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## A Resilient Mindset: Take Stock of What You Lost and What You Gained to Move Forward

### What Is a Resilient Mindset?

I don't know of a single person in our profession who has not dealt with a personal or professional setback. While most of us have honed a few coping skills for trying times, many of us are finding that our skills are falling short during the pandemic and its aftermath – the unknowns are too vast and the tragedy too great. As we move forward, a resilient mindset may be what allows us to stay afloat mentally, emotionally, and financially in these rocky waters. Ultimately, a resilient mindset may mean the difference between holding steady with an anchor and being tossed around in the waves.

Resilience is our ability to bounce back from a setback and adapt when things don't go as planned. It arises through a process of understanding our emotional response to the setback and by making meaning of what we learn while recovering. Our mindset is a compilation of our beliefs, attitudes, and mental states that orient us to what is going on and what we should do (or not do) about a given situation. A resilient mindset allows us to adapt our beliefs, attitudes, and mental states such that we can bounce back from setbacks and unanticipated changes. A resilient mindset is one that both allows space for "what is real" in the moment – including difficult emotions such as fear, sadness, and loneliness – and space for something new and improved to emerge.

No one yet knows what the full impact of the coronavirus and its aftermath will be; however, our mindset will determine how we remember and talk about what happened, and will determine what we make of our lives now. If we strive to have a resilient mindset, we will be able to adapt and bounce back from all we have lost and make the most of what we have gained in the past few months.

During the peak of the pandemic, I received an email from a client, Jessica Yañez, a North Carolina attorney and owner of Yañez Immigration Law in Greensboro. Her email so clearly illustrates the power of employing a resilient mindset during challenging times that I asked her for permission to excerpt from it here.

What follows is an example of someone who is thriving in difficult circumstances. Not everyone is experiencing the pandemic in the same

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way, and not everyone will embrace adversity like this. In fact, most people will find that they are coping well in some areas and not as well in others. It's completely normal to feel challenged by setbacks. So if you are struggling right now, know that you are not alone. But you can draw inspiration from others' stories, and maybe it will spark an idea that resonates for your own life.

"Hi Laura," her email began, "I wanted to share some of my personal thoughts about the current coronavirus situation. We are definitely in unprecedented times, and lots of people are suffering. There was one day that I worried myself sick and ended up having a good, long cry because I just felt so bad for all of the people suffering and my fear of the unknown."

As I read the opening lines of Jessica's email, I could feel her distress and concern due to the trauma and uncertainty of the times. And yet, when I read her next sentence, I started to smile: "Once I got past that day, things have been so much better." As I continued to read her email, it was apparent that Jessica had adopted a "resilient mindset" to help her and her family cope with pandemic-related setbacks. Her email went on to exemplify ways she and her family were adapting both their attitudes and their lives in resilient ways.

"I am embracing the unknown and enjoying so many new things," she wrote. "I always said I wanted to work less and spend more time with my kids. Now I am staying home two days a week with them and spending so much quality time with them. I am embracing technology and all of the things it has to offer. I did a paint class online Friday evening; I started having the kids do photography scavenger hunts. Our son turned 12 at the end of March and finally learned to ride the bike we got him when he was six years old! He learned to mow the lawn, too. My daughter is doing an online art class, and we do free online lessons through scholastic and Cosmic Kids yoga together. I also signed them up for a book club called Literati and a cooking club called Kidstir. We made a home gym in the garage and work out together. It's like we are finally able to do all the things I've always wanted to do, but was too tired or too stressed to do."

Embracing the unknown is a useful approach to cultivating a resilient mindset, and oftentimes creativity emerges as a result, just as Jessica and

## Did You Know? The OAAP Offers Help for ...

- Problem substance use
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- Compulsive disorders including gambling, sex, and Internet addiction
- Procrastination
- Relationship issues
- Retirement planning
- Time management

her family discovered. A resilient mindset can also open us up to deepening our relationships with ourselves and those we love. Jessica's email continued: "I gardened for the first time and even got a bike myself! I've connected more with my husband, and we have taken time to talk about things that really matter to us."

Cultivation of a resilient mindset can be done at both work and home: When we foster a resilient mindset toward our home life, it crosses over into our work, and vice versa. The adage "the way you do anything is the way you do everything" applies to our mindset, and we can reap the benefits of resilience in both places, as Jessica's email illustrates. "As for the firm, we are still steady, and we now have time to do everything we wanted to, but didn't have the time [before]. At the end of this month, we are going to do a complete file review for every case in the office. We will reach out to everyone with a pending case to say hello and check in. We will use the time after that to get ahead on every case."

Most importantly, a resilient mindset makes meaning out of what we lost and connects it with what we gained. The closing lines of Jessica's email illustrate that she was doing that. "I know everyone processes this differently, but this has been a

blessing in disguise for me. Some people may feel overwhelmed and not want to be given a laundry list of things to do, but I feel like now the world has given us the much-needed gift of slowing things down and letting us take time to rest and do things we always wanted to [do].” I was touched to read Jessica’s email and felt proud of her for investing her time in cultivating a resilient mindset long prior to the pandemic. It was clear she had “done her homework,” and her resilience kicked into gear when she needed it.

**Step One: Account for What You Lost** – As you process your experience with COVID-19, take a moment to acknowledge how it set you back and what you lost. Perhaps professionally you lost something that gave you security – like your job or your firm, or the benefits you receive from full-time work, or your confidence in being able to run a business. Maybe you lost something that gave you satisfaction or joy – like having a routine, writing a brief, going to court, or winning a case. Perhaps the biggest thing you lost was your face-to-face connection to your colleagues, your clients, or the people you saw in court. You may even have experienced a loss of identity as a professional as your work calendar cleared and clients stopped calling.

There may also be numerous personal losses to account for as well. You may have lost someone you

know to COVID-19, or suffered another loss, like being able to attend your child’s graduation, a family celebration, or your own retirement party. Or perhaps you missed out on a vacation or travel for spring break. It’s okay to account for smaller daily losses, too, like the loss of freedom to travel, leave your home, grocery shop with ease, get a haircut, and so on.

Note that you also may be experiencing “anticipatory grief” – fear of the loss of things to come. If that is the case, account also for what you’re afraid you may lose in the future.

Make a list now of your losses and setbacks.

**Step Two: Make It Manageable** – Choose one of the losses from your list and focus on that as you go through the next steps in this process. You can do steps two through five for each item on your list if you’d like. Part of having a resilient mindset is giving yourself the opportunity to digest and process your setbacks in small chunks so you don’t feel overwhelmed.

**Step Three: Acknowledge Your Feelings** – Acknowledge the feelings that came up when you experienced the loss and may still be coming up now as you account for what you lost (or what you fear losing in the future). For example, “I feel doubt, fear, sadness, confusion, disillusionment, and/or shock because when I got furloughed I lost my confidence, security, peace, sense of accomplishment, and control, and I felt alone.” As challenging as it can be to feel the uncomfortable feelings that accompany your loss, doing so is a key step to being able to process your emotions and move through the grief that arises from the loss.

**Step Four: Give Yourself Support** – This is one of the most important steps, even though it can be the most difficult for us as lawyers and judges to seek and receive support. Giving yourself support can be as simple as saying something kind and understanding to yourself like, “Ouch. That hurt. Of course I feel all of those feelings because that was a big loss and it set me back.” Taking a deep breath, sighing, or going outside may also help. You may want to find additional support by talking to a friend, colleague, or loved one about what you’ve lost and the feelings that come up when you think about it. If you feel inconsolable after trying a few different avenues

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## Trans Law Professionals Peer Support Group

The OAAP is pleased to offer a biweekly peer support group. This inclusive group is open to all transgender, trans-questioning, nonbinary, gendernonconforming, and intersex judges, lawyers, law students, and legal professionals. This group will be facilitated by OAAP Attorney Counselor Kyra Hazilla, JD, LCSW. At this time the group is meeting remotely during the noon hour. For more information, contact Kyra Hazilla at 503.226.1057 or 1.800.321.6227, ext. 13, or at kyrah@oaap.org. Not ready for a group? Feel free to reach out to Kyra for alternative resources.

for self-support, reach out to a mental health care provider and/or the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program for professional support.

**Step Five: Reflect on What You Gained and Make Meaningful Connections Between What You Lost and What You Gained**

- This is the pinnacle step in creating a resilient mindset. To bounce back from a setback better than you were before it occurred, make a connection between what you lost and a skill, belief, attitude, or mental state you gained as a result of what you lost. For example, “I lost the ease of going to work and seeing clients in person, but I figured out how to work from home and use video conferencing to connect with clients in a new way.” Or, “I lost the financial security I got from my job, but I found out that I can budget and cut back when I need to.” Or, “Because I live alone, I lost my normal sense of connection with my friends, but I feel like I know myself better now, and I made new connections with my neighbors and learned to cook.” Or, “I lost someone I love during COVID, but I gained a greater understanding of how to cope with loss by reaching out to a therapist virtually for support.” If you can, see if you can feel gratitude or appreciation for what you’ve gained. Don’t push it, though: If feelings of gratitude and appreciation don’t naturally arise, it’s okay. You may be too close to the loss and setback right now to feel much appreciation. In that case, just stick with what you gained and its meaning for you.

As you rebuild over the next few months and find yourself looking for an anchor, check in with your mindset. Try on a resilient mindset for an hour, or a day, or a week, and see if employing it calms the waters and improves your perspective, well-being, and productivity. If you like how it feels, keep at it. The more you practice, the easier cultivating a resilient mindset becomes, and the sooner it turns into a habit that improves your whole outlook on life’s setbacks.

**LAURA MAHR**

*This article originally appeared in the Summer 2020 issue of the North Carolina State Bar Journal. Republished with permission.*

*Thank you to Jessica Yañez and her family for their willingness to share their experiences with the*

*Pathways to Well-Being readership. Laura Mahr is an Oregon lawyer, a North Carolina lawyer, and the founder of Conscious Legal Minds LLC, providing mindfulness-based wellness coaching, training, and consulting for attorneys and law offices nationwide. Her work is informed by 13 years of practice as a civil sexual assault attorney, 25 years as a student and teacher of mindfulness and yoga, a love of neurobiology and neuropsychology, and a passion for resilience. Find out more about Laura’s work at [consciouslegalminds.com](http://consciouslegalminds.com). If you would like to bring Laura to your firm or event to conduct a cutting-edge resilience-building training, contact her at [info@consciouslegalminds.com](mailto:info@consciouslegalminds.com).*

**32ND ANNUAL CELEBRATION  
FOR LAWYERS,  
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STUDENTS IN  
RECOVERY**



The OAAP is pleased to invite you to the 32nd Annual Recovery Celebration for attorneys, judges, and law students in recovery and their guests. This year the event will be held virtually via Zoom on Friday, October 2, 2020, from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Join us as the featured speakers share their experience, strength, and hope in recovery.

**Registration:**

There is no charge to attend this event. To sign up and receive the confidential Zoom link for the celebration, email [bryanw@oaap.org](mailto:bryanw@oaap.org).

If you have any questions, please contact Doug Querin, [douglasq@oaap.org](mailto:douglasq@oaap.org), 503.226.1057, ext. 12, or Bryan Welch, [bryanw@oaap.org](mailto:bryanw@oaap.org), 503.226.1057, ext. 19.

We look forward to seeing you!



# Job-Search Tips for Attorneys During COVID-19

Looking for a new position is often a daunting prospect, even in the best of times. And with the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic reverberating throughout the world of BigLaw (and the world at large), job searching can feel especially overwhelming – whether you’re currently out of work or anxious about your job security.

These unprecedented circumstances call for new approaches, creative strategies, and a focus on shifting your perspective to give you the best chance of success. At Naomi Beard & Associates, we have helped thousands of attorneys find the right new position when they transition out of a firm – in all sorts of employment landscapes. Here are a few of the measures we’ve seen help attorneys land the jobs they want, even in the face of a challenging job market.

In this market, your job search is likely to take longer than you’d planned – the number and nature of job openings is contracting and shifting.

## First, take heart

With industry reports of selected hiring freezes, compensation reductions, and even layoffs, news about the legal industry job market might seem disheartening right now. But keep in mind that the news tends to report on the negatives and doesn’t always provide a balanced view of how things really look. Our experience at NB&A tells us that, while the legal industry job market is indeed more difficult right now, some employers are still hiring, and some of the attorneys with whom we are working are still landing both interviews and jobs. Your job search may look different (and take longer) than you’d anticipated, but hiring is still taking place.

## Adjust your expectations

As noted above, in this market, your job search is likely to take longer than you’d planned – the number and nature of job openings is contracting and shifting. Try to let go of what you think a job search “should” look like. Accept the current reality and lean into shifting your expectations to a new normal.

## Share Your Experience

You can help other Oregon lawyers by sharing your personal experience of managing or recovering from behavioral or mental health issues like chronic stress, depression, anxiety, or problem substance use; or in dealing with challenges like grief, loss, or family changes. Would you like to share...

- Challenges you’ve encountered while sheltering in place?
- Tips you’ve discovered for maintaining self-care or well-being?
- Acts of kindness you’ve performed yourself or witnessed others doing?
- New habits or practices that you intend to continue post-COVID?

Your stories and comments will be anonymous. Submitted stories may be published on our website or a future issue of our *inSight* newsletter. For more information, contact Bryan Welch at [bryanw@oaap.org](mailto:bryanw@oaap.org).

## Continue to track the market

Don’t get lost in online job boards, but do select at least one trusted job board listing positions in the legal industry (and elsewhere, depending on the scope of your search) and keep an eye on what’s posted. Make sure you’ve joined your undergraduate and law school alumni associations; these can be invaluable resources for both job leads and connections. Check out your state’s (and the ABA’s) bar association career centers. Stay in touch with a trusted recruiter or two. Remaining abreast of what’s trending enables you to not only identify potential new job opportunities, but to track industry movement and open additional pathways for making connections.

## Lean into (remote) networking

Many employers with open positions might not be posting them on online job boards but are still trying to find talent through their networks – wheth-

*Continued on page 6*

er to fill an immediate opening or to line up talent for when hiring picks up. This makes networking more vital than ever. In fact, the general need for human connection these days might open the door to even more networking opportunities. Reach out to your contacts with a service-oriented mindset – ask them how you can help rather than just touting your skills. Aim for authentic connection on a human level.

### **Play the long game**

It's easy to fall into the trap of tunnel vision when you're anxious to secure new employment. If you can expand your perspective, you'll have a better chance of success. Imagine where you'd like to be a year from now – and play out multiple scenarios. Keep conversations going with a wide variety of contacts. Remain flexible as the market continues to change. Be open to possibilities like a lateral move, a new practice area, or a temporary placement. Broadening your idea of what your next position might look like will open your eyes to more possibilities.

### **Expand your expertise**

Though many employers might have paused some hiring activity as they wait to see how the market changes, forecasts show potential growth in several practice areas over the coming months. Experts say that the sectors expected to expand include health care, insurance, tax, restructuring/bankruptcy, and employment law. Keep an eye on trends, and look for ways to hone your expertise in such areas.

### **Build your brand like you'd build your practice**

Ironically, working on your own professional profile is often much harder than doing work to support other people – being accountable only to oneself is a particular challenge. Approach your professional branding with the same mindset you'd use to tackle a matter: dig into research, create a strategy and timeline, and execute work product. Now is the time to optimize your LinkedIn profile, write articles or blog posts (and comment on those posted by others), engage in mentoring younger attorneys or law students, and take online courses. You can use this time to reflect on your unique skills and attributes and build out your narrative.

If you're sitting across from an interviewer six or twelve months from now, imagine how you'd answer the question, "What did you do during the pandemic?" Then do the things that will form your success story in the future.

### **Be poised to leap when opportunity knocks**

As part of building your brand, brush up on all the materials and skills you'll need when a job opportunity comes along. Don't just update your resume – revamp and optimize it. Draft a sample cover letter or two that you can quickly adapt when needed. Practice your interview skills, familiarize yourself with the world of video-based interviews, run through case studies illustrating your top strengths with colleagues and friends, research and practice digital assessments and job simulation tests. By remaining prepared to move quickly when the time comes, you can ride the waves of uncertainty without feeling like you might drown.

### **Seek support**

You don't have to go it alone – seek out the resources that can support you now. If your finances are strained, get savvy about your budget and research how recently passed government legislation (like the CARES Act) might support you with student loan relief or expanded unemployment benefits. If you're still transitioning out of a firm, ask if they'd be willing to extend the amount of time you can remain affiliated, see if you can support their pro bono matters after your official duties end, or ask if they'll offer outplacement support if they aren't doing so already.

### **Cultivate resilience**

If you're out of work, remember all the wellness-related activities you wished you had time for when you were at your busiest. Developing those habits – like physical activity, eating well, good sleep hygiene, and mindfulness practices – will serve you well right now and far into the future. Consider creating a daily schedule (and making a commitment to stick to it!) that helps you work toward your goals and milestones. Focus on what you can control – your own actions and strengthening your coping mechanisms – and try to let go of what's outside your sphere of influence.

## Be kind, especially to yourself

No one is immune from the anxiety of the current environment, and job searching at the same time is one more area of potential stress. Acknowledge that this time period is difficult and that moments of struggle are valid and expected. It's okay to have bad days – that's just human nature. At the same time, celebrate your efforts and reward yourself for small wins. Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

## Look at the big picture

Limiting your news intake to just one hour a day – instead of constantly checking the latest updates – can help you break the tendency to focus on the immediate stress and remember that this situation will eventually change for the better. We've weathered economic storms before. Recall how you and others managed during the last recession, or reach out to those who remember it well if this is the first time you're grappling with such a situation.

## Help others, empower yourself

Taking action always feels better than sitting idly and awaiting what fate throws your way. Sometimes the best way to stay in motion is to help others who are also struggling. Virtual volunteer opportunities abound – both within the field of law and in many other areas. When you make a difference in someone else's life, you get a powerful reminder that your actions matter and have value.

We all work to make a living, but our careers provide far more than an income. A job is often a source of purpose, a sense of identity, and a means for making a difference in the world. When you're without employment (or worried about losing what you have), you have to provide that purpose for yourself. Remember what drove you to enter the field of law in the first place, tap into that smoldering spark of passion, and use it to propel you into action that supports both your success and your well-being.

NAOMI BEARD NELSON

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## Non-Death Related Losses: Support Group for Lawyers

The OAAP is offering a five-week support group for lawyers working through non-death related losses during this period of uncertainty. This confidential group will focus on multiple experiences of loss arising from the pandemic, civil unrest, economic insecurity, fires, or any other experiences of current events, and on ways to cope. The group will be co-facilitated by Michael Kahn, LPC, JD, and OAAP Attorney Counselor Karen A. Neri, JD, MA, LMFT intern.

The support group will take place starting in November 2020. More details soon to follow.

To participate in this group or for more information, please set up a virtual meeting with Karen A. Neri at [karenn@oaap.org](mailto:karenn@oaap.org) or at 503.226.1057, ext. 11, or Michael Kahn, at 503.984.5418.



The OAAP is here to help you through any personal or professional issue – confidentially and free of charge.

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### **FINDING MEANINGFUL WORK**

The OAAP holds a periodic six-session networking and support group for lawyers making job or career transitions called “Finding Meaningful Work.” The sessions assist lawyers in creating a personalized job search plan; developing a mission statement and elevator speech; learning and practicing networking skills; and honing job search skills. OAAP Attorney Counselor Shari R. Pearlman, LCSW, JD will facilitate Finding Meaningful Work through videoconference. To participate or for more information, please contact Shari at 503.226.1057, ext. 14, or at sharip@oaap.org.

### **CAREER SELF-ASSESSMENT**

The OAAP attorney counselors can help you assess your career path and career opportunities. If you would like information about self-assessment, contact OAAP Attorney Counselors Shari R. Pearlman, LCSW, JD, at 503.226.1057, ext. 14, or at sharip@oaap.org, or Karen A. Neri, JD, MA, LMFT Intern, ext. 11, or at karenn@oaap.org.

### **LAWYERS IN TRANSITION PRESENTATION CALENDAR**

A “Lawyers in Transition” guest speaker is featured in conjunction with the Finding Meaningful Work group. However, you do not need to be a member of the six-session group to attend the speaking engagement. Speakers will present via videoconference. See the calendar below for scheduled speakers.

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*October 8, 2020  
(12 - 1 p.m.)*

*Iris Cox*

*In-house counsel to a law-adjacent career as a contract specialist in healthcare*

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For current information on upcoming Lawyers in Transition speakers and topics, please visit the OAAP website at [www.oaap.org](http://www.oaap.org) and click on Events.