



CITMA Webinar – Small changes, big impact: micro-habits for better mental health

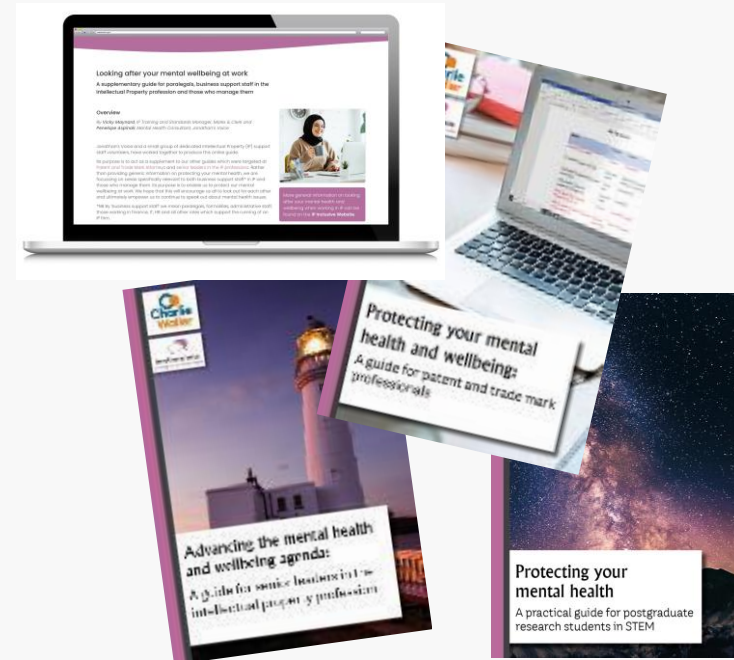
Lisa Whittleton, Jonathan's Voice
Alicia Koch, The Legal Belletrist
Frieda Levycky, Braving Boundaries



Jonathan's Voice



- We aim to break down the stigma and open up the conversation around mental health at work, specifically, within the intellectual property sector and associated professions.
- We work alongside professional institutions, individual firms and CIPA, CITMA and IP Inclusive to help develop mentally healthy workplaces where all may thrive.
- We provide workshops, webinars and resources. As a charity, we can offer these free at the point of delivery.
- We also fund vital research into better understanding of male suicide and preventative steps.



All available to download free of charge from
www.jonathansvoice.org.uk

Why micro-habits?

- The way we work - the pace, the pressure, the expectations, the constant cognitive load, has a direct impact on our mental health
- We are seeing high levels of stress, perfectionism, and burnout risk
- Micro-habits are small, repeatable actions that help us stay grounded, regulate energy, and create healthier working patterns
- They're realistic, sustainable and achievable even on the busiest days
- Micro-habits matter because they help us create **small pockets of space** in the day, interrupt threat responses, and build capacity rather than depletion
- When leaders model openness, boundaries and healthy habits, it gives everyone permission to do the same



Jonathan's Voice
Speaking out for mental health



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What stops me looking after my wellbeing at work?



menti.com
1371 8706

Waiting for participants





CITMA Webinar

Confessions of a Recovering Lawyer

Small habits, honest conversations and the radical act of being a person first.

Alicia Koch | The Legal Belletrist

Confessions of a Recovering Lawyer





THE CONFESSION

The Confession

Reaching a limit isn't evidence of incompetence; it can be the first honest sign that something must change.

- The professional self required to keep going may no longer feel recognisable.
- Burnout rarely arrives as a tidy career pivot.

The Professional Mask and the Myth of Coping

Coping can become a performance that hides exhaustion in impeccable professional packaging.

- Law rewards composure, endurance and constant availability.
- “All good” can conceal a quietly catastrophic reality.
- There’s always another deadline.

“Many people in law aren’t fine. They’re just very well formatted.”





TURNING POINT

The Mental Breakthrough

Sometimes clarity arrives not as confidence, but as exhaustion finally telling the truth.

- Professional identity can trap us inside an outdated life story.
- Staying may cost more than leaving.
- A perfect plan isn't required before change begins.

“What if the life I’d built was no longer a life I could live inside?”

WHAT WE DON'T SAY

Burnout, Shame, Silence and Harm

Needing help isn't a professional defect; it's human information worth examining.

- Burnout is more than tiredness.
- Shame keeps people isolated.
- Bullying, humiliation and chronic overwork aren't "high standards".



IDENTITY

You Are Not Your Business Card

Being a lawyer is something you do; it isn't everything you are.

Titles can become identity, status and self-worth.

Changing direction doesn't betray your former self.

Pausing or leaving can be self-preservation.

Writing, Recovery and Rediscovery

A changed path doesn't waste your training; it lets you repurpose your brilliance.

- Writing created distance from difficult experiences.
- Legal discipline, structure and scepticism remained valuable.
- Precision doesn't have to be sterile.



The Micro-Habits That Got Me Through

Small, strange habits that carried me through dark days and out the other side.

01

Put your nose in the fur of your cat or dog

02

Dance in your kitchen

03

Creamsoda — one word that means come now

04

Butterflies

05

A cup of tea



SEASONAL WELLBEING

Surviving Winter, Hot Chocolate First

Winter is not the season for heroics. It is the season for warmth and your people.

- Hot chocolate is a must. The proper kind, in your favourite mug.
- Chase the early light, even if it is just the walk to the car.
- Move gently. A slow walk counts. Kitchen dancing counts.
- Wrap up warm: blankets, socks, soup, a cat on your lap.
- Keep your people close. Winter is not meant to be done alone.
- If low mood or bad sleep sticks, tell someone. No mug replaces real support.

Leadership, Permission and Everyday Culture

Leaders create permission through visible behaviour, not wellbeing slogans.

- Model breaks, focus time and reasonable finishing hours.
- Ask what can be deprioritised.
- Protect colleagues' time.
- Distinguish genuine urgency from habitual escalation.

“Another resilience webinar won’t rescue an impossible workload.”



YOUR PLAN

Start Slow. Start Ridiculously Small.

When your nervous system is on the brink, a plan has to be tiny enough to survive your worst day.

- 1 Pick one thing. Not five. One.
- 2 Hook it to the kettle, the car or the cat.
- 3 Ten seconds of fur still counts as a win.
- 4 Tell one person what actually helps you.
- 5 If it did not stick, the habit was too big. Not you.





SYSTEMS

Small Habits Don't Excuse Broken Systems

Individual habits can help people notice trouble earlier, but organisations remain responsible for harmful systems.

- Wellbeing can't be delegated to individuals while impossible workloads, bullying or chronic overwork remain untouched.
- Personal practice and structural reform must work together.

Closing: Permission

You're allowed to be a whole person before you're a useful professional.

- Let struggle be information, not shame.
- Ask for help.
- Take the next small humane step.
- The goal isn't to make everyone leave law, but to make it possible to stay without disappearing inside it.

“You are a person first. And that should never be the most radical statement in the room.”





GETTING HELP

If You Are Not Ok, Please Say So

Help built for this profession exists. Using it is good sense.

- LawCare — mental health charity for the legal sector, UK and Ireland. Free to CITMA members. 0800 279 6888, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm. support@lawcare.org.uk. Webchat at lawcare.org.uk.
- Samaritans — urgent support, free, 24 hours a day, on 116 123.
- CITMA Benevolent Fund — support for trade mark professionals and their families in financial hardship.
- Jonathan's Voice — mental health resources for the IP professions, including self-help videos. citma.org.uk/support.
- SADAG (South Africa) — Suicide Crisis Helpline 0800 567 567, toll-free, 24 hours. Office 011 234 4837. sadag.org.



HEALTHY
HABITS



MICROHABITS:

*Small enough to do on a
challenging day*

MY BACKGROUND



Lawyer

- English qualified lawyer (2004)
- International career
- Specialisations: M&A & Commodities
- In-house (15 years)
- Private Practice (9 years)
- Group General Counsel (current)

From



Coach/Trainer

- Professional Coach (ICF (PCC))
- Enneagram coach (Integrative Enneagram Coach & Inner Life Skills Enneagram Coach)
- Whole Person Certified Coach
- Applied Psychology & Counseling degree - in progress

to

TO DO LIST

01. draft contract for ABC Limited
02. respond to email from John
03. check Board Resolution for James
04. sort our issues with AI repository
05. circular marketing agreement
06. check badlog for urgent matters
07. day to vet - team
08. respond to Emma on marketing contract
09. review PQA
10. draft lon
11. l

weekend

17. call with team
18. review
19. review
20. review
21. review
22. review
23. review
24. review
25. WIML- review PDF
26. sign affidavit
27. review EUAT Act
28. address HR queries
29. check in on Tanya
30. relaxation call - 4pm Friday
31. chase Bob to sign

**THIS MORNING'S BRAIN DUMP!!
31 THINGS!!!!**



WHY BIG BREAKS DON'T WORK FOR LAWYERS

TIME: An increasingly scarce commodity.

IDENTITY: Who we are and who we need to be as lawyers

MOTIVATION: In winter, seriously lacking!

BEHAVIOUR VS. IDENTITY

*"I am trying to
be
more organised"*



*"I am someone who
is organised"*

*"I am trying to create
more work-life balance"*

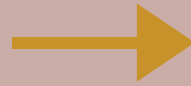


*"I am someone who protects
my time and prioritises
my well-being"*

**Because when your identity shifts,
your behaviour follows.**

EVERY ACTION IS A VOTE

"I'm someone who values my health and mobility"



I see how many steps I can walk in two minutes

"I'm someone who stays calm under pressure"



I take three slow breaths before responding to a difficult email.

The Two-Minute Rule: when you start a new habit, scale it down until it takes less than two minutes.
(James Clear, Atomic Habits)



AFTER I ... I WILL ...

After I [Existing Routine], I will [Microhabit]

- ➔ ***After I finish my lunch, I will bounce on the trampoline for two minutes.***
- ➔ ***After I end a client call, I will stand up and stretch for two minutes.***
- ➔ ***After I make my morning cup of tea, I will spend two minutes with my dog.***



THINGS YOU CAN DO UNDER 2 MINUTES

BRAIN DUMP

Write down everything on your mind, then choose three priorities.

BREATHING

Breathe in for four and out for six.
Repeat three times.

DAYLIGHT AND MOVEMENT

Step outside at midday, even if it's only to the front door and back, or stretch or do a few squats at your desk between matters.

BUILDING YOUR OWN MICROHABIT

STEP 1. I am someone who...

e.g. "I am someone who protects my focus."

e.g. "I am someone who leaves work with a clear head."

STEP 2. One micro-habit that proves it (under two minutes)

e.g. "I spend 2 minutes doing a brain dump at the start of each day."

STEP 3. After I..., I will...

e.g. "After I've made my morning coffee, I will complete my 2 minute brain dump."

ANY QUESTIONS?



WHO

WHEN

WHERE

How

WHY

WHAT

THANK YOU!



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DISCLAIMER

This presentation does not purport to be comprehensive or to contain all the information that an individual may require when considering the mental health matters (particularly in the context of the legal sector). The information contained herein is based on personal experience and currently available information and sources, which we believe to be reliable, but has not been independently verified.

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