do. Here are some tips.

Talk to the person about how they're feeling.

Listen to what they're saying – sometimes, when a person wants to talk, they're not always seeking advice, but just need to talk about their concerns. Make it clear they have your full attention and you are listening properly. You may like to save any suggestions for a later discussion.

Maintain eye contact and sit in a relaxed position – positive body language will help you both feel more comfortable.

Use open-ended questions such as 'So tell me about...?', which require more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. This is often a good way to start a conversation.

If your conversation becomes difficult or the person you're talking to gets angry, stay calm, be firm, fair and consistent, admit if you are wrong and don't lose control.

Often, just **spending time with the person** lets them know you care and can help you understand what they're going through.

Encourage the person to seek professional help from their family doctor or a mental health worker.

Take care of yourself. Supporting someone with depression can be demanding, so make sure you take some time out to look after yourself.

People with depression often don't see the point of doing anything and may feel that no one can really help them. Helping someone who isn't ready to recognise they need assistance may be very difficult.



DO – You can help someone by:

- Spending time talking about their experiences
- Indicating that you've noticed a change in their behaviour
- Letting them know you're there to listen without being judgmental
- Suggesting they see a doctor or mental health professional
- Assisting them to make an appointment and/or going with them to see a doctor or mental health professional
- Asking how their appointment went
- Talking openly about depression and assisting them to find information
- Encouraging them to exercise, eat well and become involved in social activities
- Keeping in touch and encouraging close friends and family to do the same.

DON'T – It's unhelpful to:

- Pressure them to 'snap out of it', 'get their act together' or 'cheer up'
- Stay away or avoid them
- Tell them they just need to stay busy or get out more
- Pressure them to party more or wipe out how they're feeling with drugs or alcohol
- Assume the problem will just go away.

Treatments

Depression is often not recognised or treated.

Different types of depression require different types of treatments. This may include physical exercise for preventing and treating mild depression, through to psychological and drug treatments for more severe levels of depression. For more information, visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue* info line on 1300 22 4636

DEALING WITH STRESS

For most law students, study tends to be the main priority and may cause us to cut out other aspects of our lives to accommodate it. This is a normal reaction. So much of our efforts and future are tied up in our studies it's hard not to throw ourselves in head first. However, it is important that we don't sacrifice too much of our personal lives to achieve our goals. Balancing time between work and study will be different for everyone, but it's important to find the balance that works best for you.

Effective time management can significantly reduce the stress of a law degree. Time management is a hard skill to perfect and what works can be different for everyone. So, we've put together a few ideas that may help you work out what fits best with your situation.

DO

Sleep well⁵ — You've probably heard caffeine addict law students proclaim 'sleep is for the weak!', but sleep is actually for the smart. Having a good night's sleep is important for maintaining good health. The body needs the opportunity to recharge from the day's activities.

Make time for—

Friends and family⁶ - be reasonable – Don't spend ALL of your time with friends and family, but make sure that you don't neglect your social life. Your friends and family are your support network and you don't want to alienate the people who will help you through your tough times.

Physical activity⁷ – It is important to keep up your physical activity during your study. You should aim for at least thirty minutes per day of designated exercise time to ensure you keep healthy. Light physical activity can also be a good way to clear your mind from stressful distractions.

Yourself⁸ – Sometimes you will also need to have time to yourself to debrief, or just to relax and let your brain take a break from the severe beating law school gives it.

Make a weekly planner— Whether you use a diary, your phone, a calendar or a wall planner, a visual map of how your time will be spent can be invaluable. It can allow you to see what can be moved to another day and what needs to stay, and can also be a motivating tool to organize your commitments and stick to your timetable.⁹

DON'T:

Indulge in binge drinking¹⁰ – Alcohol is a depressant and statistics show that law students are the most susceptible, of all professions, to develop an alcohol or substance abuse problem.

⁵Fact Sheet 7: *Sleeping Well* (beyondblue, 2008).

⁶Brogan, M and Spencer, D, *Surviving Law School* (2006) 144-145; Smith, M, Jaffe-Gill, E and Segal, J, *Understanding Stress: Signs, Symptoms, Effects and What to do* (2008) HelpGuide.org <http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm> at 13 January 2009, 3

⁷Brogan, above n7, 144-145.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Brogan, above n 7, 131-134.

¹⁰Smith, M Jaffe-Gill, E and Segal, R *Stress Management: How to Reduce, Prevent and Cope with Stress* (2005) Helpguide.org <http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm> at 13 January 2009, 4.

Over-commit yourself¹¹ – Be realistic about the time you have when deciding to take on any new tasks or responsibilities. Extra-curricular activities are only impressive if you do them well.

Procrastinate¹² – Allocate study time and choose a study area with minimal distractions, such as television or Facebook, etc. Go to your library, or somewhere that will allow you maximum concentration. Some people find that background music helps when studying, but as with most things, you will find the way that benefits you most.

Study tips to help achieve balance

Work together– The old adage that two minds are better than one is never truer than in the case of a law degree. Not only will working in a team allow you to divide the work, but the camaraderie of sharing a stressful experience with others can make it more manageable.

Plan your answers – If you write an essay plan, you can focus your reading and research towards those points, rather than reading through an entire article to find that it is completely irrelevant.¹³

Set your goals early in the semester¹⁴ – Your enthusiasm is usually at its peak towards the beginning of the semester, so try to get yourself into a study routine as soon as possible. Once you have your routine going it will be easier to stick to it. It will also make it easier for you to identify where you need to put in more effort.

Get started early¹⁵ – Even if you don't start writing your essay until close to the due date, make sure you have researched the topic and know the subject. Your results will be better and will save you the unnecessary stress of leaving everything until the last minute.

Structure reading¹⁶ – While it is good to read your text books to get an overview of the topic, when answering questions it is also useful to read the question that you want to answer and target your reading to answering the questions. As most lecturers will tell you it is better to get the basic principles right than to put in extra information while getting the basics wrong.

Write Case Notes/Summaries¹⁷ – These will be invaluable when it comes time to writing assignments or exams as you will have the main principles of the cases on hand. You should be able to find templates on the internet, or you can make one of your own.

Make use of your library¹⁸ – Most librarians are more than willing to point you in the right direction. Use all facilities and references available, the more comprehensive your research, the better the results you will achieve.

¹¹ Ibid; *Stress Management Tips* (2005) Stress Management Tips.com <<http://www.stressmanagementtips.com/tips.htm>> at 13 January 2009, 1

¹² Brogan, above n 5, 130.

¹³ Krever, R, *Mastering Law Studies & Law Exam Techniques* (6th ed, 2006) 45.

¹⁴ Brogan, above n 6, 128.

¹⁵ Ibid, 203-232.

¹⁶ Ibid, 137-138.

¹⁷ Ibid, 128. Krever, above n 13, 13-22.

¹⁸ Brogan, above n 6, 181-202.



Stress Management

Definition¹⁹ – Stress can be defined as a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. High stress levels are detrimental for physical and mental health.

Cause & Effect

The most common causes of stress for law students are:

- Workload/Readings (texts and cases)
- Financial problems
- Pressure to be exceptional
- Ethical responsibilities
- Negative public perceptions
- Morally offensive materials/cases/clients

These stressors are very real issues that affect law students and practitioners alike. The effects of stress can range from something as simple as a twitch to things as serious as a heart attack or stroke. That is why it is so important to identify the initial symptoms of stress and take appropriate measures to reduce it.

Some symptoms to look for:²⁰

Memory problems	Agitation
Inability to concentrate	Inability to relax
Poor judgment	Feeling overwhelmed
Negativity	Sense of loneliness or isolation
Anxious or racing thoughts	Depression or general unhappiness
Constant worrying	Aches and pains
Moodiness	Diarrhea or constipation
Irritability or short temper	Nausea,
Dizziness	Chest pain
Rapid heartbeat	Loss of sex drive
Frequent colds	Eating more or less
Sleeping too much or too little	Isolating yourself from others
Using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax	Procrastinating/neglecting responsibilities
	Nervous habits (eg. nail biting)

¹⁹ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2008) Merriam-Webster Online <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stress>> at 24 December 2008.

²⁰ Smith, above n 7, 3.

Stress Reduction



For law students, like most things, stress prevention is better than a cure. The best way for students to reduce stress is to be organized.²¹ Know your due dates, make goals to have certain things done by and do your best to stick to these deadlines.²² Practicing this kind of organization as a student will only benefit you after graduation. You can try some of the suggestions above, or come up with some of your own to help get you on track.

Things can get out of hand even for the best of us and unexpected circumstances may arise and, despite our best efforts to keep your stress levels under control, can take us on a downward spiral. So here are a few things to try to help alleviate stress.

Exercise – join a sporting team, go to the gym, take a yoga class, or just go for a walk.²³ As most of us know exercise releases endorphins, the hormones that make you happy.

Socialise – go spend some time with friends or family, they are the people most likely to be able to help you relax and can be a good source of advice.²⁴

Eat well - try eating smaller, more frequent meals that keep your blood sugar level steady.²⁵

Crank up the volume– put on some of your favorite tunes. Music is a proven stress reliever and is also a tool used by medical practitioners in the treatment of chronic pain sufferers.²⁶

Just breathe – take a few deeps breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth, will help ease the stress. Try closing your eyes as well in those particularly hair –pulling moments for some added relief, it helps to block out external stressors.²⁷

There are also numerous websites that can give you more ideas of ways to reduce stress. The possibilities are endless, but only you will know what activities are the best stress relievers for you.

²¹ *Managing School Stress* (2005) Stress Management Tips.com <<http://www.stressmanagementtips.com/school.htm>> at 13 January 2009, 1.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Jeanne Segal, Laura Horwitz, Ellen Jaffe-Gill, Melinda Smith and Robert Segal, *Stress at Work: How to Reduce and Manage Job and Workplace Stress* (2008) Helpguide.org <http://www.helpguide.com/mental/work_stress_management.htm> at 13 January 2009, 4.

²⁴ Above n 6.

²⁵ Above n 10.

²⁶ *Stress Relieving Exercises* (2005) Stress Management Tips.com <<http://www.stressmanagementtips.com/exercises.htm>> at 13 January 2009, 1.

²⁷ Above n 11; Above n 21.

INFORMATION FOR LAW STUDENT SOCIETIES

Hosting awareness events

Given that depression is often a silent illness, especially amongst competitive overachievers like law students, raising awareness of the problem is one of the most valuable things an LSS can do to tackle the black dog. Such an event can be a step towards breaking down the stigma that relates to depression and can make students realise they are not the only ones going through hard times to encourage them to seek support from peers.

What follows is some advice **from Tom Baker, Vice President Education of the LaTrobe University LSA**, which organised one of these events in 2008.

When the La Trobe University LSA organised the annual Brendan Cassidy Memorial Lecture (BCML) in March 2008, the CEO of the LIV Michael Brett Young, renowned clinical psychologist Dr. Chris Day, and Vice Chairman of the Bar Council of Victoria Paul Lacava SC; were invited to provide their individual accounts of why practicing in the legal profession is not necessarily all doom and gloom. A similar tack is annually implemented by the Tristan Jepson Memorial Fund, hosted by the University of New South Wales and the University of Technology Sydney; in the Tristan Jepson Memorial Lecture. This lecture was established in memory of Tristan Jepson, a law student who committed suicide in 2004. The inaugural lecture was presented by Clinical Professor of psychiatry from the University of Ottawa, Dr. Mamta Gautam MD, and Craig Leggat SC of the NSW Bar. The success of the lecture is widely recognised.

Awareness events presented jointly by legal professionals and clinical psychologists accurately address the issue. Legal professionals should have some demonstrated commitment to addressing the issue. When organising an awareness event on this topic it is important to remember that the invited presenters will accept your invitation because the issue directly impacts upon the people with whom they must associate on a daily basis.

Tips on How to Get Speakers:

- *Choose the right person for your event via research.*
- *Be prepared for rejection.*
- *Before contacting your speaker, have as much of your event organised as possible, date, time, location, subject matter.*
- *Get in contact with your speaker by phone or email. (Legal professionals*



- *Ideally you will have contacted your speaker well in advance of your event. KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THAT PERSON. Let them know of any developments during the organisation stages, and that you are serious. This is a matter of courtesy.*
- *Remember to thank them for their participation. Send them a letter afterwards expressing gratitude and a desire to see them participate in more like events.*

Awareness and educational events can be very effective in increasing the mental health literacy of your student community. But the literature on this topic indicates that intrinsic cultural aspects of Law are conducive to depression. For example, if an overly competitive environment is responsible for mental anxiety and depression among law students, then LSSs should recognise that they're uniquely positioned to provide students with a mental space which is free of this competitive element. Mooting is an essential component of the LSS service. But BBQs, law ball and law revue can be the designated 'non-competitive' activities.

Alcohol consumption has been recognised as part of the problem, so these traditional LSS events should somehow be divorced from the culture of alcoholism. The leaders of LSSs should recognise that this cultural change should begin with the example somehow be divorced from the culture of alcoholism. The leaders of LSSs should recognise that this cultural change should begin with the example set by the LSS. Students join their LSS because they want to add another dimension to their university experience, not to compound the problem. Hiring a professional to organise forward planning seminars and team building days with physical activities are great ways to get your committee thinking outside the law school mentality.

LSSs can provide the stimulus for change at the faculty level. The prevalence of the issue in law schools across the globe has provoked a 'humanising movement' in legal education. Very few legal teachers would be unacquainted with the movement. The movement towards humanising legal education provided the Academic Support Program at Suffolk University Law School in Boston with the impetus to present a colloquium to

their Faculty in 2005 where the problem of student stress and depression was laid out. The colloquium challenged established practices on everything from individualised feedback to excessive study hours. The movement can be ascertained from numerous articles published in the Harvard Law Review by students alerting faculty members to the problem and proposing curriculum based solutions (see especially: Making Docile Lawyers: An Essay on the Pacification of Law Students, 111 Harv. L. Rev. 2027, 1998). These initiatives and the growing field of Australian and American literature have been responsible for the introduction of subjects such as Prof. Laurie Morin's 'Professional Responsibility' at University of Colombia Law School.

It has long been the role of the Education Vice President to work with the law faculty on enhancing educational services. It is the prerogative of the LSS to at least alert their faculty to this issue, and to act with knowledge of the broader context in legal education.





Running a mentoring program

Beginning law school can be a daunting time for first years. First year mentor programs are a fantastic way to assist new law students as they integrate into the community of your Law School. Through mentor programs, students are encouraged to socialise with each other and later year students while they get to know the essentials of Law School in a non-threatening and informal environment.

Here, **Michael Beaconsfield, the President of Monash Law Society** has outlined some of the secrets to their successful mentoring program.

Successful mentor programs should assist students with developing a friendship group so that they know other students in their classes and can form useful study groups. Students should be guided by mentors particularly in the first few months of their enrolment. Mentors should pass on tips like where to park cars on campus, how law notes might look, where to get study help from the university, what sort of support services the university offers, etc.

Good mentor programs are very inclusive and are offered to every single student. The more social students that engage quickly with the LSS and the law school community are generally the least in need of mentoring.

Running a mentor program is an easy way to introduce your society to first year students and encourage them to join as members.

Recruiting voluntary mentors

The first step for anybody running a mentor program is to design how the program will work. Being clear on the requirements and details of the program will convey to potential mentors that the program is well organised, is there to provide real help to new students and has something to offer them as mentors.

At Monash, we recruit mentors in September/October before people start studying for exams. We market the program to students of all year levels (including current first year students) and explain the social benefits for them as mentors, the resume line, the free alcohol, etc. to encourage them to participate.

them to participate. We encourage current and past LSS committee members to sign up as mentors and promote the program through Facebook and word-of-mouth.

To sign up as a mentor at Monash, students have to fill out a two-page application form and attend a 15 minute group interview. The purpose of the application process is not necessarily to screen potential mentors, but rather is used to communicate the seriousness of the program and that we have high expectations of our mentors.

We explain at this stage that we expect mentors to contact the students in their mentor group on a fortnightly basis, that the program runs from February to November and that it is something they need to commit to seriously. For the last couple of years we have had 80 - 100 students sign up to be mentors.

Training mentors

Once we have recruited our mentors, we run training sessions for them. Training sessions are compulsory and are spread out so that all students have an opportunity to attend a session. The training covers the way the mentor program will work, what our expectations are, contact details of university support services (learning assistance, disability liaison unit, student counselling, welfare advisers, etc.), and how they can get the most out of the program as mentors.

Recruiting the students

The next step is to recruit the first year students into the program. We take a multi-pronged approach but if you are limited in resources or are less fortunate as far as your Faculty relationship is concerned, try a couple of different methods and see how you go.

When students enrol in Law (in January each year, but also mid-year for some transfer students and at various times for our JD program) the LSS and some mentors attend each enrolment session. The Law Faculty allow us to do a 5-minute presentation during their enrolment seminar and then we make sure we speak to as many students as possible as they leave the enrolment sessions.

After we have explained the program to students, we encourage them to sign up with their name, mobile number, and email address and tell them that their mentor will contact them by telephone in the next couple of weeks. We also allow first year students to sign up during O-week or at a later date, but we hope to sign up as many students as possible before university starts so that they have the chance to meet their peers and mentors before their daunting first day of university.

Thanks to the good relationship that we have with our Faculty of Law, Student Services provides us with a complete list of students that are enrolling in each intake and provides their mobile number and email to ensure that all students are offered the mentor program.

Our program is not only for school leavers, but also for mature age students and students that have transferred from other degrees.

Thanks to the good relationship that we have with our Faculty of Law, Student Services provides us with a complete list of students that are enrolling in each intake and provides their mobile number and email to ensure that all students are offered the mentor program.

Matching mentors to students

Once everybody is recruited, we put students into mentor groups. Our mentor groups always have two mentors (ideally one male, one female) so that if one mentor is unavailable the other mentor is still there for the group. Having two mentors for each group also means that if there is a personality clash students will be less likely to be turned away from the program.

We match our students based on their course (i.e. Arts / Law students in a group with an Arts / Law mentor). Where there are a large number of students in the same course we will split them into groups based on where they live. The intention is that students will meet peers that are in the same classes and from the same suburbs so that they have something in common.

Our mentor groups have approximately 8-12 students for each pair of mentors, but smaller or larger groups probably work just as well, as long as students are still getting individual attention from their mentors.

Regular informal events and small group meet ups

We organise a large group event for every first year law student and mentor once/month during semester. Some examples of events include barbeques, lawn bowls, playing some sport in a park and nights out at a bar. Try to find something suitable for the number of students involved and make the event something that people will actually want to attend. In between these large group events, mentors are asked to contact their groups on a fortnightly basis. Whether it is a telephone call or a coffee on campus is up to the mentors. We prefer mentors to contact students in person or by phone rather than the impersonal group email.



To give the mentors some further guidance, we send them a timeline of key dates for first year students and advise them of particular times when their mentoring will be most useful. Some examples are the first week of classes, the week before the first assignment, a month before exams, etc.

For the first meeting between mentors and students we have the groups meet up separately and then come together at a larger function. This reduces the intimidating nature for students that attend a large event where they do not know anybody.

We are very flexible with our mentor groups, if students want to be put in groups with a friend we do our best to accommodate their requests to make them feel as comfortable as possible.

Review and feedback for next year

One of the most important processes of all LSS events is passing on a good report to next year's committee. We make sure that we write down what we did each year. Where there is room for improvement we make recommendations to future committees.

Undertaking a survey of the mentors and first year students at the end of the program is a great way to measure your success and pick up on further areas for future improvement.

Good Luck!

At Monash we have found that expanding our mentor program dramatically over the last couple of years has created a noticeable improvement in the sense of community in our Law School, increased participation in LSS events and generally happier students.

If you have any questions or want to discuss an aspect of your mentor program, you can email our mentor program coordinator



WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

South Australia

Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia (MIFSA): (08) 8221 5160

<http://www.mifsa.org/>

- o 1 Richmond Rd, KESWICK, 5035

Mood Disorders Association (SA): (08) 8221 5170

- o 1 Richmond Rd, Keswick, 5035

Department of Health, Mental Health Services & Program: (08) 8226 6278

www.health.sa.gov.au/mental-health-unit/

South Australian Mental Health CRISIS Team: 1800 182 232 or 131 465

Western Australia

Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH): (08) 9420 7277

<http://www.waamh.org.au/>

- o 2 Delhi Street, WEST PERTH 6005

WA Mental Health Crisis Team: 1800 676 822 or (08) 9227 6822

For a directory of health services in Western Australia please visit: http://www.health.wa.gov.au/services/category.cfm?Topic_ID=5

Northern Territory

TEAM Health: (08) 8948 4399

<http://www.teamhealth.asn.au/>

- o Shop 30, Rapid Creek Business Village, 48 Trower Rd, Millner

Northern Territory Association for Mental Health: 08 8981 4128

NT Mental Health CRISIS Services: 1800 019 116 or 08 8999 4988 (Darwin) 08 8981 9227 (Alice Springs)

Tasmania

Mental Health Council of Tasmania: 1800 808 890 or (03) 6224 9222

<http://www.mhct.org/>

- o Suite 5, Mayfair Plaza, 236 Sandy Bay Rd, SANDY BAY 7005

Lifeline Samaritans Tasmania Inc: (03) 6331 3355 (Launceston) or 1300 364 566 (Statewide)

<http://www.lifelinesamaritans.org.au>

ACT

Mental Health Foundation: (02) 6282 6658

<http://www.mhf.org.au/mhf/>

Suite 6, 42 Townshend Street, Phillip Canberra Australia

WA – (08) 9277 6060

TAS - 0409 941 962

For a directory of health services in ACT please visit: <http://health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=sp&pid=1061186615>

Queensland

Australian Depression Institute: 07 5494 3918
<http://www.australiandepressioninstitute.com.au/>

Mental Health Association Inc: (07) 3271 5544
<http://www.mentalhealth.org.au/>
Fleming House, Orford Drive, WACOL, 4076

New South Wales

The Depression and Mood Disorders Association (NSW): (02) 9816 5688
<http://dmda.mentalhealth.asn.au/dmda/>

Mental Health Information Service (NSW): 1300 794 991
<http://www.mentalhealth.asn.au/>
o Level 5, 80 William St, East Sydney 2011

Depression Sydney - Depression Resources in Sydney NSW:
<http://www.depressionsydney.com/>

Victoria

Reconnexion (VIC): (03) 9886 9400 OR 1300 273 266
o 24 Hartington St, Northcote, VIC, 3070

Suicide Helpline (VIC): 1300 651 251
<http://www.suicideline.org.au/>

Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria (ARCVic): 03 9886 9377 or 1300 ANXIETY
<http://www.arcvic.com.au/>

Mental Health Foundation Australia: 03 9427 0407
<http://www.mhfa.org.au/>
o 270 Church St, Richmond, 3121

For support groups in Victoria please visit: <http://www.depressionet.com.au/what-s-on/whats-on-in-vic-2.html>

All States

Beyond Blue: *beyondblue's* main aims are to raise awareness of depression, help to reduce the stigma associated with the illness and encourage people to seek help if they think they may be depressed.

More than a million people in Australia live with depression. With the right treatment, most people recover.

For more information about depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue* info line on 1300 22 4636 (local call cost).

Christian Counsellors Association of Australia: <http://www.ccaa.net.au/>

NSW - (02) 9528 0543

VIC - (03) 9563 8063

QLD - (07) 3398 4866

SA – (08) 8373 8788

WA – (08) 9277 6060

TAS - 0409 941 962

Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI): <http://www.arafmi.asn.au/>

NSW - (02) 9805 1883

NT - (08) 8999 4945

QLD - (07) 3254 1881 - Outside Brisbane - 1800 35 1881

SA - (08) 8221 5166

TAS - (03) 6331 4486

VIC - (03) 9810 9300

WA - (08) 9228 1411

SANE Australia Helpline: 1800 187 263

<http://www.sane.org/>

- o With initiatives such as StigmaWatch, Mind and Body Initiative and the SANE Metal Illness and Bereavement Initiative, SANE works to aid not only those who are suffering but those who live with sufferers of mental illness

Australian Psychological Society Referral Line: 1800 333 497

<http://www.psychology.org.au/>

- o APS has the goal of improving the well-being and education of the community by representing, promoting and advancing psychology as an avenue to do so

Mensline Australia: 1300 789 978

<http://www.menslineaus.org.au/>

- o Aiming to empower Australian men to participate in and sustain healthy personal relationships within families, workplaces and communities.

Lifeline: 13 11 14

<http://www.lifeline.org.au/>

- o Attempting to see and respond to painful situations in new ways Lifeline want to hear what is hurtful to people in order to enhance their wellbeing

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

<http://www.crisissupport.org.au/>

- o Anyone who is suicidal, caring for someone who is suicidal or is bereaved by suicide can call for up to six 50-minute telephone counselling sessions.

GROW Support Groups: 1800 558 268

<http://www.grow.net.au/>

- o Focuses on a 12 step program supporting and helping people suffering from mental health problems.

headspace: 03 8346 8213 (head office)

- o Information on mental illness for young people.

<http://www.headspace.org.au/>

Black Dog Institute

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

Black Dog Institute is an educational, research and clinical facility offering specialist expertise in mood disorders, as well as resources and information for consumers and the general community

For more sites please go to: https://www.psychsupport.com.au/public_links.asp where names and numbers of different organisations are provided for all to use.





ALSA is a national not-for-profit association comprising all Law Student Societies and Law Students Associations, representing approximately 28,000 law students. The core functions of ALSA are:

- To advocate the interests and concerns of Australian law students;
- To gather and disseminate information of interest and concern to Australian law students;
- To facilitate communication and the exchange of information between law student societies, within Australia and abroad; and
- To initiate activities of a social, intellectual, and competitive nature among law students at a national level.



beyondblue: the national depression initiative

beyondblue's main aims are to raise awareness of depression, help to reduce the stigma associated with the illness and encourage people to seek help if they think they may be depressed.

More than a million people in Australia live with depression. With the right treatment, most people recover.

For more information about depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue* info line on 1300 22 4636 (local call cost).