**Self-Efficacy Exercise**

Self-efficacy is your belief that you can successfully achieve on an academic task or attain a specific academic goal that you have set for yourself. High self-efficacy when attempting difficult tasks creates feelings of calmness or serenity, but low self-efficacy may result in you perceiving a task or situation to be more difficult than it is, which may create anxiety and limit your problem-solving ability.

To boost your self-efficacy going into this semester and throughout this semester, write answers to the following prompts:

1. **Off load your worries.** When a situation is stressful, (like opening and reading your grades after your first semester of law school or taking a law school exam), the brain’s prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for our working memory and planning, focuses on the stress and has difficulty remembering the reality that our first semester grades do not define us and are not predictors of our ability to succeed as law students and lawyers.

When a student is filled with too much anxiety, the anxiety can interfere with their thought process and the regulation of their emotions. Therefore, if our grades are lower than we had hoped, we tend to catastrophize the situation and make up stories in our heads that are simply not true, untrue stories like “This is the end of my law school career,” or “I’ll never be a lawyer” or “I don’t belong here.” These stories are the result of the stress shutting down your prefrontal cortex. They are not reality. Although it may seem counterintuitive, writing down fears before facing an anxious situation, can help. Putting your worries on paper relieves your “working memory” and allows you to more realistically face the challenge. If your grades are not what you had hoped (and remember B range grades are very solid grades in law school), take some deep breaths. List all your worries at this moment and tell yourself you are going to leave them on this paper to eliminate them from your mind. Then reach out to talk with someone you trust. I will be holding open office hours on January 15 and the week of January 18. Email me any time if you need support.

1. **Develop a mantra that recognizes your strengths and accepts that you will experience stressful thoughts on occasion**. Remember that not all stress is bad—some stress can actually increase performance. Throughout the semester, use mantras that remind you that you belong here and are capable of performing well. Examples of mantras are “I can handle this” or “I expected this to be a challenge.” Write a mantra and explain how it will help you through exams.
2. **Concentrate on your progress.** Think back to how you felt during the first days and weeks of law school. How did you feel when completing your first reading assignments? How did you feel in class? Now shift your mind to the progress you made during the semester. Write a paragraph about your individual growth during this first semester of law school.
3. **Remember your reason.** Think about your reason for choosing to go to law school. Write a paragraph about that reason. Examine if the reason has changed and acknowledge that you are half way through your first year and that much closer to your goal of becoming an attorney.
4. **Remember that you are so much more than a test or a grade.**  List out all your life roles. What are your positive qualities, strengths, and significant accomplishments associated with them?

***Heading into this semester, I hope this assisted you to engage your emotions, revitalize your dream of becoming a lawyer, and invoke the self-efficacy necessary for success! We are here for you!***