

# Better Lawyering *through* Mindfulness

8-Week Mindfulness Based Wellness Program



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# How Today's Busy Lawyers Can Improve Focus And Increase Job Satisfaction

• Data Driven • Verified Effectiveness • Tailored for Lawyers



In today's highly competitive and results oriented legal environment, lawyers are faced with high demands on both their time and performance. Lawyers are expected to perform at a very high level, under time and client pressure and do more in less time, while also balancing work and personal life.

**It's no wonder that lawyers are 3.6 times more likely to suffer from depression than non-lawyers.**

This leads to lawyers feeling as though their day is compressed, living in 0.1 hour increments. This high level of demands and workload can often lead to **burnout, anxiety, and stress, and can affect their mental and physical well-being.**

This in turn affects the lawyers' ability to perform at the level the firm and clients expect and require.

Many lawyers try to bottle up these feelings. They push these negative feelings down and work even harder. As a result, many lawyers also engage in self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse, alienating close relationships, and unknowingly allowing their physical and mental state to deteriorate.

Instead of pretending that these problems don't exist, lawyers need healthy and productive outlets to combat these issues. They need strategies and methods to help them cope with and reduce stress and focus on their productivity and well-being.



# Mindfulness and Resiliency Help Drive Business

In the past two decades there have been great strides made into research on two incredibly important tools: **mindfulness** and **resiliency**.

- **Mindfulness** is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.
- **Resilience** is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress.

*A lawyer's mind is arguably his or her most used and valued instrument; yet, we are never taught ways of training our mind for optimal performance. Mindfulness and resilience train the mind just like exercise trains the body.*

Companies all over the world are taking notice of the benefits of mindfulness and resiliency. **Aetna, Nike, P&G, Apple, Google, Maersk, Facebook, Target, Goldman Sachs,** and **General Mills** are just a few examples of the many major corporations that are investing in mindfulness and resiliency initiatives.

**More than one-quarter of the Aetna's workforce of 50,000 has participated in at least one [mindfulness] class, and on average, and those who have reported, a 28% reduction in their stress levels, a 20% improvement in sleep quality and a 19% reduction in pain. They also become more effective on the job, gaining an average of 62 minutes per week of productivity each, worth \$3,000 per employee per year to Aetna.**



These companies are rolling out such programs because they improve employees' work and personal lives. **Employees become happier, more productive, and stay with the company longer.**

# Goals And Benefits of Mindfulness and Resiliency

- **Improves recruitment.** Offering wellness and mindfulness programs can improve recruiting as it demonstrates a firm culture committed to the wellness of its associates.
- **Happier workers means a higher retention rate and more productivity** (for example, retaining just 10 attorneys for an extra year, and billing 1,800 hours each at \$350/hr. = \$6,350,000 in non-disrupted revenue). The aim of this program is to create an environment that attorneys and staff flock to, not to squeeze another year out of an unhappy employee who's on the fence about leaving.
- **Changing a firm culture one step at a time.** Many staff and attorneys find biglaw alienating and depressing. Firms have deeply entrenched cultures that have contributed to their success but large firms filled with people working very hard under competitive and otherwise stressful conditions lead to these feelings, and this workshop is just one method and step for working toward a healthier work environment.
- **Wellness and lifestyle considerations are a perk to which associates respond.** Many firms are reporting associates rejecting high value economic incentives to bill more hours; attorneys don't need more money, they crave more balance and autonomy.
- **Earn the reputation** of a firm that cares about its employees.
- Develop the **competitive advantage** that comes with more focused employees and a healthier work environment.

*We find that meditation allows your brain to get over the cultural ADHD that we've been creating by trying to do multiple tasks at once and allows our brains to focus on the task at hand."*

– Shawn Achor, NYTimes best selling author and Harvard professor



# Mindfulness and Resiliency Program By Lawyers, For Lawyers

Our programs are **designed by practicing lawyers, and tailored specifically for lawyers and law firms**. As practicing lawyers, we are intimately familiar with the stresses and the hardship that lawyers regularly face. We also understand how valuable time is for lawyers. In short, our programs are designed to **deliver mindfulness training in bite-sized pieces that can be incorporated into lawyer's busy schedule**.



The goal of meditation practice is not to master techniques for their own sake but to change the way we experience and live our lives.

~The Anxious Lawyer (ABA, 2016)

# 8-Week Course Detail



ANALYSIS & DATA

## Part I: Wellness Assessment

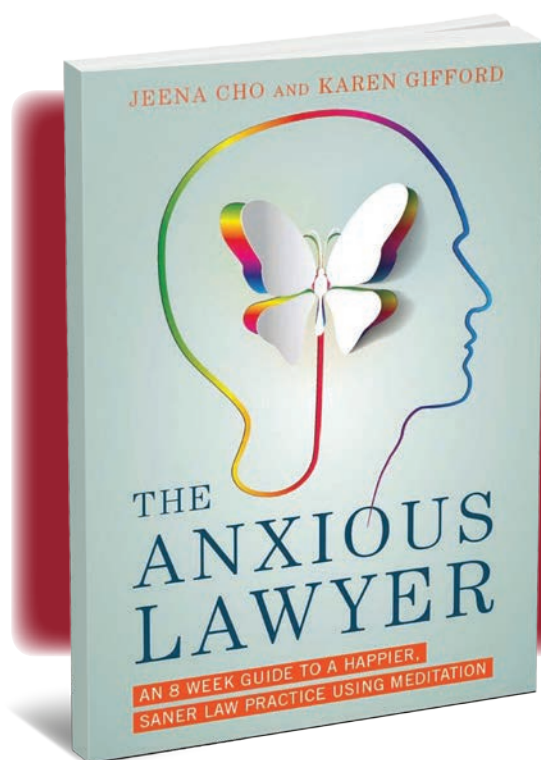
This program is data driven and verified. We start the program with a survey that measures physical, mental, and social well-being of the attorneys. This is measured by [PROMIS®](#), developed by NIH – a highly reliable, precise measure of overall well-being. (See: [PROMIS](#) methodology.) The survey is critical in measuring the effectiveness of the program and tailoring the program to meet the firm’s specific needs.

## Part II: Program

Class size is limited to create a safe and supportive environment. During class, we'll discuss the many challenges of practicing law and develop ways to integrate our mindfulness practice in our daily lives.

The workshop is highly interactive and experiential. Attorneys will have an opportunity to try the tools presented during the workshop so that they can start experiencing the benefits immediately. It's not just about teaching mindfulness but rather teaching applied mindfulness. **The goal of the workshop is to arm each attorney with a menu of tools he or she can draw from when faced with a difficulty or challenge – in other words, increase resiliency.**

One common feedback we have received over the years in teaching this course is a sense of “I am not alone in my struggles.” This is an incredibly powerful experience for lawyers where there's seemingly never any room for weakness and errors, and it can often feel as though you're the only one that's struggling.



**This course is based on the curriculum in the book, *The Anxious Lawyer*, published by the American Bar Association.**

## Curriculum (Each session is 1-hour)

### *week 1*

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

What is mindfulness (what it is; what it isn't)? What is resiliency? How lawyers can use mindfulness and resiliency for better lawyering. Exercise: The mind-body connection (Body Scan)

### *week 2*

#### **THE AUTHENTIC LAWYER**

Using mindfulness for self-regulation. Role of setting boundaries and mindfulness. Reaction vs. response. Practical applications of mindfulness in client interactions. Exercise: Getting to know your authentic lawyering style.

### *week 3*

#### **THE MYTH OF STRESS-FREE LIFE**

Physiology of stress and practical ways of working with stress/anxiety. Releasing the “busy mind” – increase focus/concentration. “Thinking errors” – noticing and questioning our narrative. Working with anxiety: letting go of what we cannot control. Exercise: Recognizing and working with negative thoughts.

### *week 4*

#### **WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE**

Role of Compassion & Empathy towards others. Holding assertiveness and compassion together. Letting go of unhelpful thoughts. Exercise: Recognizing your triggers. Noticing your habitual response and changing it to get what you want. Importance of boundaries.





## *week 5*

### **WORKING WITH THE BIGGEST CRITIC – YOURSELF**

Self-Compassion – why it’s critical for lawyers. Working with self-criticism, negative self-talk and the saboteur. Selfish vs. Self-care. Mindful eating exercise. Exercise: What are the underlying beliefs that are holding you back?

## *week 6*

### **MINDFUL LISTENING (PART I)**

Listening to understand rather than to respond. Conflict resolution – using conflict as an opportunity for deepening and fostering mutual benefit and understanding. Breaking habitual thought patterns with mindfulness. Exercise: Receiving difficult feedback/ criticism

## *week 7*

### **MINDFUL LISTENING (PART II)**

Using mindful listening in interpersonal relationships. Processing difficult emotions. Understanding role of compassion and vulnerability in law practice. Exercise: What needs are not being met?

## *week 8*

### **NEGATIVITY BIAS**

Understanding compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and importance of self-care. Gratitude as a way to combat compassion fatigue. Exercise: Secure your own oxygen mask before assisting others – importance of self-care.

## Part III: Wellness Assessment

We'll administer the wellness assessment and report the findings.

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### What's Included

Program includes:

- 4-hours of consultation time to understand firm's needs and adjust curriculum to address the specific needs and concerns
- Pre and post survey, detailed PROMIS report
- 8-weeks of classroom instruction (each session is 1-hour long), optional weekly 30-minute "drop-in" meditation sessions
- Email support for attorneys
- All materials.

**For additional information,  
visit [www.theanxiouslawyer.com](http://www.theanxiouslawyer.com)**

# Jeena Cho

Lawyer, Author, Mindfulness Instructor, Wellness Consultant



Jeena Cho is a partner at JC Law Group PC, a bankruptcy law firm in San Francisco, CA. In addition to her law practice, she teaches mindfulness and meditation to lawyers. She has given over 100 talks and training sessions on mindfulness, wellness, self-care, work-life balance, and diversity in the legal profession. She also works with lawyers and law firms implement programs for stress management, work-life balance, career transition, increasing productivity and overall wellness.

Jeena started her meditation practice at the Himalayan Institute in Buffalo, NY. She has completed several classes in Mindfulness and Compassion Cultivation Training at a number of institutions including Stanford University, and has attended numerous retreats on mindfulness at organizations including the Spirit Rock, Insight Retreat Center, Esalen Institute and the San Francisco Zen Center. She has completed the teacher training practicum for Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

Jeena is an adjunct professor at University of San Francisco, School of Law. She has spoken and offered training at Sheppard Mullin, Clio, Golden Gate University, School of Law, NACBA, AABA, SMCBA, CCCBA, BASF, NAPO and BALRA (and many other acronyms).

Jeena enjoys writing and is currently working on her second book *The Anxious Lawyer*(ABA) which is scheduled to be published in early 2016. She is a regular contributor at *Above the Law*, *Lawyerist*, *Ms. JD*, and *Huffington Post*. She's been interviewed on *MSNBC* and *Wall Street Journal*. Jeena is the author of the LexisNexis guide *How to Manage Your Law Office* where she wrote about starting, growing and managing a solo practice including topics ranging from marketing to virtual law practice to social media. She holds a J.D. and B.A. from University at Buffalo.



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