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OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Welcome, Law Students!

IN SIGHT for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

A MINDFUL RETREAT

The Seventh Annual Women's Wellness Retreat for Lawyers saw a record turnout of 53 participants learning techniques for increasing mindfulness in our lives. The retreat took place at the lovely Oregon Gardens in Silverton and provided much opportunity for exploring in nature. We began with a delicious lunch and an opportunity to get to know one another better.

Lewis and Clark Professor Amy Bushaw kicked off the CLE portion of the event with amazing insights into what creates satisfaction professionally and personally. We learned that particular pitfalls for satisfaction are specific to lawyers. The role of advocating for other people can distance us from our own well-being; thinking like a lawyer can distance us from our emotions and the emotions of others; and the terrible combination of high stakes and low control over the outcome is a recipe for dissatisfaction. In addition, for many lawyers, these challenges are intensified by the pressures of child-rearing and home-tending with little time for self-care.

Professor Bushaw offered wonderful ideas for how to cultivate the skills and values that contribute to well-being. Switching our mental "to-do" list to a goal-oriented endeavor informed by our intrinsic values can change our perceptions of these looming tasks for the better. Aspiring to meet three important psychological needs – for autonomy, connectedness and competence – can help us all in our quest for contentment.

After a substantial and restorative break, we visited over a fantastic dinner. Yoga was a participant favorite and was

packed in both the evening and following morning sessions.

In a session called "Lawyering From Your Center: The Mind-Body Connection to Inner Peace," Denise Gour taught us the importance of deep breathing (and the vast difference between a shallow breath, providing only four ounces of air, compared to a full breath that gives us a whole liter of air). Responding to our thoughts and experiences on "auto pilot" can mire us in a negative cycle that impacts both our physical and mental health. When we mindfully appraise our thoughts and feelings, check in with their effect on our bodies, and treat ourselves with compassion, we are better able to return to a state of calm.

Dr. Jillayne Sorenson taught "Cultivating Emotional Resilience Through Mindfulness." We talked about how our emotions function and the useful information they provide us. Positive memories and emotions don't stick in our brains the same way that negative things do. Thankfully, concentrating on a pleasant moment for just 10 to 30 seconds can encode it in our memory with the same strength as a distressing experience. The ability to access positive emotions is the biggest factor in building resilience, and this is a skill we can cultivate for ourselves!

Professor Bushaw closed the retreat with wonderful ideas about how to bridge the gap between intention and action. We left with tools to support our own well-being by nourishing our ability to be present in all senses of the word.

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