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The Intentional Pursuit of Purpose: Nurturing Students' Authentic Motivation for Practicing Law

Katya S. Cronin

THE INTENTIONAL PURSUIT OF PURPOSE: NURTURING STUDENTS' AUTHENTIC MOTIVATION FOR PRACTICING LAW

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Abstract

"Why do you want to pursue a career in the law?" Nearly every aspiring attorney answers this question as part of their law school application personal statement. They pour their hopes, dreams, and challenges into the answer to this question—their formative struggles, deeply held values, and resolve to make the world a better place as legal practitioners. Soon after starting law school, however, law students turn their attention from core aspirations to immediate concerns. Forgotten and slowly choked by the thorns of competition, prestige, and external validation, law students' internal sense of self and purpose begin to wither away until, at the end of three years in law school, they are just a faint shadow of what once was. Unmoored from their personal values and seeing no higher meaning behind their efforts, many law students soon "grow up" to be directionless, helpless, and hopeless lawyers in a profession marked by profound unhappiness.

The blame does not lie with the students. The curriculum prevalent in most law schools today does little to help students appreciate their personal values, nurture their well-being, and find their calling. Indeed, it actively thwarts this important work. As educators, it is our moral obligation to correct this unfortunate, long-standing, and dangerous process. In a historic time of reassessing life choices and norms after a worldwide pandemic, now more than ever it is crucial for legal educators not only to help students learn how to practice law well, but also to empower them to find and nurture their authentic answers for why they want to

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practice law in the first place. This interdisciplinary Article offers a blueprint for how to achieve this in a first-year legal practice class. First, the Article explores the current research on professional identity formation and argues that teaching law students to critically question their choices and to pursue meaningful work is the most effective way to combat the crisis of identity facing the legal profession. Second, it examines the philosophical and psychological underpinnings of purpose and meaning, and reviews medical data demonstrating that living a life of purpose tremendously enhances one's physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Lastly, it brings tested methods from the fields of cognitive and positive psychology into the legal writing classroom and offers tangible curricular approaches to help students better direct their lives.

Introduction

> *If one wanted to crush and destroy a man entirely, to mete out to him the most terrible punishment, [. . .] all one would have to do would be to make him do work that was completely and utterly devoid of usefulness and meaning*.
> – Fyodor Dostoevsky[1]

The practice of law is capable of producing greatness. Too often, it produces despair. Attorneys have changed laws, built companies, fought injustices, freed people, created countries, and ensured peace. And yet, there is a deep "misery rooted in meaning"[2] that has infected the profession. By latest estimates, one in three lawyers suffers from depression, one in four engages in alcohol or substance abuse, and one in eight has thoughts of suicide.[3] We live in a world full of worthy legal problems that society must solve and of people capable of solving them. Despite this fact, lawyers all too often engage in work that they believe has no value or meaning.

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[1] THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 43 (Penguin Classics 1986).

[2] MARY ANN GLENDON, A NATION UNDER LAWYERS: HOW THE CRISIS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION IS TRANSFORMING AMERICAN SOCIETY 91 (1994).

[3] *See, e.g.,* Patrick R. Krill, Ryan Johnson & Linda Albert, *The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys*, 10 J. ADDICT. MED. 46, 51 (2016)*;* Stephanie Francis Ward, *Lawyers Are Twice as Likely to Have Thoughts of Suicide, New Study Finds*, ABA J. (Feb. 14, 2023), https://www.abajournal.com/web/article/study-finds-lawyers-twice-as-likely-to-have-thoughts-of-suicide [https://perma.cc/9DHU-LJGJ].

This crisis of purpose traces its origins to law school. These venerated institutions all too often fail to equip students with the skills they need to pursue a life of purpose, and in many ways actively impede such efforts. The pressures and extreme competition, focus on cold rationality, and use of external measures of value in law school condition law students to suppress their internal moral compass, ignore their personal values, and subjugate their intrinsic sense of self to the dominant narrative of prestige and success.[4] The result is law students who forget why they wanted to be lawyers in the first place and, by inertia, end up following the path of least resistance before them.[5] They pursue a comfortable and prestigious life, instead of a purposeful one.

This problem is neither new nor unknown. For decades, many have called upon law schools to reform their curricula and to place more emphasis on the skills and values that would allow law students to become grounded, ethical, healthy, and purpose-driven members of the profession.[6] Such a paradigm shift, however, inevitably faces cynicism, institutional inertia, and lack of buy-in.[7] In the meantime, each year, more than 35,000 law students graduate across the country,[8] many of whom will inevitably suffer mental and emotional turmoil as they lead a life that, by their own account, has no deeper meaning.

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[4] *See generally* Susan Sturm & Lani Guinier, *The Law School Matrix: Reforming Legal Education in a Culture of Competition and Conformity*, 60 VAND. L. REV. 515, 535 (2007). *See also* Lawrence S. Krieger, *Institutional Denial about the Dark Side of Law School, and Fresh Empirical Guidance for Constructively Breaking the Silence*, 52 J. LEGAL EDUC. 112, 125 (2002).

[5] *See* Lawrence S. Krieger & Kennon M. Sheldon, *What Makes Lawyers Happy?: A Data-Driven Prescription to Redefine Professional Success*, 83 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 554, 560 (2015).

[6] *See, e.g.,* E Eugene Clark, *Legal Education and Professional Development—An Educational Continuum, Report of the Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession: Narrowing the Gap* 6–10 (Ill. Am. Bar Ass'n 1992) [hereinafter MACCRATE REPORT]; WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN, ANNE COLBY, JUDITH WELCH WEGNER, LLOYD BOND & LEE S. SHULMAN, EDUCATING LAWYERS: PREPARATION FOR THE PROFESSION OF LAW 3, 25 (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 2007) [hereinafter CARNEGIE REPORT].

[7] Jan L. Jacobowitz, *Cultivating Professional Identity & Creating Community: A Tale of Two Innovations*, 36 U. ARK. LITTLE ROCK L. REV. 319, 325 (2014).

[8] Statista Research Department, *Number of Law Graduates in the United States from 2013 to 2021* (Sept. 26, 2023), https://www.statista.com/statistics/428985/number-of-law-graduates-us/ [https://perma.cc/6W5M-4V7B].

But there is hope: As law school faculty, we do not have to wait for sweeping changes before we can begin making a difference in our students' lives. Although the recently revised ABA Standard 303 requires "law schools" to provide opportunities for students to develop a more robust professional identity, it is ultimately up to individual faculty to find effective pedagogical approaches to nurture students' internal sense of self and pursuit of purpose.

This Article offers a blueprint for how to do so in the context of a first-year legal practice class. Part I explores in depth the crisis facing the legal profession and the root causes behind it. It also surveys nearly two decades of calls for curricular reform and the academy's response. Part II makes the case for pursuing a life of purpose. It explores the medical, psychological, and social benefits of living a life of purpose, and looks at the underpinnings of purpose through the lens of philosophical traditions and the fields of cognitive and positive psychology. Finally, Part III offers concrete, tested, and easily deployable interventions to help students find and pursue purpose. It addresses the skills students need to reflect on their personal values and beliefs, actively and confidently seek out knowledge and competencies, and remain mindful of the infinite possibilities to make a difference and find meaning in the world around them.

I. A Profession in Crisis

> *How can the laborious study of a dry and technical system, the greedy watch for clients and practice of shopkeepers' arts, the mannerless conflicts over often sordid interests, make out a life?*
> – Oliver Wendell Holmes[9]

The physical and mental wellbeing of lawyers is notoriously worse than that of people in other professions.[10] Lawyers experience overwhelming levels of stress, which in turn makes them highly susceptible to cardiovascular events and other health problems.[11] They also generally get less, and poorer quality, sleep, which again

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[9] The Profession of the Law, Lecture delivered to undergraduates of Harvard University (Feb. 17, 1886), *reprinted in* THE COLLECTED LEGAL PAPERS 29 (1921).

[10] *See, e.g.,* Krill, Johnson & Albert, *supra* note 3, at 46; STEVEN J. HARPER, THE LAWYER BUBBLE: A PROFESSION IN CRISIS 61 (2016); Cheryl Ann Krause & Jane Chong, *Lawyer Wellbeing as a Crisis of the Profession*, 71 S.C. L. REV. 203, 240 (2019).

[11] Jennifer Pirtle, *Stressing Yourself Sick*, ABA J. (Sept. 24, 2006), https://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/stressing_yourself_sick [https://perma.cc/AH8K-ZQJ5].

increases their susceptibility to diseases.[12] Lawyers have a disproportionately higher occurrence of alcoholism and substance abuse, at twice the rate of adults in the general population.[13] They likewise have notably higher levels of depression.[14] Studies estimate that close to 45% of lawyers suffer from depression,[15] as compared to 3 to 9% in the general population.[16] Indeed, of 100 professions surveyed, lawyers had the highest rates of depression, more than 3.6 times that of the second highest score.[17] Of those reporting symptoms of depression, many also experienced suicidal ideations, with 12% of lawyers reporting that they consider suicide about once a month.[18] Similarly, one in four lawyers reports some other psychological distress, including "feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, anxiety, social alienation, [and] isolation."[19] These statistics have held true for

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[12] National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change* 7, 53 (Aug. 14, 2017), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/abanews/ThePathToLawyerWellBeingReportRevFINAL.pdf [https://perma.cc/5P5M-KTEA].

[13] G. Andrew H. Benjamin, Elaine J. Darling & Bruce Sales, *The Prevalence of Depression, Alcohol Abuse, and Cocaine Abuse Among United States Lawyers*, 13 INT'L J. LAW & PSYCHIATRY 233, 240–41 (1990); Krill, Johnson & Albert, *supra* note 3, at 46; C. Stuart Mauney, *The Lawyers' Epidemic: Depression, Suicide and Substance Abuse*, South Carolina Bar HELP Task Force, https://www.scbar.org/media/filer_public/3d/25/3d25d564-bc05-468b-9cc0-6317004adb38/outline_for_lawyers_epidemic.pdf [https://perma.cc/5HT3-9UCC] (last visited Dec. 5, 2023).

[14] William W. Eaton, James C. Anthony, Wallace Mandel & Roberta Garrison, *Occupations and the Prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder,* 32 J. OCCUPATIONAL MED. 1079, 1085 (1990).

[15] Norina Melita, *Emotional Intelligence, Distancing, and Learning a New Skill as Strategies to Combat the Deleterious Effects of Emotional Labor on Attorney Wellbeing*, 17 FRONTIERS IN BEHAV. NEUROSCIENCE 3 (2023).

[16] Benjamin, Darling & Sales, *supra* note 13, at 234.

[17] Eaton, Anthony, Mandel & Garrison, *supra* note 14, at 1085.

[18] Michael J. Sweeney, *The Devastation of Depression: Lawyers Are at Greater Risk–It's an Impairment to Take Seriously,* https://www.alabar.org/assets/2014/08/BP-ALAP-RDevastationDep.pdf [https://perma.cc/9UDE-KENY] (last visited Dec.11, 2023).

[19] Mississippi Bar Association, *Mental/Emotional Health*, https://www.msbar.org/programs-affiliates/lawyers-judges-assistance-program/signs-symptoms/mentalemotional-health/ [https://perma.cc/63VV-4QWX] (last visited Dec. 11, 2023).

decades,[20] and they hold true today.[21]

These numbers are harrowing but unsurprising. On average, practicing lawyers are not a happy bunch. In a 2010 study on career satisfaction, clergymen, architects, scientists, engineers, physicians, detectives, travel agents, pilots, financial planners, repair persons, housekeepers, and butlers all reported higher levels of happiness than the members of the legal profession.[22] Only about half of lawyers responded that they are satisfied with their job, and that number dropped significantly when measuring overall life satisfaction.[23] The level of dissatisfaction is highest at large law firms,[24] where 37% of associates quit their big law firm job by the end of their third year.[25]

These statistics paint a picture not only of personal tragedies, but also of a profession in crisis.[26] Such pervasive personal dissatisfaction affects lawyers' productivity and effectiveness,[27] impairs lawyers' ability to relate to others, including their family members, colleagues, and clients,[28] results in high levels of burnout and volatility in the legal field,[29] and deepens the public's mistrust and perceptions of the

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[20] Eaton, Anthony, Mandel & Garrison, *supra* note 14, at 1085, tbl. 3 (finding that attorneys have the highest rate of depression of any profession in the United States).

[21] Ward, *supra* note 3 (discussing new findings among California and Washington, D.C. lawyers and finding that 8.5% of all respondents thought "they'd 'be better off dead,'" and 14.3% of attorneys thirty and younger considered suicide).

[22] NANCY LEVIT & DOUGLAS O. LINDER, THE HAPPY LAWYER: MAKING A GOOD LIFE IN THE LAW 2 (2010).

[23] *Id*.

[24] Jerome M. Organ, *What Do We Know About the Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction of Lawyers? A Meta-Analysis of Research on Lawyer Satisfaction and Well-Being*, 8 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 225, 265 (2011).

[25] *See* LEVIT & LINDER, *supra* note 22, at 5. By contrast, lawyers working for smaller firms, in-house, the government, or part-time reported higher levels of career satisfaction, and both men and women who took time off for childcare likewise reported higher levels of happiness. *Id.*

[26] *See* Christine Cerniglia Brown, *Professional Identity Formation: Working Backwards to Move the Profession Forward*, 61 LOY. L. REV. 313, 317 (2015).

[27] *See* Paul R. Verkuil, Martin E.P. Seligman & Terry H. Kang, *Countering Lawyering Unhappiness: Pessimism, Decision Latitude and the Zero-Sum Dilemma* 6 (Sept. 2000), http://papers.ssrn.com/paper/taf?abstract-id=241942 [https://perma.cc/87Z5-ZN58].

[28] Leonard L. Riskin, *The Contemplative Lawyer: On the Potential Contributions of Mindfulness Meditation to Law Students, Lawyers, and Their Clients*, 7 HARV. NEGOT. L. REV. 1, 13 (2002).

[29] *See generally* DEBORAH L. ARRON, RUNNING FROM THE LAW: WHY GOOD

legal profession as soulless, valueless, and amoral.[30]

There are numerous factors contributing to this grim reality. The cost of education leaves most law students with an average debt of $125,000, thus presenting seemingly limited career choices.[31] The practice of law in most cases also requires significantly more than the national average forty-hour work week, leaving in turn less room for personal life and other pursuits and interests.[32] The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting life disturbances further exacerbated these issues and contributed to increased dissatisfaction.[33] All these factors, however, are not unique to the legal profession and, therefore, cannot alone explain the large disparity of physical and psychological malaise plaguing lawyers.

A subtler, but no less pernicious, contributing factor can be traced to the way law students are trained to become lawyers in the first place.[34] The remainder of this section will thus unpack the role of law schools in shaping lawyer (un)happiness by examining the shortcomings of the law school curriculum, detailing the numerous and persistent calls for curricular reform dating back to the early 1990s, and zeroing in on the concept of professional identity as a potential antidote to the existential angst of lawyers.

LAWYERS ARE GETTING OUT OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION (2003) (interviewing hundreds of successful former lawyers about their dissatisfaction with the practice of law and summarizing the main reasons for lawyers leaving the profession); Robert Kurson, *Who's Killing the Great Lawyers of Harvard?*, ESQUIRE (Jan. 29, 2007) https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a842/killing-lawyers-harvard-0800/ [https://perma.cc/EKQ7-T358].

[30] *See* Marc Galanter, *The Faces of Mistrust: The Image of Lawyers in Public Opinion, Jokes, and Political Discourse*, 66 U. CIN. L. REV. 805 (1998).

[31] Brian Z. Tamanaha, *Is Law School Worth the Cost*, 63 J. LEGAL EDUC. 173, 176 (2013).

[32] RONIT DINOVITZER, ROBERT L. NELSON, GABRIELE PLICKERT, REBECCA SANDEFUR & JOYCE S. STERLING; WITH TERRY K. ADAMS, BRYANT G. GARTH, JOHN HAGAN, GITA Z. WILDER & DAVID B. WILKINS, AFTER THE J.D.II: SECOND RESULTS FROM A NATIONAL STUDY OF LEGAL CAREERS 30 (2009); *see also* Patrick J. Schiltz, *On Being a Happy, Healthy, and Ethical Member of an Unhappy, Unhealthy, and Unethical Profession*, 52 VAND. L. REV. 871, 891–94 (1999).

[33] Jennifer N. Rosen Valverde, *Using Narrative Therapy to Re-Author the Dominant Law Student Narrative, Foster Professional Identity Development, and Restore Hope*, 28 CLINICAL L. REV. 329, 330 (2021).

[34] *See generally* Benjamin V. Madison, III & Larry O. Natt Gantt, II, *The Emperor Has No Clothes, But Does Anyone Really Care? How Law Schools Are Failing to Develop Students' Professional Identity and Practical Judgment*, 27 REGENT U. L. REV. 339, 356–73 (2014).

A. The Law School Curriculum

Law schools teach students numerous valuable skills but finding happiness and well-being is not among them. Studies show that, upon entering law school, law students are no more or less likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, substance abuse, or other mental health issues than the general population (with numbers ranging between 3% and 9%, depending on the study).[35] Yet, within the span of three years in law school, something drastically changes in the way these students perceive the world, their career aspirations, and their intrinsic worth.[36] A host of symptoms, including "obsessive-compulsive behavior, anxiety, hostility, depression, and social alienation and isolation," see drastic increases in both occurrence and severity between the first and third year of law school, with 40 to 70%

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[35] *See* G. Andrew H. Benjamin, Alfred Kaszniak, Bruce Sales & Stephen B. Shanfield, *The Role of Legal Education in Producing Psychological Distress Among Law Students and Lawyers*, 11 AM. BAR FOUND. RSCH. J. 225, 250 (1986) (finding that, upon entering law school, the studied cohort did not differ from the general population on mental health measures but that the law school experience elevated symptoms such as "obsessive-compulsive behavior, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism (social alienation and isolation)"); Krieger, *supra* note 4, at 114; Kennon M. Sheldon & Lawrence S. Krieger, *Does Legal Education Have Undermining Effects on Law Students? Evaluating Changes in Motivation, Values, and Well-Being*, 22 BEHAV. SCI. & L. 261, 262–63 (2004); SUSAN SWAIM DAICOFF, LAWYER, KNOW THYSELF: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PERSONALITY STRATEGIES AND WEAKNESSES 73 (2004).

[36] *See* Benjamin, Kaszniak, Sales & Shanfield, *supra* note 35, at 250; *see also* Sheldon & Krieger, *supra* note 35, at 275, 283 (finding that law students experienced a decline in happiness and well-being during their first law school year, and that "the law-school experience was associated with troubling increases in extrinsic values and declines in self-determined motivation"); LEVIT & LINDER, *supra* note 22, at 3–7 (reviewing data on lawyer career satisfaction, mental health concerns and substance use and abuse); Jerome M. Organ, David B. Jaffe & Katherine M. Bender, *Suffering in Silence: The Survey of Law Student Well-Being and the Reluctance of Law Students to Seek Help for Substance Use and Mental Health Concerns*, 66 J. LEGAL EDUC. 116, 144–45 (2016) (finding that "the current culture of law school at many law schools appears to foster a variety of challenges for students" including with respect to alcohol use, illegal street drug and prescription drug use, moderate to severe anxiety, and depression, and that in the last twenty-five years "the substance use and mental health issues facing law students have not decreased").

of students reporting mental distress at the end of law school.[37] Some scholars attribute this phenomenon to a "moral drift"—a perceptible shift from "generally intrinsic values and motivations" to "more extrinsic orientations," that in turn leads to a decrease in "well-being and life satisfaction," and "a sense of disinterest, disengagement, and loss of enthusiasm."[38] Others go so far as to call it "a kind of moral schizophrenia," which causes the lawyers' professional amorality to "infect" their personal life and thus leads to deterioration of mental and emotional health.[39] Whatever the label for this process, research demonstrates that law schools cause it in two ways: by what they teach and what they unteach.

"[T]he factors most emphasized in law schools [. . .] have nil to modest bearing on lawyer well-being."[40] Law school classes focus on analytical reasoning over personal and interpersonal skills, and implicitly (and many times, explicitly) encourage students to detach what they learn about "the law" from their personal reactions, goals, histories, and values.[41] This overemphasis on rational, logical, and analytical skills "marginalizes fairness, justice, morality, emotional life, and caring for others."[42] For students who arrive at law school with a strong empathetic core, this environment of cold rationality above all creates not only feelings of distress and isolation, but also a strong academic disadvantage that follows these students well into

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[37] Susan C. Wawrose, *A More Human Place: Using Core Counseling Skills to Transform Law School Relationships*, 55 WILLAMETTE L. REV. 133, 141 (2018). *See also* Barbara Lentz, *Incorporating Reflection into Law Teaching and Learning*, *in* EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN THE LAW SCHOOL CURRICULUM 17, 18–21 (2017) (finding that prevalence of depression among entering students was at 8–9%, while depression rates at graduation were at 40%); Jessie Agatstein, Zach Arnold, Rachel Dempsey, Joya Sonnenfeldt & Josh Weiss, *Falling Through the Cracks: A Report on Mental Health at Yale Law School* 14 (Dec. 2014), https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/falling_through_the_cracks_120614.pdf [https://perma.cc/NRQ5-FT28] (finding that 70% of Yale law students reported mental health challenges during law school).

[38] Lawrence Krieger, *The Inseparability of Professionalism and Personal Satisfaction: Perspectives on Values, Integrity and Happiness*, 11 CLINICAL L. REV. 425, 433 (2005); *see generally* JAMES BALDWIN, *A Stranger in the Village*, *in* NOTES OF A NATIVE SON 163, 167 (2012).

[39] JOSEPH ALLEGRETTI, THE LAWYER'S CALLING: CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LEGAL PRACTICE 19, 68 (1996).

[40] *See* Krieger & Sheldon, *supra* note 5, at 560.

[41] *See* Sturm & Guinier, *supra* note 4, at 516; Krieger, *supra* note 4, at 117.

[42] *See* Krieger & Sheldon, *supra* note 5, at 568 (citing to ELIZABETH MERTZ, THE LANGUAGE OF LAW SCHOOL: LEARNING TO "THINK LIKE A LAWYER" 1, 6, 10, 95, 100–01, 120 (2007)).

their future careers.[43] By contrast, students who are naturally more analytically inclined and who thrive in the law school environment are left ill-equipped to handle the inevitable professional situations which "call for judgment, maturity, self-awareness, self-control, interpersonal awareness, the ability to influence people, relationship-building, teamwork, collaboration, problem-solving, and strategic planning,"[44] and are thus differently disadvantaged in their future career paths.[45]

But law schools not only fail to teach values and emotional competency skills—they also undermine and erode the values and priorities that students already possess prior to entering law school, which happen to be "the very factors most important for the well-being of lawyers."[46] Law schools rely upon extrinsic motivators and hierarchical measures—including comparative grading and class ranks, honors, journal participation, and status-seeking placements.[47] Empirical research has found that these competitive pressures effectively "socialize" students away from the intrinsic values that they possessed in their 1L year—values stemming from their family and upbringing, religious or spiritual traditions, school, organized activities, and others—and towards extrinsic measures of success, including money and job titles, status and power, fancy consumer

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[43] *See* DAICOFF, *supra* note 35, at 73, 114–17.

[44] Susan Swaim Daicoff, *Expanding the Lawyer's Toolkit of Skills and Competencies: Synthesizing Leadership, Professionalism, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, and Comprehensive Law*, 52 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 795, 833 (2012).

[45] Susan Daicoff, *Lawyer, Know Thyself: A Review of Empirical Research on Attorney Attributes Bearing on Professionalism*, 46 AM. U. L. REV. 1340, 1381 (1997).

[46] *See* Krieger & Sheldon, *supra* note 5, at 560.

[47] *See* Lawrence S. Krieger, *What We're Not Telling Law Students—and Lawyers—That They Really Need to Know: Some Thoughts-in-Action Toward Revitalizing the Profession from Its Roots*, 13 J. L. & HEALTH 1, 18 (1999); *see also* Riskin, *supra* note 28, at 56 (arguing that preoccupation with money, status, or power can produce unnecessarily adversarial behavior); Debra S. Austin, *Positive Legal Education: Flourishing Law Students and Thriving Law Schools*, 77 MD. L. REV. 649, 687–88 (2018) (noting that law school grade curves restrict students who could otherwise excel, create a toxic learning environment, and reduce students' sense of belonging); Kennon M. Sheldon & Lawrence S. Krieger, *Understanding the Negative Effects of Legal Education on Law Students: A Longitudinal Test of Self-Determination Theory*, 33 PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCH. BULL. 883, 894 (2007) (finding that research results suggest "to maximize the learning and emotional adjustment of its graduates, law schools need to focus on enhancing their students' feelings of autonomy").

goods, and country club memberships.[48] Alongside significant student debt, this drive toward such extrinsic recognition of worth leads students to ignore their own sense of self and autonomy, as well as their "personal needs, feelings, and conscience" in favor of "more 'practical' matters (such as production, performance, income, or image)."[49] Students end up selecting higher-paying, more "prestigious" career paths, which often do not match their personal values and experiences.[50] Through this process of value displacement, students "lose their sense of purpose and their expectation of finding meaningful work."[51] By recent estimates, between 40 and 70% of incoming law students want to practice public interest law.[52] Yet, by the time students graduate from law school, less than 7% of them continue on to be public interest lawyers in any capacity and about 70% of them end up working in private law firms.[53]

This sharp change in career trajectory often breeds "moral and psychological role distancing and feelings of fraudulence,"[54] which in turn can cause cognitive dissonance.[55] Cognitive dissonance is the process through which one's mind tries to reconcile two contradictory values, beliefs, or ideas that they hold at the same time.[56] Strategies for resolving such contradictions vary but all have uniformly been proven to lead to detachment, avoidance, anxiety, depression, and deep emotional and mental disturbance.[57] As second-order effects,

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[48] *See* Krieger, *supra* note 4, at 121; Kennon M. Sheldon & Tim Kasser, *Goals, Congruence, and Positive Well-Being: New Empirical Support for Humanistic Theories,* 41 J. HUMANISTIC PSYCH. 30, 42–45 (2001).

[49] *See* Krieger, *supra* note 47, at 8.

[50] *See, e.g.,* Organ, *supra* note 24, at 253; Phyllis W. Beck & David Burns, *Anxiety and Depression in Law Students: Cognitive Intervention*, 30 J. LEGAL EDUC. 270, 274–75 (1979); Glendon, *supra* note 2, at 7–8, 304, n.55.

[51] Jacobowitz, *supra* note 7, at 321–22 (discussing Prof. Daisy Floyd's experience in surveying students during three seminar courses that she offered as part of her CASTL project).

[52] LEVIT & LINDER, *supra* note 22, at 134–35.

[53] Todd A. Berger, *Jimmy Carter's "Malaise" Speech, Social Desirability Bias, and the Yuppie Nuremberg Defense: The Real Reason Why Law Students Say They Want to Practice Public Interest Law, Yet So Few Actually Do*, 22 KAN. J.L. & PUB. POL'Y 139, 143, 145 (2012); DINOVITZER, NELSON, PLICKERT, SANDEFUR & STERLING, *supra* note 32, at 9.

[54] John Bliss, *Divided Selves: Professional Role Distancing Among Law Students and New Lawyers in a Period of Market Crisis*, 42 LAW & SOC'Y L. & SOC. INQUIRY 855, 880 (2017).

[55] Valverde, *supra* note 33, at 349.

[56] *See* LEON FESTINGER, A THEORY OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE 12–13 (1962).

[57] Valverde, *supra* note 33, at 356.

individuals who experience frequently triggered cognitive dissonance often resort to coping strategies such as alcohol and substance abuse and destructive relational practices.[58] It is no surprise then, that when these already strained, disenchanted, and psychologically distanced law students enter the workforce and are faced with the harsh realities of their student debt, back-breaking work weeks, ever-increasing demand for performance, client-driven schedules, and little to no room for outside interests, they turn into deeply dissatisfied and psychologically distressed attorneys.

B. Calls for Curricular Reform

These failings of the U.S. law school curriculum have led to numerous calls for reform over the years. As early as 1992, an ABA "Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession: Narrowing the Gap," published what is commonly known as the MacCrate Report.[59] The report urged law schools to teach professional values that transcend mere professionalism and to help students strive to "promote justice, fairness, and morality," by continuously improving both themselves and the profession.[60] Nearly two decades after the MacCrate Report, the Clinical Legal Education Association ("CLEA") issued a report called *Best Practices for Legal Education*, which reiterated the same conclusions and advised law schools to integrate professional values and skills, including "client relationship management" and "the ability to manage personal workload," to "recognize personal and professional strengths and weaknesses," and "to develop strategies to enhance professional performance."[61]

The same call sounded in yet another watershed study of U.S. law schools. In 2007, the Carnegie Foundation, in a series of comprehensive assessments, analyzed the state of professional development in several disciplines, including law. In their report, titled *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law* (herein the Carnegie Report), the authors formulated three distinct apprenticeships, listed in order of decreasing success: 1) thinking like a lawyer, 2) acting like a lawyer, and 3) developing the professional

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[58] Richard C. Reuben, *Beyond Stress Reduction: Mindfulness as a Skill for Developing Authentic Professional Identity*, 89 UMKC L. REV. 669, 676 (2015).

[59] MACCRATE REPORT, *supra* note 6.

[60] *Id*. at 135–36, 22, 218.

[61] ROY STUCKEY ET AL, BEST PRACTICES FOR LEGAL EDUCATION: A VISION AND A ROAD MAP 4, 40, 56 (2007); *see also* Megan Bess, *Grit, Growth Mindset, and the Path to Successful Lawyering*, 89 UMKC L. REV. 493, 496–97 (2021).

identity to be a lawyer.[62] The third of these "apprenticeships" seeks to help each student answer for themselves questions such as "Who am I as a member of this profession? What am I like, and what do I want to be like in my professional role? And what place do ethical-social values have in my core sense of professional identity?"[63] As a high-level recommendation, the report proposed a scheme of integrating all three of the apprenticeships in the legal curriculum, rather than focusing merely on the first one.[64]

These early reports sparked significant curricular changes in many law schools, targeting specifically the second apprenticeship—the inclusion of clinical and practice-based education. Although "the typical law school continue[d] to devote the lion's share of resources to doctrinally focused teaching and learning,"[65] the decade following the Carnegie Report and *Best Practices* saw a rapid expansion of experiential course offerings and other modalities designed to train students for client-centered service.[66]

By 2015, however, when CLEA published its updated report, *Building on Best Practices: Transforming Legal Education in a Changing World*, little had been done to bolster the third apprenticeship. The authors of the report yet again called on law schools to expand their focus and teach law students (1) core values such as "integrity, honesty, diligence, fairness, courage, wisdom, compassion, and balance;"[67] and (2) core skills, including "self-awareness, empathy, and self-motivation."[68] The lack of meaningful progress on the third apprenticeship gave rise to a social movement to incorporate "professional identity formation" into the law school

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[62] CARNEGIE REPORT, *supra* note 6, at 25.
[63] *Id*. at 194.
[64] *Id*.
[65] Martin J. Katz & Kenneth R. Margolis, *A Balanced Curriculum*, *in* BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICES: TRANSFORMING LEGAL EDUCATION IN A CHANGING WORLD 45, 45 (Deborah Maranville, Lisa Radtke Bliss, Carolyn Wilkes Kaas, & Antoinette Sedillo López eds., 2015) [hereinafter BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICES] (https://www.cleaweb.org/Building-on-Best-Practicees) [https://perma.cc/8PCS-6CQW] (last visited Dec. 11, 2023).
[66] AM. BAR ASS'N, TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF LEGAL EDUCATION, REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS 3 (2014), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/professional_responsibility/report_and_recommendations_of_aba_task_force.pdf [https://perma.cc/N4JX-VDNV].
[67] Larry O. Natt Gantt, II & Benjamin V. Madison III, *Teaching Knowledge, Skills, and Values of Professional Identity Formation* 253, 257, *in* BUILDING ON BEST PRACTICES, *supra* note 65 (internal numbers omitted and punctuation modified).
[68] *Id.* at 260 (internal numbers omitted and punctuation modified).

curriculum. This effort was spearheaded by the work of the Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions at the University of St. Thomas School of Law.[69] Over the last decade, a robust body of scholarship has developed, exploring the many ways that law schools could modify their curricula to better serve their students in their journey to becoming members of the legal profession.

In response to numerous appeals from legal associations and the academy, in February 2021, the Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar presented a proposed revision to Standard 303 of the ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools that requires law schools to include the development of professional identity as part of the law school curriculum.[70] After receiving overwhelming support from the legal field for the proposed change, in February 2022, the ABA adopted its revised Standard 303 requiring that, starting in the Fall of 2023, law schools shall "provide substantial opportunities to students for . . . (3) the development of a professional identity."[71]

C. Professional Identity Defined

The concept of professional identity comes from the identity theories of social psychology.[72] Identity theories broadly posit that an individual's concept of self is influenced by their perception of the role they occupy in society and "the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its

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[69] Neil Hamilton, *The Next Steps of a Formation-of-Student-Professional Identity Social Movement: Building Bridges Among the Three Key Stakeholders – Faculty and Staff, Students, and Legal Employers and Clients*, 14 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 285, 301–03 (2018).

[70] *See* Memorandum from Scot Bales, Council Chair & William Adams, Managing Dir. Of Accreditation and Legal Educ., Am. Bar Ass'n, to Interested Persons and Entities 6–7 (May 25, 2021), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/council_reports_and_resolutions/comments/2021/21-may-notice-and-comment-standards-205-206-303-507-508.pdf [https://perma.cc/RDZ7-QKAC].

[71] AM. BAR ASS'N SECTION OF LEGAL EDUC. & ADMISSIONS TO THE BAR, REVISIONS TO THE 2021-2022 ABA STANDARDS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF LAW SCHOOLS 2 (2022), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/standards/2021-2022/21-22-standards-book-revisions-since printed.pdf [https://perma.cc/CHR9-LTM8].

[72] Reuben, *supra* note 58, at 671.

performance."[73] As such, a person's identity encompasses the intricate interplay between one's own core system of beliefs, values, and experiences, on the one hand, and the characteristics, norms, and expectations of the group or social structure that the individual belongs to, on the other.[74]

Professional identity is a sub-category of identity theory and focuses on the degree to which a person's chosen profession impacts and shapes their core values and beliefs.[75] No single definition of professional identity exists, with some researchers focusing more on "the foundational elements of identity: beliefs, attitudes, values, motives, and experiences through which one derives personal meaning," while others focus on the processes of socialization and integration of the broader societal or group norms into the self.[76]

This lack of unified definition and the inherent tension between the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of one's sense of self persist in the context of lawyer professional identity. Alongside the revised Standard 303, the ABA also promulgated a new Interpretation 303-5, which states:

> Professional identity focuses on what it means to be a lawyer and the special obligations lawyers have to their clients and society. The development of a professional identity should involve an intentional exploration of the values, guiding principles, and well-being practices considered foundational to successful legal practice. Because developing a professional identity requires reflection and growth over time, students should have frequent opportunities for such development during each year of law school and in a variety of courses and co-curricular and professional development activities.[77]

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[73] Jan E. Stets & Peter J. Burke, *Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory*, 63 SOC. PSYCHOL. Q. 224, 225 (2000).

[74] *Cf.* Henri Tajfel & John Turner, *An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict*, *reprinted in* ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY: A READER 33, 33–35 (Mary Jo Hatch & Majken Schultz eds., 2004) (noting that "the complex interweaving of individual or interpersonal behavior with the contextual social processes of intergroup conflict" has previously been neglected in the literature and discussing the various conditions in which one's actions in a conflict situation are determined by "their interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics" versus "by their respective memberships" in a group) (emphasis in original).

[75] Reuben, *supra* note 58, at 672.

[76] *Id.*

[77] AM. BAR ASS'N SECTION OF LEGAL EDUC. & ADMISSIONS TO THE BAR, *supra* note 71, at 3.

In the decade and a half following the Carnegie Report's first mention of "professional identity formation" of lawyers, many scholars have taken up the concept and have explored its various facets. Broadly, the scholarship falls in one of two categories: the first is focused on the practical, ethical, and professional aspects of becoming a lawyer, and the second on personal values and lawyer well-being.

Most of the studies and recommendations in the field fall into the first category. In 2003, for example, Marjorie Schultz and Sheldon Zedeck from the University of California at Berkeley conducted a rigorous empirical study of the practical and professional skills that clients value in their lawyers and published a list of twenty-six "effectiveness factors."[78] Among the factors listed were creativity/innovation, problem solving, strategic planning, managerial skills, networking, and business development.[79] Along similar lines, an initiative by the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System surveyed 24,000 practicing lawyers and identified almost forty professionalism skills and qualities that new lawyers need upon graduating from law school, including keeping information confidential, arriving on time, honoring commitments, integrity/trustworthiness, treating others with respect, listening attentively, responding promptly, diligence, strong work ethic, and attention to detail.[80] Through their work with the Holloran Center, Professors Neil Hamilton, Jerome Organ, and Verna Monson have likewise advocated extensively for placing greater curricular emphasis on professionalism and lawyer effectiveness.[81] In empirical studies,

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[78] Marjorie M. Shultz & Sheldon Zedeck, *Predicting Lawyer Effectiveness: Broadening the Basis for Law School Admission Decision*s, 36 L. & SOC. INQUIRY 620, 630 tbl.1 (2011).

[79] *Id.*

[80] *See* ALLI GERKMAN & LOGAN CORNETT, INST. FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE AM. LEGAL SYS., FOUNDATIONS FOR PRACTICE: THE WHOLE LAWYER AND THE CHARACTER QUOTIENT REPORT 1, 21 fig.9, 22 fig.10 (2016), https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/foundations_for_practice_whole_lawyer_character_quotient.pdf [https://perma.cc/Z9PA-QAN8].

[81] *See generally* Neil W. Hamilton, *Professionalism Clearly Defined*, 18 PROF. LAW. 4 (2008); Neil W. Hamilton, *Assessing Professionalism: Measuring Progress in the Formation of an Ethical Professional Identity,* 5 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 470 (2008); Neil Hamilton, *Fostering Professional Formation (Professionalism): Lessons from the Carnegie Foundation's Five Studies on Educating Professionals*, 45 CREIGHTON L. REV. 763 (2012); Verna E. Monson & Neil W. Hamilton, *Entering Law Students' Conceptions of an Ethical Professional Identity and the Role of the Lawyer in Society*, 35

Hamilton and Organ have identified skills and characteristics, such as integrity, good judgment, strong work ethic, dedication to client service, and commitment to work goals, that form more effective and competent lawyers.[82]

Recognizing that, no matter their professional competencies, "[l]aw students who do not develop a sense of their internal values and honor those as part of their judgments in practice are far more likely to lose their sense of self,"[83] a smaller subset of the literature on professional identity formation has focused on the intrinsic process of becoming a lawyer.[84] Scholars have advocated that, to enhance

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J. LEGAL PROF. 385 (2011); Verna E. Monson & Neil W. Hamilton, *Ethical Professional (Trans)Formation in Law: Early Career Lawyers Make Sense of Professionalism*, 8 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 129 (2011); Neil W. Hamilton & Verna Monson, *Ethical Professional (Trans)Formation: Themes from Interviews About Professionalism with Exemplary Lawyers*, 52 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 921 (2012); Neil Hamilton & Verna Monson, *Legal Education's Ethical Challenge: Empirical Research on How Most Effectively to Foster Each Student's Professional Formation (Professionalism)*, 9 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 325 (2011); Neil W. Hamilton, Vera E. Monson & Jerome M. Organ, *Empirical Evidence That Legal Education Can Foster Student Professionalism/Professional Formation to Become an Effective Lawyer*, 10 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 11 (2012); Neil Hamilton & Sarah Schaefer, *What Legal Education Can Learn from Medical Education About Competency-Based Learning Outcomes Including Those Related to Professional Identity Formation and Professionalism*, 29 GEO. J. LEGAL ETHICS 399 (2016); Neil Hamilton, *Law Firm Competency Models & Student Professional Success: Building on a Foundation of Professional Formation/Professionalism*, 11 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 6 (2013).

[82] Hamilton, Monson & Organ, *supra* note 81, at 12–13.

[83] Madison & Gantt, *supra* note 34, at 348.

[84] *See, e.g.,* Daisy Hurst Floyd, *Practical Wisdom: Reimagining Legal Education,* 10 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 195, 202 (2012) (arguing that "lawyers cannot truly live fulfilled lives, nor meet their professional obligations well, unless they integrate their *personal* and professional values") (emphasis added). *See also* Michael S. McGinniss, *Virtue Ethics, Earnestness, and the Deciding Lawyer: Human Flourishing in a Legal Community*, 87 N.D. L. REV. 19, 45–48 (2011) ("A deciding lawyer, confronting an ethically and morally challenging circumstance in the practice of law, should begin with a search of his own personhood and his will to become and remain a person of virtuous character. The unifying virtue for the practice of law is integrity, which must be cultivated before entry into the legal profession, tended carefully in the life of a new lawyer, and maintained through repeated harvests of actions undertaken with integrity."); Mary Walsh Fitzpatrick & Rosemary Queenan, *Professional Identity Formation, Leadership and Exploration of Self*, 89 UMKC L. REV. 539, 543 (2021); Katherine R. Kruse,

students' mental, emotional, and physical well-being, law schools should look for opportunities to teach concepts like grit and growth mindset,[85] leadership skills,[86] practical wisdom,[87] emotional intelligence,[88] core values,[89] and meditation and mindfulness.[90] Happiness and well-being have been central themes in the works of Jerry Organ and Neil Hamilton,[91] Todd Peterson,[92] Nancy Levit and

Fortress in the Sand: The Plural Values of Client-Centered Representation, 12 CLINICAL L. REV. 369, 374 (2006).

[85] Bess, *supra* note 61, at 522–36; *see also* Emily Zimmerman & Leah Brogan, *Grit and Legal Education*, 36 PACE L. REV. 114 (2015).

[86] *See* DEBORAH L. RHODE, LAWYERS AS LEADERS (2013); Scott A. Westfahl & David B. Wilkins, *The Leadership Imperative: A Collaborative Approach to Professional Development in the Global Age of More for Less*, 69 STAN. L. REV. 1667 (2017); Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 84.

[87] *See* Floyd, *supra* note 84, at 216–18.

[88] *See* Daicoff, *supra* note 44, at 840–42.

[89] Brown, *supra* note 26, at 319–23; Levit & Linder, *supra* note 22, at 8.

[90] *See, e.g.,* Jacobowitz, *supra* note 7, at 326–29; Reuben, *supra* note 58, at 677–83; Riskin, *supra* note 28, at 33–63; Teresa Kissane Brostoff, *Meditation for Law Students: Mindfulness Practice as Experiential Learning*, 41 L. & PSYCHOL. REV. 159, 162–70 (2017); Kate Pickert, *The Art of Being Mindful*, TIME, Feb. 3, 2014, at 40; Dan Hurley, *Breathing in vs. Spacing out*, N.Y. TIMES MAG., Jan. 19, 2014, at MM14, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/magazine/breathing-in-vs-spacing-out.html [https://perma.cc/5KRX-CKPG]; Colin James, *Law Student Wellbeing: Benefits of Promoting Psychological Literacy and Self-Awareness Using Mindfulness, Strengths Theory and Emotional Intelligence*, 21 LEGAL EDUC. REV. 217, 222–23 (2011); Richard C. Reuben, *Bringing Mindfulness into the Classroom: A Personal Journey*, 61 J. LEGAL EDUC. 674 (2012); David M. Zlotnick, *Integrating Mindfulness Theory and Practice into Trial Advocacy*, 61 J. LEGAL EDUC. 654, 659–64 (2012).

[91] *See, e.g.,* Organ, *supra* note 24; Neil W. Hamilton, *The Foundational Skill of Reflection in the Formation of a Professional Identity*, 12 ST. MARY'S J. LEGAL MALPRACTICE & ETHICS 254, 256–261 (2022) (discussing the skill of reflection as, among other things, a well-being practice).

[92] *See* Todd David Peterson & Elizabeth Waters Peterson, *Stemming the Tide of Law School Depression: What Law Schools Need to Learn from the Science of Positive Psychology*, 9 YALE J. HEALTH POL'Y, L. & ETHICS 357 (2009); Todd David Peterson, *The Moral Obligation of Law Schools to Address Law Student Well-Being: A Review Essay About the Happy Lawyer*, 30 NOTRE DAME J.L. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 67 (2016).

Douglas Linder,[93] Daisy and Tim Floyd and Patrick Longan,[94] Larry Natt Gantt and Benjamin Madison,[95] Peter Henry Huang,[96] and Susan Brooks.[97]

In this "well-being" silo reside the concepts of purpose and meaning.[98] Only a handful of works so far have zeroed in specifically on the role of meaningful employment in lawyer well-being.[99]

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[93] *See* LEVIT & LINDER, *supra* note 22; DOUGLAS O. LINDER & NANCY LEVIT, THE GOOD LAWYER: SEEKING QUALITY IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW (2014); Nancy Levit & Douglas O. Linder, *Happy Law Students, Happy Lawyers*, 58 SYRACUSE L. REV. 351 (2008).

[94] PATRICK LONGAN, DAISY HURST FLOYD & TIMOTHY W. FLOYD, THE FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY: THE PATH FROM STUDENT TO LAWYER Ch. 8 (2019) (discussing practical wisdom as a virtue that "supports [] living a life of well-being and satisfaction" and leads to "flourishing" and "human happiness"); Patrick E. Longan, Daisy Hurst Floyd, & Timothy W. Floyd, *Law School and Professional Identity Formation*, GA. BAR J., Dec. 2019, at 63 (discussing the virtues that help lawyers "flourish as individuals in the profession"); Daisy Hurst Floyd, *The Authentic Lawyer: Merging the Personal and the Professional*, *in* ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL LAWYER 19, 20 (Paul A. Haskins ed., 2013) (discussing the concept of authenticity as "living consistently with one's deepest values and core beliefs").

[95] *See, e.g.,* Larry O. Natt Gantt, II, *Integration as Integrity: Postmodernism, Psychology, and Religion on the Role of Moral Counseling in the Attorney-Client Relationship*, 16 REGENT U. L. REV. 233, 248–55 (2004) (reasoning that lawyers need to integrate their personal and professional values so they are more fulfilled in practice and can better counsel their clients).

[96] *See* Peter Henry Huang, *Happiness Studies and Legal Policy*, 6 ANN. REV. L. & SOC. SCI. 405 (2010); Peter H. Huang & Rick Swedloff, *Authentic Happiness & Meaning at Law Firms*, 58 SYRACUSE L. REV. 335 (2008); Peter H. Huang, *Authentic Happiness, Self-Knowledge and Legal Policy*, 9 MINN. J.L. SCI. & TECH. 755 (2008).

[97] *See* Susan L. Brooks, *Using a Communication Perspective to Teach Relational Lawyering*, 15 NEV. L.J. 477, 506–07 (2015)

[98] While some philosophers and psychologists draw a distinction between purpose and meaning and note that purpose is one of the fundamental components of meaning (*see, e.g.,* M.F. Steger, *Meaning in Life*, *in* OXFORD HANDBOOK OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY 679, 680–81 (Shane J. Lopez & C.R. Snyder eds., 2d ed. 2009)), most in the field use the terms interchangeably. *See, e.g.,* MARTIN E.P. SELIGMAN, FLOURISH: A VISIONARY NEW UNDERSTANDING OF HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING 17–20, 27 (2012). This article does the same.

[99] *See, e.g.,* Neil Hamilton & Jerome M. Organ, *Thirty Reflection Questions to Help Each Student Find Meaningful Employment and Develop an*

Building on the work of Abraham Maslow and other prominent psychologists, for example, Professors Lawrence Krieger and Ken Sheldon have argued that law student well-being requires meeting five basic needs—self-esteem, autonomy, authenticity, relatedness to others, and competence—and law students should strive to find meaning and purpose by satisfying not only their need for competence but also staying true to their internal values.[100] Professors Gantt and Madison have likewise posited that law students should be self-directed in seeking meaningful employment that aligns with their values and skills and contributes to the societal good.[101] Most notably, Neil Hamilton's *Roadmap to Meaningful Employment* provides a plan for law students, faculty, and career counselors alike to engage in specific inquiries designed to direct students not only to work opportunities that they will be good at, but also ones that they will find personally rewarding and satisfying.[102]

This Article stands on the shoulders of these giants in making the case for "teaching" our students how to seek, find, and pursue purposeful engagement in the profession. Through interdisciplinary research in the fields of cognitive, social, and positive psychology, philosophy, ethics, and leadership studies, it seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical and clinical approaches to finding meaning and purpose in life and law school pedagogy. The Article's ultimate goal is to offer concrete and effective methods for training purpose-driven lawyers that can be deployed in a first-year, required legal practice class by individual faculty, without the need for a sweeping curricular reform or institutional buy-in.

Integrated Professional Identity (Professional Formation), 83 TENN. L. REV. 843, 876 (2016); Neil W. Hamilton, *Professional Formation with Emerging Adult Law Students in the 21–29 Age Group: Engaging Students to Take Ownership of Their Own Professional Development Toward Both Excellence and Meaningful Employment*, 2015 J. PROF. LAW 125 (2015).

[100] *See generally* Krieger, *supra* note 4; Krieger & Sheldon, *supra* note 5; Sheldon & Krieger, *supra* note 35; Krieger, *supra* note 38.

[101] Larry O. Natt Gantt, II & Benjamin V. Madison, III, *Self-Directedness and Professional Formation: Connecting Two Critical Concepts in Legal Education*, 14 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 498, 508–11 (2018).

[102] NEIL W. HAMILTON, ROADMAP: THE LAW STUDENT'S GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT 31–37 (3d ed. 2018).

II. The Case for Purpose

> *For in the end, it is impossible to have a great life unless it is a meaningful life. And it is very difficult to have a meaningful life without meaningful work.* – Jim Collins[103]

Although the Carnegie Report's reference to the third apprenticeship encompasses a broad swath of professional identity attributes, the report's lead author, William Sullivan, himself has called it "the apprenticeship of meaning and purpose" in later work.[104] Sullivan recognized the crucial importance that purpose plays in the life of new professionals: "[U]nless this rigorous thinking [that students are exposed to in school] is directed toward some committed purpose, it can lead to relativism or cynicism—or at least to a narrowly instrumental orientation. . . . Lack of attention to [finding meaning] is a dangerous limitation, especially when students are preparing for work that has important implications for the welfare of society."[105] Indeed, Sullivan argued, it is only through "[e]xploring purpose" that students can "discover concrete ways in which they might contribute to bettering the world."[106]

Finding purpose is not only a desirable societal goal, but a personal one as well. A life of purpose consistently ranks as one of the most important goals in the life of adults. A 2012 study, for example, showed that 72% of college students and 53% of employed adults would rank purposeful work as more important than having children, a prestigious career, wealth, and a position of leadership.[107] Another study indicated that, for 30% of emerging adults (ages twenty-one to thirty-one), meaningful work was the top indicator of a successful career.[108] A similar picture emerges in law schools as well. In a 2015

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[103] GOOD TO GREAT: WHY SOME COMPANIES MAKE THE LEAP . . . AND OTHERS DON'T 210 (2001).

[104] WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN, LIBERAL LEARNING AS A QUEST FOR PURPOSE 11 (2016).

[105] ANNE COLBY, THOMAS EHRLICH, WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN & JONATHAN R. DOLLE, RETHINKING UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION: LIBERAL LEARNING FOR THE PROFESSION 79 (2011).

[106] SULLIVAN, *supra* note 104, at 1.

[107] CLIFF ZUKIN & MARK SZELTNER, JOHN J. HELDRICH CTR. FOR WORKFORCE DEV., RUTGERS UNIV., NET IMPACT TALENT REPORT: WHAT WORKERS WANT IN 2012, 2 (Fig. 1) (2012), https://netimpact.org/sites/default/files/documents/what-workers-want-2012.pdf [https://perma.cc/34MA-7VC8].

[108] ALEXANDRA LEVIT & SANJA LICINA, CAREER ADVISORY BD. DEVRY UNIV., HOW THE RECESSION SHAPED MILLENNIAL AND HIRING MANAGER ATTITUDES

study, Professor Hamilton asked his second-year students about the professional goals they would like to achieve by six months after graduation.[109] "The most frequently reported goal was 'meaningful employment' (59 out of 60)."[110]

In making the case that law schools should explicitly address the role of purpose in students' career choices, this section will explore the medical benefits of living a life of purpose, the concept of purposeful life across philosophical traditions, and the role of purpose in psychological interventions.

A. The Benefits of a Purposeful Life

Leading a life of purpose is well recognized as "one of the most fundamental human needs."[111] A purposeful life has numerous physiological benefits, such as higher vitality,[112] a stronger immune system,[113] lower stress levels,[114] lower incidence of cardiovascular

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ABOUT MILLENNIALS' FUTURE CAREERS 17–18 (2011), https://www.careeradvisoryboard.org/content/dam/dvu/www_careeradvisoryboard_org/Future-of-Millennial-Careers-Report.pdf [https://perma.cc/73LN-WHFT].

[109] Hamilton & Organ, *supra* note 99, at 861.

[110] *Id.* at 876.

[111] Michaéla C. Schippers & Niklas Ziegler, *Life Crafting as a Way to Find Purpose and Meaning in Life,* 10 FRONTIERS IN PSYCHOL. 2778, at 1 (Dec. 2019).

[112] Glen A. Nix, Richard M. Ryan, John B. Manly & Edward L. Deci, *Revitalization Through Self-Regulation: The Effects of Autonomous and Controlled Motivation on Happiness and Vitality*, 35 J. EXPERIMENTAL SOC. PSYCHOL. 266, 280–81 (1999).

[113] Barbara Fredrickson, Karen M. Grewen, Kimberly A. Coffey, Sara B. Algoe, Ann M. Firestine, Jesusa M. G. Arevalo, Jeffrey Ma & Steven W. Cole, *A Functional Genomic Perspective on Human Well-Being*, 110(33) PROCEEDINGS NAT'L ACAD. SCI. 13684, 13686–88 (2013).

[114] *See* Carol D. Ryff, Burton H. Singer & Gayle Dienberg Love, *Positive Health: Connecting Well-Being with Biology*, PHIL. TRANSACTIONS-ROYAL SOC'Y LONDON SERIES B BIOLOGICAL SCI. 359, 1383, 1390–91 (2004); Cynthia A. Bonebright, Daniel L. Clay & Robert D. Ankenmann, *The Relationship of Workaholism with Work–Life Conflict, Life Satisfaction, and Purpose in Life*, 47 J. COUNSELING PSYCHOL. 469 (2000); Pamela Bucy Pierson, Ashley Hamilton, Michael Pepper & Megan Root, *Stress Hardiness and Lawyers*, 42 J. LEGAL PROF. 1, 46 (2017) (finding a strong inverse correlation between the levels of stress lawyers experience and their ability to find meaning and purpose in their jobs).

events,[115] and lower cholesterol and inflammatory response levels.[116] It is also linked to increased preventative healthcare use, better sleep habits, and increased physical activity.[117] Impressively, a purposeful life is also often a long life, as having a purpose has been proven time and again to decrease all-cause mortality, even when controlling for other factors contributing to longevity.[118]

Having a purpose aligned with one's values and skills has also been associated with enhanced emotional and psychological well-being, including lower rates of depression, anxiety, loneliness,

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[115] Randy Cohen, Chirag Bavishi & Alan Rozanski, *Purpose in Life and Its Relationship to All-Cause Mortality and Cardiovascular Events: A Meta-Analysis*, 78 PSYCHOSOMATIC MED. 122 (2016).

[116] Ryff, Singer & Love, *supra* note 114, at 1388, 1390.

[117] *See generally* Ying Chen, Eric S. Kim, Howard K. Koh, A. Lindsay Frazier & Tyler J. VanderWeele, *Sense of Mission and Subsequent Health and Well-Being Among Young Adults: An Outcome-Wide Analysis*, 188(4) AM. J. EPIDEMIOL. 664 (2019); Eric S. Kim, Koichiro Shiba, Julia K. Boehm & Laura D. Kubzansky, *Sense of Purpose in Life and Five Health Behaviors in Older Adults*, 139 PREV. MED. (2020), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7494628/pdf/nihms-1610550.pdf [https://perma.cc/2TTN-W53K]; Ayse Yemiscigil & Ivo Vlaev, *The Bidirectional Relationship Between Sense of Purpose in Life and Physical Activity: A Longitudinal Study*, 44 J. BEHAVIORAL MED. 717 (2021); Eric S. Kim, Ying Chen, Julia S. Nakamura, Carol D. Ryff & Tyler J. VanderWeele, *Sense of Purpose in Life and Subsequent Physical, Behavioral, and Psychosocial Health: An Outcome-Wide Approach*, 36 AM. J. HEALTH PROMOTION 137 (2022); Eric S. Kim, Victor J. Strecher & Carol D. Ryff, *Purpose in Life and Use of Preventive Health Care Services*, 111(46) PROCEEDINGS NAT'L. ACAD. SCI. 16331 (2014); Yoona Kang, Victor J. Strecher, Eric Kim & Emily B. Falk, *Purpose in Life and Conflict-Related Neural Responses During Health Decision-Making*, 38(6) HEALTH PSYCHOL. 545 (2019).

[118] *See, e.g.*, Patrick L. Hill & Nicholas A. Turiano, *Purpose in Life as a Predictor of Mortality Across Adulthood*, 25(7) PSYCHOL. SCI. 1482 (2014); Samantha J. Heintzelman, Jason Trent & Laura A. King, *Encounters with Objective Coherence and the Experience of Meaning in Life*, 24(6) PSYCHOL. SCI. 991 (2013); Aliya Alimujiang, Ashley Wiensch, Jonathan Boss, Nancy L. Fleischer, Alison M. Mondul, Karen McLean, Bhramar Mukherjee & Celeste Leigh Pearce, *Association Between Life Purpose and Mortality Among US Adults Older than 50 Years*, 2(5) JAMA NETWORK OPEN 1, 9 (May 24, 2019), https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2734064 [https://perma.cc/S6N5-2N73]; Cohen, Bavishi & Rozanski, *supra* note 115; Neal Krause, *Meaning in Life and Mortality*, 64 J. GERONTOLOGY SERIES B: PSYCHOL. SCI. & SOC. SCI. 517 (2009); Patricia A. Boyle, Lisa L. Barnes, Aron S. Buchman & David A. Bennett, *Purpose in Life Is Associated with Mortality Among Community-Dwelling Older Persons*, 71(5) PSYCHOSOMATIC MED. 574 (2009).

boredom, and suicidal ideation.[119] It leads to lower incidence of other psychological problems or cognitive impairments, including Alzheimer's disease.[120] People leading purposeful lives are also far less likely to abuse drugs or suffer from alcoholism.[121] They report higher self-esteem, self-efficacy, sense of control, hope, happiness, optimism, overall well-being, and life satisfaction, even in challenging

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[119] *See generally* Richard M. Ryan & Edward L. Deci, *Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being*, 55(1) AM. PSYCHOL. 68 (2000); Monica Bigler, Greg J. Neimeyer & Elliott Brown, *The Divided Self Revisited: Effects of Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Concept Differentiation on Psychological Adjustment*, 20 J. SOC. & CLINICAL PSYCHOL. 396 (2004); Kim, Shiba, Boehm & Kubzansky, *supra* note 117; Brian L. Burke, Andy Martens & Erik H. Faucher, *Two Decades of Terror Management Theory: A Meta-Analysis of Mortality Salience Research*, 14(2) PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. REV. 155 (2010); Bonebright, Clay & Ankenmann, *supra* note 114.

[120] Kennon M. Sheldon, *The Self-Concordance Model of Healthy Goal Striving: When Personal Goals Correctly Represent the Person*, *in* HANDBOOK OF SELF-DETERMINATION RESEARCH 65, 75–76 (2002); Patricia A. Boyle, Aron S. Buchman, Lisa L. Barnes & David A. Bennett, *Effect of a Purpose in Life on Risk of Incident Alzheimer Disease and Mild Cognitive Impairment in Community-Dwelling Older Adults*, 67(3) ARCHIVES GEN. PSYCHIATRY 304 (2010).

[121] Lisa L. Harlow, Michael D. Newcomb & P. M. Bentler, *Depression, Self-Derogation, Substance Use, and Suicide Ideation: Lack of Purpose in Life as a Mediational Factor*, 42 J. CLINICAL PSYCHOL. 5 (1986); Thomas Nicholson, Wayne Higgins, Paul Turner, Susan James, Fred Stickle & Terry Pruitt, *The Relation Between Meaning in Life and Occurrence of Drug Abuse: A Retrospective Study*, 8(1) PSYCHOL. ADDICTIVE BEHAV. 24 (1994); Betty L. Padelford, *Relationship Between Drug Involvement and Purpose in Life*, 30(3) J. CLINICAL PSYCHOL. 303 (1974); Corey R. Roos, Megan Kirouac, Matthew R. Pearson, Brandi C. Fink & Katie Witkiewitz, *Examining Temptation to Drink from an Existential Perspective: Associations Among Temptation, Purpose in Life, and Drinking Outcomes*, 29 PSYCHOL. ADDICTIVE BEHAV. 716 (2015).

circumstances.[122] And they experience less conflict with others,[123] make better life decisions[124] and better regulate their emotions and reactions to new situations.[125]

Finally, having a purpose in life leads to significant social benefits for students and adults alike. It helps students achieve academic success and form their future professional identities.[126] Students

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[122] *See generally* Jared D. Kass, Richard Friedman, Jane Leserman, Margaret Caudill, Patricia C. Zuttermeister & Herbert Benson, *An Inventory of Positive Psychological Attitudes with Potential Relevance to Health Outcomes: Validation and Preliminary Testing*, 17(3) BEHAVIORAL MED. 121 (1991); Sonja Lyubomirsky, Chris Tkach & M. Robin DiMatteo, *What Are the Differences Between Happiness and Self-Esteem?*, 78 SOC. INDICATORS RES. 363 (2006); Michael F. Steger & Patricia Frazier, *Meaning in Life: One Link in the Chain from Religiousness to Well-Being*, 52(4) J. COUNSELING PSYCHOL. 574 (2005); Kendall Cotton Bronk, Patrick L. Hill, Daniel K. Lapsley, Tasneem L. Talib & Holmes Finch, *Purpose, Hope, and Life Satisfaction in Three Age Groups*, 4(6) J. POSITIVE PSYCHOL. 500 (2009); Virginia Lee, S. Robin Cohen, Linda Edgar, Andrea M. Laizner & Anita J. Gagnon, *Meaning-Making Intervention During Breast or Colorectal Cancer Treatment Improves Self-Esteem, Optimism, and Self-Efficacy*, 62(12) SOC. SCI. & MED. 3133 (2006); Bonebright, Clay & Ankenmann, *supra* note 114; Dominique L. Debats, Petra M. Van der Lubbe & Fimmy R. Wezeman, *On the Psychometric Properties of the Life Regard Index (LRI): A Measure of Meaningful Life: An Evaluation in Three Independent Samples Based on the Dutch Version*, 14(2) PERSONALITY & INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES 337 (1993); Carol D. Ryff & Corey Lee M. Keyes, *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being Revisited*, 69(4) J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 719 (1999); Nathan Mascaro & David H. Rosen, *Existential Meaning's Role in the Enhancement of Hope and Prevention of Depressive Symptoms*, 73(4) J. PERSONALITY 985 (2005); Michael F. Steger, Shigehiro Oishi & Todd B. Kashdan, *Meaning in Life Across the Life Span: Levels and Correlates of Meaning in Life from Emerging Adulthood to Older Adulthood*, 4(1) J. POSITIVE PSYCHOL. 43 (2009).

[123] KENDALL COTTON BRONK, PURPOSE IN LIFE: A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF OPTIMAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT 48 (2014) (summarizing studies that demonstrate a relationship between lack of purpose and loneliness, proclivity to blame others, and to experience high levels of anger).

[124] Kang, Strecher, Kim & Falk, *supra* note 117, at 550.

[125] Jackie Swift, *The Benefits of Having a Sense of Purpose*, Cornell Prog. for Res. on Youth Dev. & Engagement (Dec. 3, 2020), https://pryde.bctr.cornell.edu/news/2020/12/3/the-benefits-of-having-a-sense-of-purpose [https://perma.cc/98LD-XSSG] (noting that health comes not from "the absence of stress [but] how we react to it" and that "purpose mitigates reactivity").

[126] *See, e.g.*, Dominique Morisano, Jacob B. Hirsch, Jordan B. Peterson,

living purposeful lives exhibit more grit, resilience, and self-efficacy.[127] Studies demonstrate that a purpose-oriented mindset "improve[s] academic outcomes, including self-regulation, college persistence, grade point average, and the amount of time students were willing to spend studying for tests and completing homework."[128] Choosing a meaningful career path while in school also leads to better educational outcomes because the students see their educational journey as a direct path to pursuing their calling and as a meaningful, rather than taxing or stressful, experience.[129] A sense of

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Robert O. Pihl & Bruce M. Shore, *Setting, Elaborating, and Reflecting on Personal Goals Improves Academic Performance*, 95(2) J. APPLIED PSYCHOL. 255 (2010); Michaéla C. Schippers, Ad W. A. Scheepers & Jordan B. Peterson, *A Scalable Goal-Setting Intervention Closes Both the Gender and Ethnic Minority Achievement Gap*, 1 PALGRAVE COMMC'N. 15014 (2015); Michaéla C. Schippers, Dominique Morisano, Edwin A. Locke, Ad W. A. Scheepers, Gary P. Latham & Elisabeth de Jong, *Writing About Personal Goals and Plans Regardless of Goal Type Boosts Academic Performance*, 60 CONTEMP. EDUC. PSYCHOL. 101823 (2019); Cheryl J. Travers, Dominique Morisano & Edwin A. Locke, *Self-Reflection, Growth Goals, and Academic Outcomes: A Qualitative Study*, 85(2) BRIT. J. EDUC. PSYCHOL. 224 (2015).

[127] *See generally* Bonnie Benard, *Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community*, WestEd, (Aug. 1991), https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/1373568312 resource93-3.pdf [https://perma.cc/QW8T-WSNB]; Patrick L. Hill, Anthony L. Burrow & Kendall Cotton Bronk, *Persevering with Positivity and Purpose: An Examination of Purpose Commitment and Positive Affect as Predictors of Grit*, 17 J. HAPPINESS STUD. 257 (2016); Jane Elizabeth Pizzolato, Elizabeth Levine Brown & Mary Allison Kanny, *Purpose Plus: Supporting Youth Purpose, Control, and Academic Achievement*, 132 NEW DIRECTIONS YOUTH DEV. 75 (2011).

[128] MEMBERS OF THE ADOLESCENT MORAL DEV. LAB AT CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIV. FOR PROSOCIAL CONSULTING & THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUND., THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE 13 (2018), https://www.templeton.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Psychology-of-Purpose.pdf [https://perma.cc/G9VF-ENGM] [hereinafter THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE]. *See also* David S. Yeager, Marlone D. Henderson, David Paunesku, Gregory M. Walton, Sidney D'Mello & Brian J. Spitzer, *Boring But Important: A Self-Transcendent Purpose for Learning Fosters Academic Self-Regulation*, 107 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 559, 560 (2014).

[129] *See generally* PETER L. BENSON, ALL KIDS ARE OUR KIDS: WHAT COMMUNITIES MUST DO TO RAISE CARING AND RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS (2006); Pizzolato, Brown & Kanny, *supra* note 127, at 77; David Scott Yeager & Matthew J. Bundick, *The Role of Purposeful Life Goals in Promoting Meaning in Life and Schoolwork During Adolescence*, 24 J.

purpose in one's career is also unsurprisingly linked to greater satisfaction once students graduate.[130] Finally, a sense of purpose—which prevents burnout and frequent career changes—ultimately results in higher economic success over the course of one's life.[131]

Remarkably, these benefits correlate with purposeful living across cultures, genders, races, age groups, and income levels,[132] so long as the purpose pursued is self-endorsed (rather than "heteronomous" or imposed by external authority).[133] While the benefits of a purposeful life are incontrovertible, the object of a purposeful life has long been hotly contested.

ADOLESCENT RES. 423, 425 (2009); Schippers & Ziegler, *supra* note 111, at 2779; THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 15; WILLIAM DAMON, THE PATH TO PURPOSE: HELPING OUR CHILDREN FIND THEIR CALLING IN LIFE (2008); Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl & Shore, *supra* note 126, at 256; Matthew J. Bundick, *The Benefits of Reflecting on and Discussing Purpose in Life in Emerging Adulthood*, 132 NEW DIRECTIONS FOR YOUTH DEV. 89, 90 (2011); Schippers, Scheepers & Peterson, *supra* note 126, at 8–9; Cécile Nurra & Daphna Oyserman, *From Future Self to Current Action: An Identity-Based Motivation Perspective*, 17 SELF & IDENTITY 343, 358 (2018).

[130] THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 16.

[131] Patrick L. Hill, Felix Cheung, Amanda Kube & Anthony L. Burrow, *Life Engagement Is Associated with Higher GDP Among Societies*, 78 J. RES. PERSONALITY 210, 210 (2019).

[132] *See* Toshihiko Hayamizu, *Between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: Examination of Reasons for Academic Study Based on the Theory of Internalization*, 39 JAPANESE PSYCHOL. RES. 98, 106–07 (1997); Robert J. Vallerand, Michelle S. Fortier & Frédéric Guay, *Self-Determination and Persistence in a Real-Life Setting: Toward a Motivational Model of High School Dropout*, 72 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 1161, 1169–72 (1997); Valery I. Chirkov & Richard M. Ryan, *Parent and Teacher Autonomy-Support in Russian and U.S. Adolescents: Common Effects on Well-Being and Academic Motivation*, 32 J. CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOL. 618, 630–32 (2001); Richard M. Ryan & Edward L. Deci, *On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being*, 52 ANN. REV. PSYCHOL. 141, 160 (2001); Toshimasa Sone, Naoki Nakaya, Kaori Ohmori, Taichi Shimazu, Mizuka Higashiguchi, Masako Kakizaki, Nobutaka Kikuchi, Shinichi Kuriyama, Ichiro Tsuji, *Sense of Life Worth Living (Ikigai) and Mortality in Japan: Ohsaki Study*, 70 PSYCHOSOMATIC MED. 709, 709 (2008); Boyle, Barnes, Buchman & Bennett, *supra* note 118, at 577.

[133] Ryan & Deci, *supra* note 132, at 156–57; Luke Wayne Henderson, Tess Knight & Ben Richardson, *An Exploration of the Well-Being Benefits of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Behaviour*, 8 J. POSITIVE PSYCHOL. 322, 336 (2013); Schippers & Ziegler, *supra* note 111, at 2; Ryan & Deci, *supra* note 119, at 69.

B. The Philosophy of Purpose

In analyzing the Homeric myth of Sisyphus, Albert Camus noted that "many people die because they judge that life is not worth living" while "others paradoxically get[] killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living."[134] Camus "therefore conclude[d] that the meaning of life is the most urgent of questions."[135] This most urgent question of life's purpose has occupied the minds of philosophers ancient and modern, extreme and moderate, spiritual and naturalist.

The ancient Greeks saw one's purpose in life as achieving ultimate virtuous happiness. According to Aristotle, for example, the highest purpose for one's life was eudaimonia—happiness achieved by the active, rational, and intentional "pursuit of virtue, excellence, and the best within us," in accordance with our unique talents, virtuous potential, and intended role.[136] Socrates likewise believed that the purpose of life was achieving eudaimonia by pursuing knowledge of virtue.[137] The Cynics and, later, the Stoics, believed that the purpose of life was to live in accordance with inner virtue and in agreement with nature, eschewing desires and external pressures, and thereby achieving freedom, self-sufficiency, and happiness.[138]

Eastern traditions perceive life's purpose as bringing oneself in alignment with the universe. Lao Tzu saw the perfect life as one lived in harmony with "the way things are," centered on the divine, and following the "natural rhythms" and the "law written on [people's] hearts."[139] For Confucius and Mencius, the purpose of life was achieving individual happiness by pursuing peace with others through the exercise of ethical desires and the pursuit of moral

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[134] ALBERT CAMUS, THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS AND OTHER ESSAYS 4 (Justin O'Brien trans., Vintage Int'l 1991).

[135] *Id.*

[136] ARISTOTLE, THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS BOOK I Ch. 8-10, BOOK X Ch. 6 (David Ross trans., Oxford Univ. Press 1925); Veronika Huta & Alan S. Waterman, *Eudaimonia and Its Distinction from Hedonia: Developing a Classification and Terminology for Understanding Conceptual and Operational Definitions*, 15 J. HAPPINESS STUD. 1425, 1427 (2014).

[137] Chris Bobonich, *Socrates and Eudaimonia*, *in* THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SOCRATES 293 (Donald R. Morrison ed., 2010).

[138] THE CYNICS: THE CYNIC MOVEMENT IN ANTIQUITY AND ITS LEGACY 7–9 (R. Bracht Branham & Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé eds., 1986); WILLIAM O. STEPHENS, STOIC ETHICS: EPICTETUS AND HAPPINESS AS FREEDOM 123 (2017).

[139] LAO TZU, TAO TE CHING Ch. 32, 37 (Gia-fu Feng & Jane English trans., Vintage Books 1972).

innocence and virtue.[140] According to Buddhism, the purpose of life is to cultivate peace, achieve perfect enlightenment, and aid others in reaching their full potential.[141]

The Abrahamic faiths express the purpose of life as living out God's plan. Building on the Aristotelian view, Thomas Aquinas argued that while perfect happiness (*beatitudo*) is not possible on Earth as it depends on complete knowledge of God, imperfect happiness (*felicitas*) is possible through applying reason, seeking knowledge, and living in accordance with natural and God-given virtues.[142] The Islamic philosopher Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali likewise argued that true happiness lies in discovering through personal experience and self-knowledge one's perfect spirit, exercising one's higher facilities (like reason and imagination), transforming one's actions from self-centered to centered on the divine, and achieving unity with God as one's true life purpose.[143] Judaism considers a meaningful life possible on earth by carrying out God's commandments and embodying Torah, the living word of the living God.[144]

Modern philosophers have built upon these various traditions and have proliferated numerous schools of thought on what makes out a meaningful life—fulfilling higher-order purposes, having a noteworthy impact on society, transcending one's animal nature, living in awe of superior quality, transcending one's limits, living in

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[140] MENCIUS 71, 122, 157 (D.C. Lau trans., Chinese Univ. Press 2003) (noting that "human nature is good just as water seeks low ground," that there are "no just wars," and that "[w]hen one realized that something is morally wrong, one should stop it as soon as possible"); CONFUCIUS, THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS: A PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSLATION 60 (Roger T. Ames & Henry Rosemont trans., Ballantine Pub. Grp. 1998) (instructing, among other things, to "[m]ake it your guiding principle to do your best for others"); *see also* Shirong Luo, *Happiness and the Good Life: A Classical Confucian Perspective*, 18 DAO: J. COMP. PHIL. 41, 48, 51 (2019).

[141] Paul Carus, *The Philosophy of Buddhism*, 7 MONIST 255, 274 (1897).

[142] ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, SUMMA CONTRA GENTILES BOOK 3 Chapter 37 (English Dominican fathers trans., Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd. 1923-29); ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, SUMMA THEOLOGICA Part 2, Q.1, Article 8 (Brian Davies & Brian Leftow eds., Cambridge Univ. Press 2006).

[143] AL-GHAZZALI, THE ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS 104 (Claud Field trans., Elton L. Daniel ed., M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 1991).

[144] Thaddeus Metz, *Judaism's Distinct Perspectives on the Meaning of Life*, 7 J. JEWISH ETHICS 13, 33–35 (2021).

accordance with God's laws or a moral code of virtue, striving for the "true, the good, and the beautiful," and many other formulations.[145]

While the philosophical underpinnings of purpose are numerous and diverse, three constants that inform the conclusions in this Article emerge from this survey through the centuries. The first is the ceaseless striving to find purpose. Whatever each philosopher's answer may be, all recognize that the question is worth asking—in other words, that a life *without* purpose "is not worth living."[146] Even nihilists, who largely hold that a meaningful life cannot be achieved by anyone, nonetheless concern themselves with searching for what could theoretically provide life with meaning.[147]

A second commonality is the focus on each individual's own potential to lead a meaningful life. While some philosophical traditions begin by exploring the purpose *of* life, all inevitably focus on finding purpose *in* one's life. And while life is multifaceted and purpose can exist in many dimensions, the general consensus is that

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[145] *See generally* Arjan Markus, *Assessing Views of Life: A Subjective Affair?*, 39 RELIGIOUS STUD. 125 (2003); GARRETT THOMSON, ON THE MEANING OF LIFE (2003); THADDEUS METZ, MEANING IN LIFE: AN ANALYTIC STUDY 24–35 (2013); Joshua W. Seachris, *General Introduction*, *in* EXPLORING THE MEANING OF LIFE: AN ANTHOLOGY AND GUIDE 1–2 (J. Seachris ed., 2013); T.J. MAWSON, GOD AND THE MEANINGS OF LIFE: WHAT GOD COULD AND COULDN'T DO TO MAKE OUR LIVES MORE MEANINGFUL (2016); CHARLES TAYLOR, SOURCES OF THE SELF: THE MAKING OF MODERN IDENTITY (1989); Neil Levy, *Downshifting and Meaning in Life*, 18 RATIO 176 (2005); Frank Martela, *Meaningfulness as Contribution*, 55 S. J. PHILOSOPHY 232 (2017); William H. Davis, *The Meaning of Life*, 18 METAPHILOSOPHY 296 (1987); William Lane Craig, *The Absurdity of Life Without God*, *in* EXPLORING THE MEANING OF LIFE 153, *supra*; T.J. MAWSON, MONOTHEISM AND THE MEANING OF LIFE 52 (2019); CLIFFORD WILLIAMS, RELIGION AND THE MEANING OF LIFE: AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH 112–134 (2020).

[146] PLATO, THE APOLOGY OF SOCRATES 38A, 77 (D.F. Nevill ed., F.E. Robinson & Co. 1901).

[147] JEFFRIE G. MURPHY, EVOLUTION, MORALITY, AND THE MEANING OF LIFE 12–17 (1982) (arguing that it is impossible to arrive at a universally accepted set of values and therefore there is nothing that can give life objective meaning); Quentin Smith, *Moral Realism and Infinite Spacetime Imply Moral Nihilism*, *in* TIME AND ETHICS: ESSAYS AT THE INTERSECTION 43, 53 (Heather Dyke ed., 2003) (arguing that objective moral values exist but no one individual is capable of living in accordance with them); DAVID BENATAR, BETTER NEVER TO HAVE BEEN: THE HARM OF COMING INTO EXISTENCE 60–92 (2006) (arguing that when considering the human life in the context of all of history, nothing that one can do during their lifetime could have comparative significance and meaning considering the billions of years and light-years that make up time-space).

meaningful work, defined broadly to encompass one's contribution to society, is a "fundamental human need"[148] and that "[f]ar and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."[149] By contrast, "[t]here is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor."[150] Thus, philosophical discussions on achieving one's purpose in life often center on finding and carrying out purposeful work.

The third constant is the recognition that whatever the source of a higher purpose may be, the components of what makes a purpose worthy of pursuit remain largely the same: (1) compatibility with one's nature/identity/values (rather than externally imposed rewards), (2) intentional action or restraint from action involving one's higher faculties, and (3) other-centeredness (focus on the divine, society, or other individuals). Because these elements are common across philosophical definitions of higher purpose, this model has transcended the philosophical realm to inform our modern understanding of purpose and meaning in the field of psychology as well.

C. The Psychology of Purpose

Building on the ancient concept of a purposeful life, the modern science of positive psychology also studies purpose and meaning as one of its five basic pillars.[151] Indeed, the entire field of positive psychology itself can be traced back to the idea that human life is best spent in the intentional pursuit of purpose. While himself a prisoner in Auschwitz and several other Nazi camps, the Austrian psychologist Viktor Frankl observed that his fellow prisoners responded to the inhumane and unthinkable conditions to which they were subjected in two very distinct ways.[152] Those who lacked an underlying sense of purpose quickly succumbed to the physical and mental torture and lost the will to live.[153] By contrast, those with someone or something

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[148] Ruth Yeoman, *Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need*, 125 J. BUS. ETHICS 235, 236 (2014).

[149] Theodore Roosevelt, The Square Deal, at the New York State Agricultural Association in Syracuse, New York (September 7, 1903) (transcript at https://americanliterature.com/history/theodore-roosevelt/speech/the-square-deal-speech) [https://perma.cc/5T7K-YMCS].

[150] CAMUS, *supra* note 134, at 119.

[151] SELIGMAN, *supra* note 98, at 16–18, 24 (establishing the PERMA model of positive psychology, where "m" stands for meaning).

[152] VIKTOR E. FRANKL, MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING 142 (2014).

[153] *Id.* at 129–41.

to live for exhibited greater resilience and willingness to endure through even the worst of circumstances.[154] Reflecting on his experience in the camps years later, Frankl wrote the seminal book *Man's Search for Meaning*, in which he crystalized his earlier convictions that purpose is a critical component of optimal human functioning.[155] He confirmed Nietzsche's observations that "[h]e who has a 'why' to live for, can bear almost any 'how.'"[156] Frankl further argued that all people are motivated to find purpose in their lives and that lack of purpose leads to feelings of emptiness, depression, and psychological disturbances.[157] He explained that there is a "uniqueness and a singleness which distinguishes each individual and gives meaning to his existence."[158] According to Frankl, a meaningful life is one in which the individual chooses to act in a way that honors this uniqueness and fulfills his purpose.[159] A decade after publishing his book, Frankl assisted in the development of the twenty-one-item "Purpose in Life" test, which is still the most widely used assessment instrument for surveying purpose.[160]

Alongside Frankl, psychologists like Abraham Maslow, who coined the term positive psychology, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May began investigating the role of purpose in people's psychological well-being.[161] More recently, psychologists like Martin Seligman, Ed Diener, and Mihaly Csiskzenmihalyi embraced the study on "what makes happy people happy,"[162] and officially established positive psychology as a sub-field of general psychology.[163] Seligman himself

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[154] *Id.* at 144–46.
[155] *Id.*
[156] *Id.* at 149 (quoting from FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, THE TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS).
[157] *Id.* at 242.
[158] *Id.* at 148.
[159] *Id.* at 149.
[160] THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 33. Since that time, several other such assessments have been developed, including the Life Regard Index, the Purpose in Life subscale of the Psychological Scales of Well-being, the Meaning in Life questionnaire, the Existence Subscale of the Purpose in Life Test, the Revised Youth Purpose Survey, the Claremont Purpose Scale, and the Life Purpose Questionnaire. *Id.* at 9.
[161] Paul T. P. Wong, *Viktor Frankl's Meaning-Seeking Model and Positive Psychology*, *in* MEANING IN POSITIVE AND EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY 149–84 (2014).
[162] Martin E.P. Seligman, *The President's Address,* 54 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 559, 559 (1999).
[163] Martin E.P. Seligman & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Positive Psychology: An Introduction*, 55 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 5, 5 (2000).

argued that happiness has three dimensions: the Pleasant Life, the Good Life, and the Meaningful Life.[164]

In psychology, the concept of purpose has been defined with some variation. One definition posits that purpose is "a central, self-organizing life aim that organizes and stimulates goals, manages behaviors, and provides a sense of meaning."[165] Another conceives of purpose as the goals, intentions, and sense of directedness in life that produce a feeling that life is meaningful.[166] Many other versions of this definition exist, all pointing out that purpose must involve an intention, a cognitive sense of self, and a social contribution.[167] A unified and comprehensive formulation of these principles defines purpose as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once personally meaningful and at the same time leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self."[168] In other words, true lasting purpose emerges at the intersection of (1) personal meaningfulness, informed by one's intrinsic values, (2) goal orientation and intentionality of actions, and (3) a focus beyond the self.[169] If a goal is prompted by external sources, rather than a person's own intrinsic values and sense of self, it cannot

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[164] Martin E.P. Seligman, *Pleasure, Meaning, and Eudaimonia*, *in* University of Pennsylvania, Authentic Happiness (2002), https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/de/content/pleasure-meaning-eudaimonia-0#:~:text=Home%20%2F%20Pleasure%2C%20Meaning%20%26%20Eudaimonia,ones%20is%20a%20happy%20life [https://perma.cc/A8SL-92ZF].

[165] Patrick E. McKnight & Todd B. Kashdan, *Purpose in Life as a System that Creates and Sustains Health and Well-Being: An Integrative, Testable Theory*, 13(3) REV. GEN. PSYCHOLOGY 242, 242 (2009).

[166] Carol D. Ryff, *Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being*, 57 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 1069, 1071 (1989).

[167] Corey L. M. Keyes, *Authentic Purpose: The Spiritual Infrastructure of Life*, 8 J. MGMT. SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION 281, 281–82 (2011); *see also* Carin Leslie Rockind, Living on Purpose: Why Purpose Matters and How to Find It, 21 (July 31, 2011) (unpublished Master of Applied Positive Psychology thesis, The University of Pennsylvania) (available at https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/42b87698-b9bb-47b2-a4b4-d2c54cf4873e/content) [https://perma.cc/XF6T-MRLD] (defining purpose as a "verb" that pulls an individual forward in a socially beneficial way).

[168] THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 4.

[169] William Damon, Jenni Menon & Kendall Cotton Bronk, *The Development of Purpose During Adolescence*, 7 APPLIED DEV. SCI. 119, 120 (2003) (discussing the idea that true purpose should be chosen by people affirmatively on the basis of "goals and values that promote a higher purpose").

serve as true purpose.[170] Quite the opposite: socially imposed goals and purposes have been proven to lead to burn-out, depression, and "a lack of experienced meaning."[171] Likewise, a generalized aspiration, which does not get prioritized into concrete goals, does not rise to the level of true purpose.[172] And neither does a purely private intention that has no impact beyond the self.[173]

This three-part definition of purpose lines up closely with the foundational philosophical requirements of a worthy or lasting purpose and offers a valuable blueprint for designing curricular interventions that help guide students to finding their calling.

III. Curricular Interventions to Support Students' Pursuit of Purpose

> *You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.* – Galileo Galilei[174]

Because law students come from diverse backgrounds, have unique experiences, and are motivated by different values, law schools cannot simply inculcate them with a one-size-fits-all purpose. And even if such a universally worthy purpose could exist, the sheer act of instilling it in students would transform it into an externally imposed precept. This in turn would make such "purpose" just as ephemeral, ineffectual, and unfulfilling for students as other socially imposed goals, including earning high income, building a "prestigious" career or a "perfect" life, taking up the family business or otherwise yielding to family pressures, or following the

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[170] THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 4.

[171] Schippers & Ziegler, *supra* note 111, at 2. *See also* Hanna Suh, Philip B. Gnilka & Kenneth G. Rice, *Perfectionism and Well-Being: A Positive Psychology Framework*, 111 PERSONALITY & INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES 25, 30 (2017); David Garratt-Reed, Joel Howell, Lana Hayes & Mark Boyes, *Is Perfectionism Associated with Academic Burnout Through Repetitive Negative Thinking?* 6 PEERJ e5004(1), 8 (2018); Thomas Curran & Andrew P. Hill, *Perfectionism Is Increasing Over Time: A Meta-Analysis of Birth Cohort Differences from 1989 to 2016*, 145 PSYCHOL. BULL. 410, 420 (2019).

[172] *See* Marco Mazzone, *The Effects of Being Conscious: Looking for the Right Evidence*, 37 BEHAV. & BRAIN SCI. 149, 149–50 (2014) (noting that "abstract motivations, such as being cooperative, are less likely to be consciously attended than concrete goals").

[173] THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 4.

[174] As quoted in DALE CARNEGIE, HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE 117 (1937).

institutional glidepath.[175] Purpose itself, therefore, is not didactically "teachable."

What law schools could—and should—teach are the *skills* students need to find a uniquely and authentically worthy purpose and then to pursue it in their future professional lives. Studies demonstrate that, currently, even those who actively seek purpose in their lives report low degrees of success in attaining this goal[176]—pointing to a large problem in the strategies that they use in their quest.[177]

Despite the documented failure of law schools to prepare students for the search and pursuit of purpose,[178] curricular change has been incremental at best.[179] Although programs and courses focused generally on well-being—including on topics such as hope, happiness, and mindfulness[180]—have sprung up in recent years, few have

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[175] Suh, Gnilka & Rice, *supra* note 170, at 27–28; Garratt-Reed, Howell, Hayes & Boyes, *supra* note 171, at 8; Curran & Hill, *supra* note 171, at 420; Joseph A. Kahl, *Educational and Occupational Aspirations of "Common Man" Boys*, 23 HARV. EDUC. REV. 186, 193–94 (1953); Schippers & Ziegler, *supra* note 111, at 2; Kathleen M. Jodl, Alice Michael, Oksana Malanchuk, Jacquelynne S. Eccles & Arnold Sameroff, *Parents' Roles in Shaping Early Adolescents' Occupational Aspirations*, 72 CHILD DEV. 1247, 1248 (2001); Jeffrey Taylor, Marcia B. Harris & Susan Taylor, *Parents Have Their Say . . . About Their College-Age Children's Career Decisions*, 64 NACE J. 15, 18–19 (2004).

[176] *See* Michael F. Steger, Todd B. Kashdan, Brandon A. Sullivan, & Danielle Lorentz, *Understanding the Search For Meaning in Life: Personality, Cognitive Style, and the Dynamic Between Seeking and Experiencing Meaning*, 76 J. PERSONALITY 199, 221 (2008) (noting that "the evidence from this study suggests that the search for meaning is inversely related to presence of meaning").

[177] Importantly, studies show that, after one's twenties, searching for purpose is not correlated with the psychological and physical benefits that people who pursue purpose experience throughout their lives. *See, e.g.,* Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib & Finch, *supra* note 122, at 506.

[178] *See* Sheldon & Krieger, *supra* note 35.

[179] *See generally* SULLIVAN, *supra* note 104. In the undergraduate world, a notable example is a group of eighty-eight theological colleges and universities that participated in a project to reimagine higher education in terms of vocation and calling, with the goal of placing the pursuit of higher purpose in the forefront of their curriculum. *Id.* at 1–2.

[180] Examples include Professor Christine Jolls's Happiness and Morality at Yale Law School, Temple University's Law, Happiness, & Subjective Well-Being, Professor Leonard L. Riskin's courses on mindfulness in the law, University of Miami's Mindful Ethics: Professional Responsibility for Lawyers in the Digital Age and Emotional Intelligence, Southwestern's Peak

addressed head on the issues of finding meaning and purpose. Notably, the George Washington University Law School has a robust Inns of Court program specifically designed to introduce students to concepts such as self-directed learning and meaning, and to counteract the negative effects of the analytical and competitive law school curriculum.[181] Based in no small part on the work of the Holloran Center, in 2019, the school also completely reimagined its first-year legal research and writing program, which now has a strong emphasis on professional identity formation, including on pursuing purposeful careers.[182] And all faculty, practice-based and doctrinal, are invited to an annual training by the Holloran Center to promote a whole-building approach to students' professional identity formation and well-being.

A handful of other law schools—including St. Thomas, Regent, Texas A&M, Pepperdine, St. Mary's, and UC Hastings—have also reimagined their first-year curriculum and have implemented many of the approaches outlined in Professor Hamilton's *Roadmap to Meaningful Employment*. Thanks to the work of Professor Lisle Baker in popularizing the benefits of positive psychology for the practice of law, other schools, like Suffolk and the University of Louisville, have chosen to incorporate the tenets of positive psychology, including the search for meaning, into their first-year or upper-level classes. And individual courses, like the University of Missouri-Kansas City's *Quest for a Satisfying Career in Law,* aim to provide at least an optional resource to students interested in exploring the topic of meaning and purpose.[183]

That these examples can be listed in the span of two paragraphs demonstrates just how much more could be done. And, with the passage of the ABA revised Standard 303—how much more *must* be done. The pursuit of purpose is, of course, a long-term process and not something students can "accomplish" as a class assignment. However, a well-constructed law school curriculum could plant seeds

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Performance Program, UC Berkeley's Effective and Sustainable Law Practice: the Meditative Perspective, and many others. *See* Huang & Swedloff, *supra* note 96, at 346–47.

[181] *See* The George Washington University Law School, *Inns of Court*, https://www.law.gwu.edu/inns-of-court [https://perma.cc/T4ZL-A4FH] (last visited Dec. 5, 2023).

[182] *See id.*

[183] Douglas O. Linder, *Course Page, The Quest for a Satisfying Career in Law* University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law (Fall 2014), http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/happylawyers/Questions.html [https://perma.cc/9NJ5-L2WW].

and equip students with concrete skills that they can then utilize in their search for a purpose-driven career path. And even where institutional buy-in is missing, individual legal practice faculty can nonetheless make a tremendous difference in the lives and well-being of their students by adopting discrete, but proven and effective, interventions from the fields of cognitive and positive psychology and modifying them to the classroom environment.[184] This section will propose a number of such interventions that can seamlessly be folded into a first-year legal practice class, by looking at each of the three components of purpose: (1) working on personally meaningful issues (2) by engaging in intentional actions (3) for the benefit of the broader world.[185]

A. Personally Meaningful Issues

The first ingredient of finding purpose—and of building a robust professional identity—is ascertaining one's own personal values. After all, a student cannot begin to answer the questions "What kind of person do I want to be?" and "What kind of lawyer do I want to be?"

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[184] Sheila M. Clonan, Sandra M. Chafouleas, James L. McDougal & T. Chris Riley-Tillman, *Positive Psychology Goes to School: Are We There Yet?*, 41 PSYCHOL. SCH. 101, 105–08 (2004); Martin E.P. Seligman, Randal M. Ernst, Jane Gillham, Karen Reivich & Mark Linkins, *Positive Education: Positive Psychology and Classroom Interventions*, 35 OXFORD REV. EDUC. 293 (2009); Michaéla Schippers, *Ikigai: Reflection on Life Goals Optimizes Performance and Happiness*, address delivered at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (June 16, 2017), https://f.hubspotusercontent40.net/hubfs/5726799/LearnLife_August2021/Pdf/154420667.pdf [https://perma.cc/2LJX-AEYU]. *See also* Austin, *supra* note 44, at 677 ("In order for students to optimize their learning experience, they need the psychological constructs of hope, perceived academic control, curiosity, and positive perspective. Hope has two components: agency, which is the motivation and willpower to pursue a goal; and pathways, which involve the capacity to craft multiple strategies for achieving the goal.").

[185] *See* DAMON, *supra* note 128, at 7, 106, 113–14 (arguing that young people need "wholehearted dedication to an activity or interest that stems from a serious purpose, a purpose that can give meaning and direction to life" and that this purpose should be grounded in "long-term aspirations" and should be "high-minded"). *See also* Gantt & Madison, *supra* note 101, at 513 (noting that law schools need to help "students [to] develop a sense of their own values, appreciate the different avenues in law practice they could take, and move with intentionality in a direction that will result in fulfilled employment").

without first answering the foundational question "What do I believe in?"[186]

The benefits of self-reflection in articulating one's personal values cannot be overstated. Research demonstrates that providing students with the "opportunity to articulate, discuss, and reflect upon the things that matter most" to them leads to young adults who look for more meaningful career paths.[187] Young people are much more motivated to pursue goals that are aligned and linked with their personal values and interests.[188] This is particularly true where goals are aligned with what people perceive as "important," rather than simply something they "like."[189] By contrast, students who have not taken the time to reflect on their values and to formulate authentic goals that further their deeply held beliefs are at an increased risk of losing contact with their interests and passions, and experiencing feelings of fraudulence.[190]

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[186] *See* Thomson, *supra* note 95, at 317; *see also* CARNEGIE REPORT, *supra* note 5, at 28.

[187] THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 19, *citing* Kendall Cotton Bronk, *A Grounded Theory of the Development of Noble Youth Purpose*, 27 J. ADOLESCENT RES. 78, 96 (2012).

[188] Christopher J. Bryan, David S. Yeager, Cintia P. Hinojosa, Aimee Chabot, Holly Bergen, Mari Kawamura & Fred Steubing, *Harnessing Adolescent Values to Motivate Healthier Eating*, 113 PROC. NAT'L ACAD. SCI. 10830, 10831 (2016); Kenneth M. Sheldon & Tim Kasser, *Pursuing Personal Goals: Skills Enable Progress, But Not All Progress is Beneficial*, 24 PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. BULL. 1319, 1328 (1998); Kenneth M. Sheldon & Linda Houser-Marko, *Self-Concordance, Goal Attainment, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Can There Be an Upward Spiral?*, 80 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 152, 163 (2001).

[189] Sheldon, *supra* note 120, at 65–86; Carol D. Ryff & Burton H. Singer, *Know Thyself and Become What You Are: A Eudaimonic Approach to Psychological Well-Being*, 9 J. HAPPINESS STUD. 13, 16 (2008) (citing ARISTOTLE, THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS 6, 11 (David Ross trans., Oxford Univ. Press 1925)); Jon M. Jachimowicz, Christopher To, Jochen I. Menges & Modupe Akinola*, Igniting Passion from Within: How Lay Beliefs Guide the Pursuit of Work Passion and Influence Turnover* (2017) (unpublished manuscript) (available at https://osf.io/rtz8f/download/?version+2&DisplayName=merged-2018-06019T15%3A1-%20%3A49/726Z/pdf [https://perma.cc/78X8-BNHJ].

[190] Shippers, Morisano, Locke, Scheepers, Latham, & de Jong, *supra* note 126, at 2, 3, 8; Elizabeth Seto & Rebecca J. Schlegel, *Becoming Your True Self: Perceptions of Authenticity Across the Lifespan*, 17 SELF & IDENTITY 310, 321–22 (2018); Geoffrey C. Williams, Elizabeth M. Cox, Viking A. Hedberg & Edward L. Deci, *Extrinsic Life Goals and Health-Risk Behaviors in Adolescents*, 30 J. APPLIED SOC. PSYCHOL. 1756, 1758 (2000).

Psychologists and career counselors alike often engage in value-identification exercises with their subjects.[191] These interventions have been especially successful with young adults, who have a demonstrated lower goal-autonomy than people in their thirties or beyond.[192] And studies show that small, simple, and short-lived interventions can have a tremendous impact in helping people find purpose in life because they set off a cycle of self-reinforcing changes and processes that continue to work long after the specific discussion or writing.[193] In educational institutions, simple, one-time interventions have resulted in higher academic performance, decreased dropout rates, and improved self-management skills, especially among ethnic minorities and historically underperforming groups.[194]

Because the dominant law school narrative promotes emotional detachment from the legal issues, it can also implicitly lead to lack of self-reflection.[195] It is therefore crucial to counteract these effects by integrating into the curriculum intentional opportunities for

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[191] Kendall Cotton Bronk & Susan Mangan, *Strategies for Cultivating Purpose Among Adolescents in Clinical Settings,* in CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MEANING: POSITIVE & EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOTHERAPY 407–422 (Pninit Russo-Netzer, Stefan E. Schulenberg, & Alexander Batthyany eds., 2016).

[192] Kenneth M. Sheldon, Linda Houser-Marko & Tim Kasser, *Does Autonomy Increase with Age? Comparing the Goal Motivations of College Students and Their Parents*, 40 J. RES. PERSONALITY 168, 176 (2006).

[193] Gregory M. Walton, *The New Science of Wise Psychological Interventions*, 23 CURRENT DIRECTIONS PSYCHOL. SCI. 73, 79 (2014); TIMOTHY D. WILSON, REDIRECT: THE SURPRISING NEW SCIENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE 18 (2011).

[194] Shippers, Morisano, Locke, Scheepers, Latham, & M. de Jong*, supra* note 126, at 8–9; Schippers, Scheepers & Peterson, *supra* note 126, at 8–9. An inspiring example of small curricular changes with big impact is the decision by the Erasmus University's Rotterdam School of Management to introduce a three-step goal-setting intervention in their first-year curriculum, allowing their students to reflect upon personal values and goals at the outset of their graduate school journey. In the first stage of this approach, the students are asked to write about their values, wishes for their ideal life, and pitfalls they wish to avoid in the future. The second stage involves setting concrete goals to make these wishes a reality. The third is a photoshoot with a positive "I WILL" message, where the students commit to work toward their goals and post their pictures on social media. *See* Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, *I Will Challenge,* https://www.rsm.nl/iwilleveryone/ [https://perma.cc/4BP2-TP3M] (last visited Dec. 5, 2023).

[195] Eduardo R.C. Capulong, Andrew King-Ries & Monte Mills, *Antiracism, Reflection, and Professional Identity*, 18 HASTINGS RACE & POVERTY L.J. 3, 5 (2021).

introspection and reflection, with a specific focus on the students' own values.[196] Only when students are able to accurately and openly speak about their values and the impact that these values may have on their decisions can they avoid situations "that bring inner turmoil by treading on buried values."[197] In the context of legal writing, concrete value-centered activities could include assigning written self-reflections, incorporating metacognitive questions into legal practice discussions, reflecting on the experience of others, and having explicit discussions on the topic of personal values.

1. Written Self-Reflection on Students' Personal Values

The most direct approach to prompting students to engage in the process of self-reflection about their personal values is to explicitly ask them to do just that, preferably in writing. Writing can expose a gap between actual and desired state and can increase self-regulation.[198] It can also serve as a springboard for intentional future actions (*see* Part B *infra*), as it leads to subtle changes in behavior, such as looking for specific opportunities that would allow a person to reach a stated goal or reevaluating an activity that may not be helpful.[199]

Leaning into the expectation that students will write in their legal writing class, legal practice faculty can assign written self-reflections, in which students can explicitly grapple with the questions of what matters most to them, how they can serve their values as a lawyer, and who they want to be as a lawyer. Such self-reflections can be powerful

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[196] Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 84, at 533–34.

[197] *Id.* at 551 (quoting Daniel Goleman, *What Makes a Leader*, *in* HBR'S 10 MUST READS ON LEADERSHIP 10 (2011)).

[198] Laura A. King & James W. Pennebaker, *Thinking About Goals, Glue, and the Meaning of Life, in* RUMINATIVE THOUGHTS: ADVANCES IN SOCIAL COGNITION VOL. IX 97, 104 (Robert S. Wyer ed., 1996) (finding that when writing about trauma, as opposed to just ruminating on it, writers grow in insight); Andrew Neal, Timothy Ballard & Jeffrey Vancouver, *Dynamic Self-Regulation and Multiple-Goal Pursuit*, 4 ANN. REV. ORG. PSYCHOL. & ORG. BEHAV. 401, 407 (2017) (discussing a negative feedback loop dynamics of self-regulation whereby noticing "discrepancy between the current state of that variable, and the goal" leads a person to proactively or reactively respond to the discrepancy by engaging in self-regulation).

[199] Edwin A. Locke, *What Makes Writing about Goals Work?*, 5 ACAD. MGMT. DISCOVERIES 109, 109–10 (2019); Laura A. King, *The Health Benefits of Writing About Life Goals*, 27 PERS. & SOC. PSYCHOL. BULL. 798, 805 (2001).

tools for putting into words what likely percolates right below the surface of every 1L's mind.

The very first assignment in my legal practice class is just such a self-reflection. The assignment is called "Your Best Self" and asks students to "reflect on what brought [them] to law school and who [they] would like to be, professionally and personally, ten years after graduating from law school."[200] The prompt is intentionally broad and I explain to my students in class that their answers can be as general or specific as they desire: they may have concrete career aspirations already or be open to any interesting work that comes their way; they may envision their day-to-day tasks or what their long-term impact on the world may be; they may be thinking about writing a book, having a family, and other personal factors that affect their career choices; or they may only be able to formulate what they know they do not want to do. There is no wrong answer to this question, only the students' own authentic truth. I ask students to write down their reflections, though I intentionally do not prescribe any length for the final product (and have received both two-paragraph and ten-page submissions). Although I read each submission with care and keen interest, I do not provide any form of feedback on this assignment, either as to writing style or substance. I tell my students that they are not writing this for me, and that my personal take on their aspirations and values is irrelevant. I assign a deadline at the end of the first week of law school, before the pressures of "real work" have started to pile up.

This assignment serves several key functions. Because of the tectonic shifts in students' values and perceptions that occur in the first year of law school,[201] one of my goals is to encapsulate my students' original (likely more values-aligned) intentions for pursuing a law degree, before the stress and pressures of law school have had the chance to erode them. I ask my students to hold on to their self-reflection draft and to use it as a life raft anytime they find their law school journey overwhelming. Another intention behind this assignment is to give my students an explicit vocabulary to discuss their personal background, experiences, and goals and to highlight the fact that these topics take precedence over the more traditional technical competences that my class seeks to teach. Providing

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[200] Assignment on file with author. For more ideas about structuring potential self-reflective prompts, *see generally* Daphna Oyserman, Deborah Bybee & Kathy Terry, *Possible Selves and Academic Outcomes: How and When Possible Selves Impel Action*, 91 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 188, 191 (2006).

[201] Sheldon & Krieger, *supra* note 35, at 273.

students with an opportunity to share their own "story of self" allows students to see themselves and to be seen by others.[202] A third goal is to expose any gaps between intentions and actions. Having a formulated and explicit "mission statement" of sorts—an intermediate endpoint that a student would like to reach in the next decade or so—motivates students to align their present actions and choices with the path that more directly leads to that end destination. Because people are more likely to act when they are confronted with the consequences of not doing so,[203] a reflection of both possible futures has a higher chance to spur a change in direction, if one is needed. Lastly, armed with these self-reflections, I am in a better position to serve as a mentor to each of my students and to calibrate my advice and approach to their own individual aspirational paths.

As a bookend to this first assignment, I also ask my students to complete a second written self-reflection at the end of our year together. This assignment asks them to recall the values and aspirations that they had at the beginning of the year and to reflect on how these may have changed. I also ask my students to reflect on their personal feelings about such changes and on potential next steps to re-align their paths with their original values or to move closer to their new goal post. The questions are intentionally broad and agnostic. The aim of this activity is not to impart positive or negative judgment on occurrences and shifts in attitudes, but to foster intentionality in the process. I fold these open-ended questions into a larger end-of-the-year survey that I collect through Google Forms and then debrief with my students in class, probing further into the processes that led to any shift in aspirations and their feelings about it. Because so many of the pernicious changes in student motivation that occur in law school happen gradually and subtly, the main purpose behind this assignment is to bring self-awareness to any such processes.

2. Metacognitive Questions about Students' New Professional Role

In addition to the solitary work of written self-reflection, legal practice faculty have a unique opportunity to incorporate introspective questions into classroom discussions. Studies repeatedly have demonstrated that students who are consciously aware of their thinking process and emotions achieve better learning

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[202] Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 84, at 539–40.

[203] Amos Tversky & Daniel Kahneman, *The Framing of Decisions and the Rationality of Choice*, 211 SCI. 453, 458 (1981).

outcomes and can more closely align their actions with their values.[204] Yet, the law school curriculum offers very little, if any, space for students to become aware of or express feelings, doubts, and anxieties about their personal roles in the legal system or the actions those roles may engender.[205] While doctrinal classes can provide a theoretical context for connecting legal doctrine with individual values, it is generally understood that values and judgment do not exist in a vacuum—they are triggered when an abstract concept meets a real-life situation.[206] Because legal practice inevitably involves the application of legal concepts to real clients and cases, students can more clearly see how the hypothetical scenarios we create for them implicate their personal beliefs.

This type of questioning is not a self-standing assignment but rather an overarching approach to class discussions. Any time a student is asked to discuss the outcome of a case, the "right" answer under the law, or an approach that they would take to represent the interests of their clients, they could be prompted to also reflect on how this action comports with their personal values and what feelings—of satisfaction, discomfort, certainty, unease, hesitation, distancing, determination?—it evokes with the student.[207] In my class, students quickly learn to expect such "personal" follow-up questions directed at them and their classmates any time we have a large group class discussion. By instilling a habit of reflecting on the personal dimension of becoming a zealous advocate for their clients and habituating my students to hearing others' personal reflections as well, I aim to normalize their authentic reactions to the practice of law and to promote higher self-awareness of their own internal compass and better self-directedness in searching out situations that more closely align with it.[208]

3. Reflecting on the Experience of Seasoned Attorneys

Alongside in-classroom opportunities for students to reflect on how values can be linked to actions and choices in one's career, students can also benefit from reflecting on the experience of

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[204] Michael Hunter Schwartz, *Teaching Law Students to Be Self-Regulated Learners*, 2003 MICH. ST. DCL L. REV. 447, 472–83 (2003).
[205] Harriet N. Katz, *Personal Journals in Law School Externship Programs: Improving Pedagogy*, 1 T.M. COOLEY J. PRAC. & CLINICAL L. 7, 34 (1997).
[206] Chelsea Schein, *The Importance of Context in Moral Judgments*, 15 PERSP. PSYCHOL. SCI. 207, 208 (2020).
[207] Madison & Gantt, *supra* note 34, at 385.
[208] *See generally* Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 84.

seasoned attorneys. Most first-year law students have little to no work experience prior to coming to law school and therefore have a natural limit to the lessons they can learn on their own at this early stage of their professional development.[209] Being able to explore how other professionals in the field have grappled with and resolved—successfully or not—moral dilemmas, big life decisions, or conflicts with their personal values, can go a long way to painting a picture for law students about what life in the profession could involve and to avoiding potential pitfalls down the road.[210]

There are numerous ways to introduce students to the (positive or negative) experiences of seasoned attorneys. Some faculty invite practicing attorneys for guest lectures or include case studies of famous attorneys in their lessons and ask students to reflect on the choices these attorneys made.[211] In my class, I assign my students early in the fall semester the task of interviewing a practitioner, faculty member, judge, or another professional who has graduated from law school at least ten years ago, and ask them about "their most satisfying aspect, moment, or choice in their career so far, and what they would change about their career trajectory, if they could." I give my students two months to complete this task—a period which coincides with the time that they are meeting attorneys for informational interviews through the career center, attending "employer in residence" events with both law firms and public interest attorneys, and starting to think about potential summer internships. In late November, before students begin to work on their summer applications in earnest, we have a large group class discussion, when students share what they have learned from these interviews with the entire class and reflect with their classmates about how these

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[209] *See* Bronk, *supra* note 98, at 411 (finding that meaningful commitment to a purpose is spurred by relationships, especially with mentors). *See also* SHARON DALOZ PARKS, BIG QUESTIONS, WORTHY DREAMS: MENTORING EMERGING ADULTS IN THEIR SEARCH FOR MEANING, PURPOSE, AND FAITH, 165–66, 168 (2011).

[210] *See* Jacobowitz, *supra* note 7, at 321–22 (citing Daisy Hurst Floyd, *The Development of Professional Identity in Law Students,* FLA. ST. U.C.L. (2002) for the proposition that the presence of mentors and other adults who could serve as sounding boards and who are willing not only to look for and support, but also to challenge and press a young person's ideas and plans, is a pivotal resource in the subjects' purpose formation); Bryan J. Dik, Michael F. Steger, Amanda Gibson & William Peisner, *Make Your Work Matter: Development and Pilot Evaluation of a Purpose-Centered Career Education Intervention*, 132 NEW DIRECTIONS FOR YOUTH DEV. 59, 68–69 (2011).

[211] *E.g.,* Hamilton, Monson & Organ, *supra* note 81, at 37; Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 84, at 553–54.

revelations have impacted their choice of summer positions or possible longer-term career paths.

Some of my students—particularly those with few or no connections in the legal world prior to law school—approach this assignment with a degree of apprehension. All inevitably learn, however, that lawyers are generally very willing to share their own personal experiences and to mentor younger attorneys for the long haul. By going out of their comfort zone and approaching an attorney with questions about values, meaning, and life, students often discover that they not only access a treasure-trove of knowledge and experience during this one-time "informational interview," but also form a lasting relationship with members of the profession and feel more grounded and secure going into the legal field. Having conversations focused on values with people outside the classroom has the added benefit of normalizing these types of questions and keeping them in the forefront of students' minds as they begin to explore summer employment options and to think about their 2L classes and future extracurricular activities.

4. Explicit Value Discussions through Identity Mapping

While consistent implicit messaging about the importance of personal values goes a long way to promoting self-awareness, having explicit discussions about values provides students with a shared vocabulary and concrete ideas about how values play a role in choosing a career path. Studies show that guided discussions about a young person's values, goals, and purpose in life increase both self-directedness and satisfaction.[212] In a study among students from low resource communities, for example, researchers found that structured discussions about the students' values and goals led to fostering purpose that endured months later while also enhancing the subjects' sense of control over their own lives.[213]

One activity that engenders explicit value discussion is identity mapping. John Bliss created this exercise as a diagnostic tool in his empirical research on the moral drift that occurs for many law students between the first and second year of law school,[214] but it also works well as an in-class activity giving rise to a deeper discussion on personal values. In my classroom, the students grapple with this exercise in their last class of the year, after they have had the

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[212] Bundick, *supra* note 129, at 91.
[213] Pizzolato, Brown & Kanny, *supra* note 127, at 84.
[214] Bliss, *supra* note 54, at 856.

opportunity to reflect on the goals and aspirations they had when first starting law school and how those may have changed in the meantime. As in Bliss' experiment, I ask my students to draw a circle on a piece of paper.[215] In this circle, I ask them to map all of their personal identities, with those appearing closer to the center of the circle corresponding to the ones they hold dearest. The only identity they are required to place somewhere on the paper is that of a lawyer. To promote maximum sincerity and reflective value, I assure my students that they will not have to share the specific identities they place in the circle with me or the class unless they choose to do so. After ten to fifteen minutes of working on their own to map out their identities, the students come back for a large group class discussion about what lessons they can draw from this visual representation of their values and priorities.

Just as in Bliss' findings, some of my students place the identity of a lawyer close to the center.[216] The questions they ask themselves in seeing that vary from "what identities did becoming a lawyer overwrite?" to "how much of the rest am I willing to sacrifice in service of this identity?" Some students place their new-found lawyerly identity far out in the periphery and grapple with what is causing this need to distance themselves from the very goal they are currently spending so much time and money pursuing. Some see themselves as both lawyers and law students and explore the difference between these two roles. Still others see themselves as advocates or counselors rather than strictly "lawyers" and talk about what that means to them. One of the central questions for everyone is, "how can you marry this identity of a lawyer or advocate with some of the other issues you hold close to your heart and build synergies between all aspects of yourself?"

Students consistently report that having these open and explicit discussions of values and why they do—or should—matter in their legal practice is eye-opening, instructive, and liberating. Engaging in this thought experiment as students are about to embark on their first-ever professional experience in the legal field—and shortly before they decide on their second summer (and likely long-term) employment—is particularly crucial. It serves as a reminder to remain self-aware and proactive, to evaluate their actions against their own personal barometer, and to make decisions in line with their now-remembered priorities.

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[215] *Id.* at 865.
[216] *Id.* at 868.

B. Intentional Action

Once students gain self-awareness of their personal values and priorities, or at least begin giving these some thought and attention, they inevitably start wondering what steps they can take to promote them. In a clinical setting, a self-reflection on one's values and identity is immediately followed by a process of "goal-setting"—asking what steps could they take to make measurable progress toward their desired future?[217] This question is particularly important because deciding on concrete goals is the key to differentiating "between real purpose and illusory purpose."[218] Setting and prioritizing goals is also what creates motivation—defined in cognitive psychology as the process that "starts, sustains and concentrates behavior."[219] And it triggers the metacognitive processes of planning, evaluation, and self-regulation, which allow students to gain deeper awareness of and control over their "thoughts, behaviors, and emotions to reach [their] goals."[220] Formulating measurable short-, medium-, and long-term career goals translates what could often seem like abstract or inspirational ideas into a set of concrete and intentional actions[221]—the second ingredient of a worthy and lived-out purpose.

Accomplishing a set goal requires skills. And while law schools certainly aim to equip students with actionable practical skills for their future jobs, it is ultimately impossible for students to absorb, or even be exposed to, everything they need to know for the practice of law. What they can learn, however, are three important concepts: 1) skills can be acquired, 2) students can direct the course of their learning, and 3) focused actions yield better results. While these

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[217] THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PURPOSE, *supra* note 128, at 21.

[218] McKnight & Kashdan, *supra* note 165, at 249.

[219] Ester T. Canrinus, Michelle Helms-Lorenz, Douwe Beijaard, Jaap Buitink & Adriaan Hofman, *Self-Efficacy, Job Satisfaction, Motivation and Commitment: Exploring the Relationships Between Indicators of Teachers' Professional Identity*, 27 EUR. J. PSYCHOL. EDUC. 115, 120 (2011).

[220] Maria Cardelle-Elawar, Leslie Irwin & María Luisa Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga, *A Cross Cultural Analysis of Motivational Factors that Influence Teacher Identity*, 5 ELEC. J. RES. EDUC. PSYCHOL. 565, 70 (2007); Anastasia Efklides, *The Role of Metacognitive Experiences in the Learning Process*, 21 PSICOTHEMA 76, 77 (2009).

[221] *See* Carole Silver, Amy Garver & Lindsay Watkins, *Unpacking the Apprenticeship of Professional Identity and Purpose: Insights from the Law School Survey of Student Engagement*, 17 LEGAL WRITING 373, 401–02 (2011).

concepts are broad and abstract, legal practice faculty can incorporate the principles underlying them in numerous ways.

1. Promoting Growth Mindset Through Self-Evaluation Exercises

A lot of ink has been spilled on distinguishing between a fixed and a growth mindset over the last decade or so.[222] Yet, when discussing possible future careers, educators and career counselors alike often focus on the student's *current* skills and strengths—by encouraging students to take personality or skills assessment tests or evaluating what students are "good at" or not. These approaches leave the distinct impression that one's skills are fixed and static.[223] Such a message is a dangerous and, at its core, hopeless one. That is especially true in the legal field, where even the most rigorous legal education cannot possibly prepare a law student for everything that the practice of law (traditional or otherwise) would require of them.[224] To succeed in such a diverse and dynamic field students need to confidently believe that, with some dedication and hard work, they could obtain all necessary skills to excel in whatever their chosen career path may throw at them.[225]

In the legal practice classroom, a growth mindset can be promoted through opportunities for students to see their personal progress in the new skills they encounter throughout the course. In my class, one such opportunity arises close to the end of the fall semester, when I ask my students to complete a self-evaluation broken down by technical criteria: e.g., depth of legal analysis, clarity of writing,

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[222] *See, e.g.,* David Scott Yeager & Carol S. Dweck, *Mindsets That Promote Resilience: When Students Believe That Personal Characteristics Can Be Developed*, 47 EDUC. PSYCHOL. 302 (2012); Carol S. Dweck, *How Companies Can Profit from a "Growth Mindset,"* HARV. BUS. REV., at 28 (Nov. 2014); Mary C. Murphy & Carol S. Dweck, *Mindsets Shape Consumer Behavior*, 26 J. CONSUMER PSYCHOL. 127 (2016); Aneeta Rattan, Krishna Savani, Dolly Chugh & Carol S. Dweck, *Leveraging Mindsets to Promote Academic Achievement: Policy Recommendations*, 10 PERSP. PSYCHOL. SCI. 721 (2015); Carrie Sperling & Susan Shapcott, *Fixing Students' Fixed Mindsets: Paving the Way for Meaningful Assessment*, 18 LEGAL WRITING 39 (2015).

[223] Jay W. Rojewski, *Promoting the Career Development of Children and Adolescents in the Twenty-First Century, in* CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND COUNSELING: PUTTING THEORY AND RESEARCH TO WORK 643, 645–46 (Steven D. Brown & Robert W. Lent eds., 2021).

[224] Gantt & Madison, *supra* note 101, at 509.

[225] Sue Shapcott, Sarah Davis & Lane Hanson, *The Jury Is In: Law Schools Foster Students' Fixed Mindsets*, 42 L. & PSYCHOL. REV. 1, 6 (2018).

citation proficiency, time management, teamwork, leadership, etc. This evaluation closely mirrors the type of mid- and end-of-year self-evaluations that attorneys are routinely asked to complete in their jobs, which in turn become part of their professional portfolio for purposes of compensation and promotion.

In addition to noting their current level of proficiency, I also ask students to first reflect on their starting point for each skill. I go over the completed self-evaluations with each student during their individual conferences in late Fall. I use this assignment to teach students how to advocate for themselves in a professional setting—i.e., to accurately and persuasively describe where they are in their mastery of the concrete skills at the time of completing the evaluation. But I also use it to demonstrate to them through their own words and reflections just how far they have come in mastering what seemed like impossible concepts just a few short months earlier. This discussion helpfully illustrates that almost none of my students walked into my classroom with an in-born proclivity toward rule synthesis or Bluebook-ing. Rather, any amount of progress they notice from the beginning to the end of the first semester (and again at the end of the first year) is due to hard work, repetition, and intentional growth. This type of self-reflection allows students to "draw from their previous experience and to apply that which is relevant to new and unfamiliar [] situations"[226]—here, the acquisition of future unfamiliar, and likely daunting, skills that they will need to pursue their career of choice.

Another opportunity for students to appreciate their learning progress and the truth that skills can be acquired is an assignment asking students to grade their own early work. Although the rules for putting together cogent legal analysis are intimidating and foreign to almost all first-year students in the early Fall, by late Spring, when students are focused on creating a higher-level persuasive brief, they have a good grasp on the fundamentals. As part of the editing process for their final brief, I ask my students to assess their current draft using a grading rubric. Immediately after that, I hand my students a copy of the very first memo they submitted in my class and ask them to assess that in turn. This often cringe-worthy but eye-opening experience demonstrates to the students on a visceral level just how far they have come in mastering what seemed like impossible skills a few short months earlier. When law students believe—or, in this case, see with their own eyes—that they are capable of producing and

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[226] Marian Murphy, Maria Dempsey & Carmel Halton, *Reflective Inquiry in Social Work Education*, *in* HANDBOOK OF REFLECTION AND REFLECTIVE INQUIRY: MAPPING A WAY OF KNOWING FOR PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIVE INQUIRY 177 (Nona Lyons ed., 2010).

replicating positive results through their own efforts and persistence, they work harder and take on more difficult tasks that set them up for future success.[227] These classroom experiences therefore not only bring up momentary feelings of pride and accomplishment, but are also tremendously empowering for students as they embark on their journey of becoming lawyers and prompt them to seek careers that they find satisfying rather than easy or familiar.

2. Promoting Self-Directed Learning by Providing Choice and Autonomy

Relatedly, what skills a student obtains should not be left to chance or to others to decide.[228] Rather, students should be encouraged to direct their own learning by proactively seeking out opportunities to develop the skills needed for their chosen purpose-driven career and engaging in deliberate practice of these skills.[229] By gaining a sense of autonomy and engaging in self-endorsed practices or learning experience, students attain increased motivation to act, gain a deeper personal connection to the material, increase their sense of competency, and achieve overall better results.[230] This type of self-authoring behavior requires that "lawyers and law students . . . have the capacity to critically reflect on the legal [or educational] system as

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[227] *See* Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink & Hofman, *supra* note 219, at 118; Elizabeth A. Linnenbrink & Paul R. Pintrich, *Motivation as an Enabler for Academic Success*, 31 SCHOOL PSYCHOL. REV. 313, 320–21 (2002); SUSAN A. AMBROSE, MICHAEL W. BRIDGES, MICHELE DIPIETRO, MARSHA C. LOVELL, MARIE K. NORMAN & RICHARD E. MAYER, HOW LEARNING WORKS: 7 RESEARCH-BASED PRINCIPLES FOR SMART TEACHING 71–72 (2010); Shawn M. Glynn, Lori Price Aultman & Ashley M. Owens, *Motivation to Learn in General Education Programs*, 54 J. GEN. EDUC. 150, 158–59 (2005).

[228] Elizabeth M. Bloom, *Teaching Law Students to Teach Themselves: Using Lessons from Educational Psychology to Shape Self-Regulated Learners*, 59 WAYNE L. REV. 311, 312–13 (2013).

[229] E. Scott Fruehwald, *Developing Law Students' Professional Identities*, 37 U. LA VERNE L. REV. 1, 15–16 (2015); Neil Hamilton, *A Professionalism/Professional Formation Challenge: Many Students Need Help with Self-Directed Learning Concerning Their Professional Development Toward Excellence*, 27 REGENT U. L. REV. 225, 225 (2015).

[230] Paula J. Manning, *Understanding the Impact of Inadequate Feedback: A Means to Reduce Law Student Psychological Distress, Increase Motivation, and Improve Learning Outcomes*, 43 CUMB. L. REV. 225, 229–30 (2013).

a whole and on their own interaction with and role in the system."[231] It expects students to set their own learning goals (goals directed at mastering new skills or tasks rather than at achieving a performance metric) without fear of making inevitable mistakes on the path to mastery.[232]

Self-directed learning not only allows students to actively go after the skills that they will need most in their future careers, but also sets the stage for them to engage in "job crafting" once they graduate from law school.[233] Job crafting is a process through which employees can direct and shape their experience at work by adjusting the negotiable or flexible aspects of their job, thus directing their career in a way that is most meaningful and fulfilling for them.[234] Job crafting could be used to dial one's workload both up and down.[235] An attorney could propel their career forward, for example, by proactively seeking out additional projects or cases, branching out into new practice areas, connecting with mentors from other organizations or fields, attracting clients, publishing scholarship on topics that are important and meaningful to them, seeking out leadership positions, creating new organizations, and many more. An attorney could also dial back their workload by seeking out part-time opportunities or lobbying to create more flexible working arrangements in their workplace, making space for pro bono work or other type of civic engagement in lieu of some of their active paid client work, negotiating latitude in deadlines or the way that tasks could be performed, engaging in remote work, or many other similar set-ups that better fit a person's desired lifestyle and long-term goals. Research demonstrates that people who engage in

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[231] Michael J. Cedrone, *The Developmental Path of the Lawyer*, 41 CAP. U. L. REV. 779, 819 (2013).

[232] Fruehwald, *supra* note 229, at 11.

[233] Evangelina Demerouti, *Design Your Own Job Through Job Crafting*, 19 EUR. PSYCHOL. 237, 241 (2014).

[234] Amy Wrzesniewski & Jane E. Dutton, *Crafting a Job: Revisioning Employees as Active Crafters of Their Work*, 26 ACAD. MGMT. REV. 179, 179 (2001).

[235] Katherina Vogt, Jari J. Hakanen, Rebecca Brauchli, Gregor J. Jenny & Georg F. Bauer, *The Consequences of Job Crafting: A Three-Wave Study*, 25 EUR. J. WORK & ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOL. 353, 353 (2016); Christina Wessels, Michaela Schippers, Sebastian Stegmann, Arnold B. Bakker, Peter J. van Baalen & Karen I. Proper, *Fostering Flexibility in the New World of Work: A Model of Time-Spatial Job Crafting*, 10 FRONTIERS IN PSYCHOL. 1, 3 (2019).

job crafting form stronger and more positive professional identities and experience greater meaning from their work.[236]

There is no silver bullet exercise that can drive home the point that students should be proactive learners. What is needed is consistent messaging, coupled with opportunities for students to have a voice in their own learning process. For example, I frequently offer some type of choice with my in-class exercises. In the fall, I ask my students to write a memo start-to-finish in class, and I offer three memo prompts from different legal contexts for them to choose from. In the spring, I ask my students to comment in writing on a legal development—a proposed piece of legislation, a new Supreme Court case, a pending agency rule, etc.—and allow them to choose which of several organizational interests they would like to represent based on their professional interests. I also carve out at least one class per semester with no predetermined content and send out a poll or solicit email suggestions for what my students want to hear about or practice during this time. These choices not only ensure higher buy-in for the individual activities, but also implicitly show my students that they can and should take charge of their learning experience, rather than being passive recipients of instructions and expectations.

The choices I offer extend beyond the classroom and challenge my students to grapple with their own time-management style and personal preferences. For instance, I offer my students several optional assignments throughout the year that allow them to choose between getting additional feedback or having more time to focus on a previous assignment. Likewise, I support student-directed work plans, whereby students set their own intermediate deadlines for a larger assignment and take ownership over the process of completing it. These approaches demonstrate to my students that while I as the educator direct the classroom experience based on my expertise and goals, their unique needs and priorities factor heavily into my decisions.

Lastly, I discuss in class the concept of job crafting and tell my students that they should have an active role in shaping not only their education experience, but their future work experience as well. I stress that job crafting starts from a posture of proactive and respectful negotiation about the structural work parameters, *not* from an entitled attitude or expectation about unreasonable concessions that go to the substance of their work responsibilities. I then

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[236] Amy Wrzesniewski, Nicholas LoBuglio, Jane E. Dutton & Justin M. Berg, *Job Crafting and Cultivating Positive Meaning and Identity in Work*, *in* ADVANCES IN POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY 281, 282 (Arnold B. Bakker ed., 2013).

encourage my students to practice having these sometimes-difficult conversations about adjusting assignment parameters or otherwise modifying their work experience with me. I hope that by offering a safe environment for these discussions, I could help my students have similar professional and thoughtful conversations with someone in authority over them when they get to their big debut on the professional stage.

3. Promoting Flow Through Individual In-Class Work

Finally, law students should be encouraged to explore deep concentration or "flow." A term coined first by Dr. Csikszentmihalyi in the eponymous book, flow refers to a state of deep focus and immersion in a goal-directed activity.[237] As this definition makes clear, being able to achieve flow helps students reach the goals that they have set out for themselves, thus making it more likely that they will successfully set out on a purpose-driven career path.[238] Beyond that, flow allows students, and employees, to derive deep satisfaction and meaning from their work, because they become more productive, creative, and involved in their task or project.[239] This, in turn, creates a virtuous cycle whereby the pursuit of purpose itself produces purpose and satisfaction and engenders more intentional and focused actions in the same purpose-driven direction.[240]

Because flow emerges at the intersection of focus and challenge,[241] students in a legal research class could be stimulated to experience flow by being assigned short but challenging tasks that they should complete in class. Students should work on their own for this task but without the distractions that they ordinarily experience when writing at home.[242] Importantly, because achieving flow is its own reward, ideally the task would be ungraded, and the progress made on it would be entirely for the benefit of the student.

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[237] MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, FLOW: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE (1990).

[238] MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, GOOD BUSINESS: LEADERSHIP, FLOW, AND THE MAKING OF MEANING 70 (2003).

[239] Jeanne Nakamura & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Construction of Meaning Through Vital Engagement*, *in* FLOURISHING: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND THE LIFE WELL-LIVED 88–90 (Corey L.M. Keyes & Jonathan Haidt eds. 2003).

[240] *Id.*

[241] *Id.*

[242] *See* LINDER & LEVIT, *supra* note 93, at 82–83 (discussing willpower in the face of distractions and temptations and the importance of choosing to work with and near people who have positive work habits).

Many exercises lend themselves to this task. One that I incorporate in my class is targeted editing. Students often struggle with the process of editing their written work because the task can appear dauntingly unspecific, with no concrete endpoint, and no measurable results. Add to that the vast amounts of time that editing could eat up, the untold number of digital or other distractions that students have to resist to achieve flow at home, and the young writer's inherent attachment to whatever they have already drafted, and editing can quickly become a student's worst nightmare. That is why I carve out one entire class to provide students with quiet and uninterrupted space for editing while offering structured prompts and the opportunity for immediate feedback. I tell students towards the end of the semester to come to class with a printout of their current draft and a pen. I then devise several specific and manageable prompts for editing—e.g., "Read your draft for any sentences longer than three lines and edit those sentences to a single line," or "Find any topic sentences that contain a case name and edit them so that the case comes later in the paragraph and the topic sentence reflects the larger paragraph point." After each prompt, I allow the students a ten to fifteen-minute uninterrupted interval to work on their own, without the need to discuss their work product. At the end of the interval, students have the opportunity to share concrete improvements that they achieved or to seek targeted feedback. Students often comment that this is the first time that they have experienced the profound benefits of editing and the great satisfaction that comes from seeing the concrete fruits of their focused labor.

C. Considering Broader World Impact and Practicing Gratitude

The goal of the curricular changes suggested in this Article is not to produce a homogenous class of human rights lawyers. Directing students to a predetermined career path, however noble and societally beneficial it may be, would be counterproductive and would eventually result in similar levels of burn-out, depression, low motivation, high attrition, and overall lackluster professional standards as the current trend of mindlessly shepherding students into corporate law firms. If there is a single take-away point from this Article, it is that students should be encouraged to choose *personally* meaningful career paths that comport with their *unique* and *individual* set of values, priorities, and goals. That is the only way to achieve intrinsic motivation, find lasting purpose, and form a firmly grounded and satisfying professional identity.

The discussion of broader world implications in this subsection, therefore, should not be misunderstood to suggest that students should be instructed to look only for career opportunities exclusively in the public interest sector. Rather, reflecting upon the broader world implications of choices serves three goals. First, it predisposes students to look beyond themselves (even if to one other person) and to ask themselves how their actions, choices, and habits may impact others.[243] Second, it fights the dominant law school narrative that there is only one path—or, at least, only one prestigious and accomplished path—to practicing law, and prompts students to think creatively about the many ways they can use their law degrees to make a difference.[244] And third, it allows them to choose purposes that transcend the here-and-now and offer a more sustained and lasting meaning.[245]

1. Introducing Practice Area Diversity

The most direct way to raise student awareness about various potential career paths is through explicit class discussions about the enormous diversity of practices within the field of law. Often, students instinctively look at potential careers through the lens of areas of the law—e.g., international law, contract law, or energy law. What this default categorization misses, however, is the tremendous impact that factors such as the employer's central mission, the type of client base, or the organizational structure can play in a lawyer's sense of meaning and satisfaction. To counter this dominant law school narrative of careers defined by substantive areas of law, I introduce my students to the very different possible careers *within* an area of law. In late Fall, when students begin to assess potential summer internships, I deploy an exercise in which we adopt the fiction that all students in my class have some interest in environmental law. I then survey some possible career paths: (1) a public interest lawyer working in-house for an underfunded NGO that takes up issues of environmental justice; (2) a law firm environmental law associate working on behalf of

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[243] *See* Valverde, *supra* note 33, at 330 (arguing that law students' "inability to see the need for and relevance of their professional knowledge and skills to prevent and alleviate social and legal hardships of others" neutralizes the power of these students' personal convictions and passions, and leads to complacency, aimlessness, and hopelessness).

[244] *Id.* at 331.

[245] Sheldon & Krieger, *supra* note 35, at 273 (noting that the stark decrease in subjective well-being after the students' first year of law school was due at least in part to decrease in community service values).

international manufacturers that employ thousands of people and support the economy of many developing nations; (3) an EPA attorney carrying out the environmental agenda of the current administration; (4) an attorney working for a municipal utility company that needs to ensure regulatory compliance with local environmental ordinances to be able to operate; and (5) a plaintiff-side solo practitioner filing class actions against the government for toxic contamination near military bases. I then ask my students to imagine their life in each of these positions and discuss their reactions to the different options first in small groups and then, on a more general level, with the entire class. The substantive area of the law is the same, but how different would their day-to-day life, the impact on their immediate world, and the impact on the broader world be? Different roles appeal to different students, driving home the point that each person has their unique worthy purpose to pursue in life. But no matter the answer, by engaging in this discussion, students shift their understanding of what to look for in a potential future career and become more aware of the impact each of their choices can have on others.

A similar message emerges as a helpful by-product of my students' assignment to interview one or more practitioners with at least a decade of experience (*see supra*). Our class discussion of these interviews inevitably paints a picture of the incredible variety of practice set-ups, the different impacts these have had on the interviewees' lives and levels of satisfaction, and the many ways the law could be used as a force for good.

2. Exploring Proactive and Preventative Law

Another lens through which students can become more aware of the impact they could have on the world around them is by introducing them to practices such as impact litigation, preventative law, regulatory rulemaking and comment, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and community education and engagement.[246] The traditional law school curriculum is heavily skewed in favor of litigation over any other type of practice, and, within the world of litigation, the focus falls on active disputes between concrete parties.

As I begin to introduce persuasive advocacy in the spring semester, I take the opportunity to preview for my students the many ways that advocacy plays out in contexts outside of active plaintiff-

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[246] Valverde, *supra* note 33, at 360–65. *See also* Jennifer Rosen Valverde, *Preparing Tomorrow's Lawyers to Tackle Twenty-First Century Health and Social Justice Issues,* 95 DENVER L. REV. 539, 550–56 (2018).

versus-defendant litigation. I introduce them to class actions and impact litigation, preventative law, community education and engagement, legislative lobbying, regulatory drafting, and even media campaigns. These class discussions, sometimes led by guest speakers that practice in these areas of law, often prove inspirational for at least a handful of students to pursue such career paths. They also provide opportunities for short, one-off writing assignments that allow students to practice persuasion and to familiarize themselves with the types of work product that non-litigators may develop. An assignment to draft a comment on a proposed rule, a strategy memo, a Board resolution, a legislative statement or testimony, an op-ed, or an educational pamphlet for a community in crisis, for example, have proven extremely effective, in my classroom and those of my colleagues,[247] in shifting students' focus from the practice of law as petty in-fighting to the practice of law as a worthwhile fight.

3. Practicing Gratitude

Lastly, an important element of situating students' own concerns in the broader context is the regular practice of gratitude. Studies demonstrate that habitually reflecting on one's blessings and privileges not only produces more immediate satisfaction and better relationships, but also prompts students to look for ways to give back to society.[248] Expressing gratitude also fosters compassion, which in turn helps people truly *see* those around them and their needs.[249] In clinical settings, psychologists report positive and, more importantly, lasting effects of simple gratitude practices, such as asking adolescents to record three to five good things that have happened to them every day for a week or to write and deliver a gratitude letter to someone who has blessed them.[250] In the law school setting, similar small and simple gestures of gratitude, like asking students to share one good thing that they were able to do as a result of the COVID-19

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[247] *See generally* Valverde, *supra* note 246.

[248] Robert A. Emmons & Michael E. McCullough, *Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life*, 84 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 377, 386 (2003).

[249] *See* R. Lisle Baker, *Character and Fitness for Leadership: Educating Lawyers for Compassion and Courage as Well as Brains*—The Wizard of Oz *Was Right*, 14 TENN. J. L. & POL'Y 287, 321 (2020).

[250] Bronk & Mangan, *supra* note 191, at 413; Jeffrey J. Froh, William J. Stefick & Robert A. Emmons, *Counting Blessings in Early Adolescents: An Experimental Study of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being*, 46 J. SCH. PSYCHOL. 213, 220, 228–29 (2008).

pandemic or sharing one "sparkling moment," in which they successfully resisted feelings of despair, allowed students to be reminded that they have the power to define and interpret their own stories.[251]

Especially in times of high stress throughout the first year of law school, such as after their 1L midterm in the fall, first-semester grades coming out in January, or interview times for summer employment, I like to bring candy to my classroom and ask my students at the beginning of class "What went well?" Intentionally pausing for just a few brief minutes to engage in gratitude and positive self-reflection can almost magically center students, shift mindsets, and reignite lost motivation and enthusiasm. It reminds students of the incredible privilege they will one day have—and in fact already have—to serve those less fortunate than them and to change the world around them, no matter their GPA, summer employment prospects, prestigious extracurricular activities, or long-term career choices.

Conclusion

Law school can be a grueling and soul-draining experience. For many, the practice of law is worse. It does not have to be this way. With depression, substance abuse, and attrition rates in the legal profession at an all-time high, it is time we rethink how we train our young lawyers and where we are failing them. Although most of our students graduate from law school knowing how to practice law well, many of them soon discover that they no longer remember why they practice law. While we do not—and cannot—have a one-size-fits-all answer that is true and authentic for each student, as educators, we owe it to students to show them how to find it for themselves. Inspiring law students to seek purpose and meaning in their future careers—and equipping them with the skills they need to pursue that purpose intentionally and successfully—can stem the tide of aimlessness and hopelessness in the legal profession and can help law schools to once again graduate inspired, motivated, and grounded lawyers who become members of a healthy, happy, and productive profession.

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[251] Valverde, *supra* note 33, at 359.