

# Looking After Your Wellbeing During the Clerkship Application Process



The period leading up to finishing and graduating from your law degree is exciting, but it can also be scary as you contemplate starting your career as a graduate lawyer. As a lawyer graduating from university, applying for seasonal clerkships can be challenging and the process can for some feel stressful and create a lot of uncertainty, particularly given the application pool is highly competitive.

King & Wood Mallesons is committed to ensuring its seasonal clerkship application process maintains individual wellbeing.

Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that applying for seasonal clerkships at multiple law firms can result in feeling that navigating the overall process can be overwhelming; so it's important to look after your wellbeing and mental health during this time.

## What can you do to look after your wellbeing during the stressful process of applying for seasonal clerkship?

During stressful and overwhelming times, engaging in strategies that promote your mental health and wellbeing can help you to deal with stress.

### Self-Care Strategies

Investing in self-care and positive wellbeing habits can help you to refuel, cope during times of uncertainty, and redirect your energy into the things you can control. So, what are these?

- 1. Sleep:** Many, often disregard the need for a good night's sleep. But sleep is essential for your health and wellbeing and can reduce stress. Sleep decreases cortisol levels and helps to replenish energy and recharge the brain. Enhancing your sleep quality and getting the optimal 7-8 hours of sleep each night is best to reduce stress and is needed for a healthy mind and body. Getting sufficient sleep also has an influence on mood and energy levels allowing you to feel happy, energised, and ready to conquer the day. Juggling the multiple demands that are required on the home stretch of finishing a law degree is challenging. Learning to "switch off" at the end of each day can help to maximise recovery and sleep quality. Set a night-time routine and regulate your sleep schedule. This will ensure that you are able to focus clearly on your application and put your best foot forward in the interview process!
- 2. Mindfulness:** Mindfulness can be used to engage in your senses, foster calmness, and ease the mind. Mindfulness is a state of focused attention on the present moment and is an effective stress management technique which encourages you to tune into your thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness brings awareness to the mind, body, and breath, and has been proven to dial down the body's response to stress. Practising mindfulness can actually change areas of the brain that are associated with emotion regulation, complex thinking, and perception. Mindfulness activities that you can engage in include gratitude, meditation, or breathwork. Practising these activities for 10-15 minutes each day can put you in a positive, relaxed state, and improve your overall wellbeing. If you're feeling stressed during the clerkship application process, stop, take a deep breath in, and engage in your senses. Being mindful of the "now", can help you to redirect your attention on the present moment, instead of worrying about the future.

**3. Move your body:** Exercise provides many psychological benefits, just as it provides physical benefits. Exercise can be used to manage stress, as it reduces the stress hormones: adrenaline and cortisol. Exercise also stimulates the production of endorphins, which are the body's feel-good chemicals. This can boost your positive emotions, making you feel happy, content, and calm. Moving your body for 30 minutes to an hour each day decreases tension in the body, boosts your mood, and helps to counter stress. Move your body in a way that works for you. Whether this be walking, running, yoga, Pilates, or swimming. Find an activity you enjoy and incorporate this into your weekly routine. When juggling multiple tasks, time blocking is a great technique that can help you to organise your time so you can fit movement into your schedule. Schedule exercise at a time that works best for you. Maybe it's at the end of the day as a way to wind down, or maybe it's

### Mindset Strategies

In addition to the self-care strategies listed above, keeping your mindset positive, proactive and realistic will assist in coping with the stress and pressure that the clerkship application process may put on you.

- 1. Focus on what is within your control right now:** An essential strategy for dealing with challenging situations is to identify how much personal control or influence we have over these events. When you have little or no control over an external situation, it is important to be mindful of how much time, energy and effort is attributed to worrying about that event. Otherwise, you may be 'spending time' getting stressed about something that is not within your control to change, which can become extremely frustrating and overwhelming. But, if you can exert even a small amount of influence or control over a situation, you can respond proactively. Create an action plan and set realistic goals to pursue. For example, "despite the challenges I may face, I will work hard and put my best foot forward throughout the application process".
- 2. Challenge your negative thoughts:** Most people will engage in negative thinking at some point, especially competitive situations such as job applications. During these periods you may find yourself setting unrealistic expectations or thinking pessimistically (for example, "I'm not good enough to be accepted into this clerkship"). Make a conscious effort to notice these thoughts and reframe them into more helpful thinking patterns (for example, "I have worked hard in my degree and have put in my best effort for my application").

As a lawyer graduating from university, remember you may not have control over everything in life, but you always have control over your mindset and attitude. Positive mindset and attitude play a vital role in building resilience to tackle challenges and persist in the face setbacks.

The process for seasonal clerkships can be challenging and the competition for a spot is high. Engaging in positive self-talk and having a growth mindset can encourage you to be open minded, perseverant, and help you to take more control over your trajectory.