



Portfolio Media, Inc. | 111 West 19th Street, 5th floor | New York, NY 10011 | www.law360.com
Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

Legal Field Could Benefit From Mindfulness Training: Paper

By **Matthew Guarnaccia**

Law360, New York (February 1, 2017, 4:55 PM EST) -- The benefits of mindfulness are coming to the fore in popular culture and a number of U.S. industries, but little is known about its advantages in the legal field where it has the potential to boost decision-making, ethics and leadership skills, a new paper said Tuesday.

In the report released by the Social Science Research Network, Peter H. Huang of the University of Colorado Law School said mindfulness, which is the practice of maintaining awareness in the present moment, is proven to aid mental and physical health and well-being through the cultivation of "emotional intelligence" and the reduction of anxiety and stress. Huang suggested that, among other things, members of the legal field should team up with neuroscientists and psychologists to study the effects of mindfulness on law students, attorneys and law professors.

Additionally, he also suggested that these groups try mindfulness on their own and that law schools, law firms and bar associations offer voluntary mindfulness training to gauge its impact.

"To date, there is little empirical or experimental research about how practicing mindfulness affects law students, lawyers, or law professors," the paper said. "There is though a growing body of empirical or experimental research about how practicing mindfulness affects people who are not in the legal profession."

Huang suggests that from the perspective of decision-making, mindfulness has already entered into the legal world. He points to an interview with Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, in which he said he "pauses" for 10 to 15 minutes twice a day to "sit peacefully" and "relax." Justice Breyer said this act, which is a form of mindfulness meditation, has helped him become more focused and has improved his health.

The chair of the American Bar Association's Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs has also acknowledged the benefits of mindfulness, and how it creates better decision makers. Additionally, the American Judges Association has made similar comments.

Huang pointed to studies that say decision-making is in many cases dependent on mood, and that those who practice mindfulness generally have a more positive outlook and state of mind.

In general, acting more ethically is believed to have a direct connection with mindfulness as well, the paper said. Studies show that a person practicing mindfulness is more likely to care about things like integrity and honesty rather than monetary gain, Huang said.

He said mindfulness allows a person to exercise and explore all options through awareness of oneself, which could lead to a change in a person's behavior to a more ethical position.

The same can be said of the effect of mindfulness on leadership ability, Huang noted, as those who are more aware of their surroundings can acknowledge the needs of others as well.

In all, Huang said these benefits could be recognized through the implementation of his recommendations, and that the lives of lawyers and their clients will see an improvement with the addition of mindfulness.

--Editing by Jill Coffey.

All Content © 2003-2017, Portfolio Media, Inc.