

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY 2021 VIRTUAL SERIES

Workplace wellbeing: Improving resilience and preventing burnout

Tuesday 20 April 2021, 1.00 – 2.00 pm BST

How do we define burnout and resilience?

Resilience is a collection of things we've learnt to do and these skills organise into a system. If we were aware of the system of skills, we would be curious to want to add / support/ strengthen the skills. It's unhelpful and misleading to see resilience as a quality.

Signs and symptoms of burnout often include:

- exhaustion
- loss of enjoyment/engagement in our work
- becoming overwhelmed by circumstances
- lack of concentration and ability to make decisions
- agitation and sleeplessness

Why is resilience (or burnout) of particular importance / relevance to the legal sector (whether in-house or private sector), and what can organisations do to support employees?

- Competitiveness, toughness and rewarding achievement are all too often dominant traits within law firms, and self-care is regularly sidelined in favour of focusing on results.
- Organisations need to be proactive, and tailor their wellbeing initiatives so that they can offer adequate support to people working within this kind of environment, with accompanying pressures.
- Training managers and mental health first aiders can help to equip employees at all levels both to spot the signs of mental ill health and support colleagues at times of crisis.
- Developing a culture where everyone feels supported and able to speak up if they need assistance is key.

The client perspective. Why does building resilience matter?

- We're all too ready to assume that every task and project has to be completed immediately.
- Prioritisation is important. Deadlines can often be negotiated. Non-urgent emails don't have to be sent late at night or at weekends.
- Along with a number of our clients, Baker McKenzie has signed up to the Mindful Business Charter, which promotes good practice around our working practices.

What particular challenges do junior colleagues face and what can be done to address these?

- The challenges faced by junior colleagues include uncertainty in their role, not having created a personal network, including meeting their peers (made worse as a result of the pandemic), and lack of control over their workload
- It's vital to create an atmosphere where talking about mental wellbeing is comfortable and real, and confidential wellbeing conversations are possible without fear of repercussions.

What challenges does the return to the physical workplace pose and what can organisations do to help with these?

- Everyone will feel differently about the return to the office.
- The tone from the top is vital. Leaders and managers need to communicate effectively and confidently, and to feel equipped for difficult conversations. They need to be non-judgemental, to listen actively and ask questions, and draw on their emotional intelligence to understand nuance and sense what is not being said.
- Change is always stressful and needs to be handled with honesty and compassion.

How can we spot the signs of burnout in a colleague?

Noticing a departure from how you see that person in normal circumstances. Signs might include missing deadlines, sending emails late at night, being unusually irritable. But of course all of these could just be signs that someone is having a bad day so we need to monitor the situation and, if these signs persist, be prepared to have a conversation, and signpost our colleague towards sources of support.

What positive effects has COVID-19 had on our approach to wellbeing at work?

- The necessity of working from home means that flexible working will, hopefully, become a norm.
- Wellbeing conversations are already a lot more normalised in the work context.
- Self-care and setting boundaries has become more of a priority - proactively doing things that are good for us and also taking time to rest and recharge our batteries. This should help pave the way to healthier, happier, more productive and engaged employees.

Chaired by:



Rhianon Williams
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Our Panel:



Tiffany Evans
Director
A Resilient Mind



Markus Lang
Managing Director
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Dr Bill Mitchell
Clinical Psychologist
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