



## LAWYERS TALKING ABOUT WELLBEING IN LAW

### OVERVIEW

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*Compos Mentis* is a field guide to health, happiness and authenticity in the law. Two lawyers traverse the ins and outs of life in the law on a path to wellbeing.

Briefs, appearances, billable units, opposing counsel, demanding clients, unrealistic deadlines, long hours, non-stop emails, sleepless nights, fierce competition, perfectionism, disillusionment, the corporate ladder ... With so many unique and unrelenting pressures in the important work of law, personal wellbeing is often the price of professional success.

At some point in a lawyers' career - from the very beginnings as a law student right up to the echelons of law firm partners - one in three of us will experience clinical depression, anxiety or another stress-related illness. This rife reality shows how difficult but important it is to manage your wellbeing, before you reach breaking point.

Through personal anecdotes, Nat and Jenn explore some unspoken realities of legal practice and how to stay happy, healthy and productive. In discussing key themes like time, stress, mindfulness, rejection, authenticity and perfectionism and how they relate to the work of a lawyer, they identify concrete tools and strategies for finding balance on the journey to wellbeing in law.

Each bite-sized episode is a conversation format of up to 30 minutes. Together they provide an easy-listening toolbox for enhancing lawyers' wellness.

### EPISODE GUIDE

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#### **1 Lawyer v Sound (pilot)**

What does it mean to be a whole lawyer? What exactly is wellbeing and what place does it have in the work of a lawyer? Why did Nat and Jenn want to make a podcast about it and are they *compos mentis*? What can you expect from the podcast? Meet your hosts, find out why they have committed to failing while daring greatly, and learn more about the episodes to come.

#### **2 Lawyer v Perfection**

As Voltaire once said: 'perfect is the enemy of good'. But is perfectionism really such a bad thing when legal work requires high standards of accuracy and technical excellence? Yes, when it is linked unhappiness, reduced productivity and a heightened prospect of mental health issues..

Nat and Jenn discuss the detriments of perfectionism to the work of a lawyer, and the surprising upsides of vulnerability. They explore strategies for recovering perfectionists including identifying sources of perfectionism, a growth versus fixed mindset, distinguishing 'right' and 'perfect' and letting your light shine.

#### **3 Lawyer v Stress**

For many of us, stress is a constant feature of life in the law. But does it have to be, and can it be managed or used in a positive way?

Nat and Jenn explore physiological and emotional stress responses, modern triggers and stress management strategies for lawyers including: knowing your triggers, staying in the moment, checking in throughout the day, seeking support, keeping perspective and identifying immediate and long-term stress relief activities.

#### **4 Lawyer v Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a hot topic right now, but is it all that it's cracked up to be? Nat and Jenn discuss what mindfulness is, some cool scientific evidence, and how it can benefit your legal practice (improved concentration and memory), your clients (enhanced empathy and emotional intelligence) and yourself (better mental health). They explore different entry points into mindfulness like meditation and checking-in when doing small daily tasks. Try it for yourself!

#### **5 Lawyer v Time**

We all have as many hours in a day as a High Court judge so why does it always feel like there's never enough? As lawyers, time management is particularly important given that time and skills are our stock in trade.

Nat and Jenn talk practical tools for improving time management to enhance wellbeing such as single-tasking, tilting and saying 'no' without the word no! They suggest ways to tackle procrastination through unpicking emotional drivers and tips for producing realistic time estimates.

#### **6 Lawyer v Diversity**

Do we all need to be like Harvey Specter – aggressive, unscrupulous and slick – to be a gun lawyer? Nat and Jenn explore stereotypes in the law, and explain how challenging archetypes of lawyers through diversity can enhance wellbeing.

Diversity can include traditional attributes like gender, disability, race, sexuality and parental status, but also different personality types, leadership styles and problem solving approaches. Nat and Jenn explore the many benefits of workplace diversity including improved mental health and happiness, representativeness of the law and legal innovation. They suggest different ways of supporting diversity, most importantly - be yourself!

#### **7 Lawyer v Uncertainty**

Uncertainty is a constant of legal practice, for example the impact of legislative reforms on your client or how a judge might rule in your case. Many lawyers might also experience broader uncertainty regarding their practice (do I really love litigation?) or career (is law for me?).

Nat and Jenn discuss different tools to manage uncertainty including contingency planning, managing expectations, building adaptation skills and keeping perspective. They discuss the 'doing versus being' dichotomy and why it's important to both put goals in place and work towards them, but enjoy your present work in the moment.

#### **8 Lawyer v Change (season final)**

Taking off their lawyer hats, Nat and Jenn chat about life's changes and how wellbeing tools like mindfulness, acceptance and detachment can help to manage big (starting a family!), medium (new job!) and small (adventure holidays!) challenges.

Jenn discusses the value of personal and professional challenges, and change, for building resilience. Nat explains the benefits of having 'an internal benevolent dictator', and the beauty of self-validation!

## HOST BIOGRAPHIES

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Jennifer Lim works in human rights legal policy. She has prior experience in public law litigation for the Commonwealth government, as a headnote reporter for the Federal Court Reports, and Associate to Justice Beach of the Federal Court of Australia.

Natalie Campbell is a member of the Victorian Bar with a background in public, employment and industrial law. She was the Associate to Justice Jessup of the Federal Court of Australia and is a reporter for the Federal Law Reports.

Jennifer and Natalie met while working as Associates at the Federal Court of Australia. With a shared interest in mental health and improving the wellbeing of lawyers, *Compos Mentis* was born.