

Staying Safe and Sound

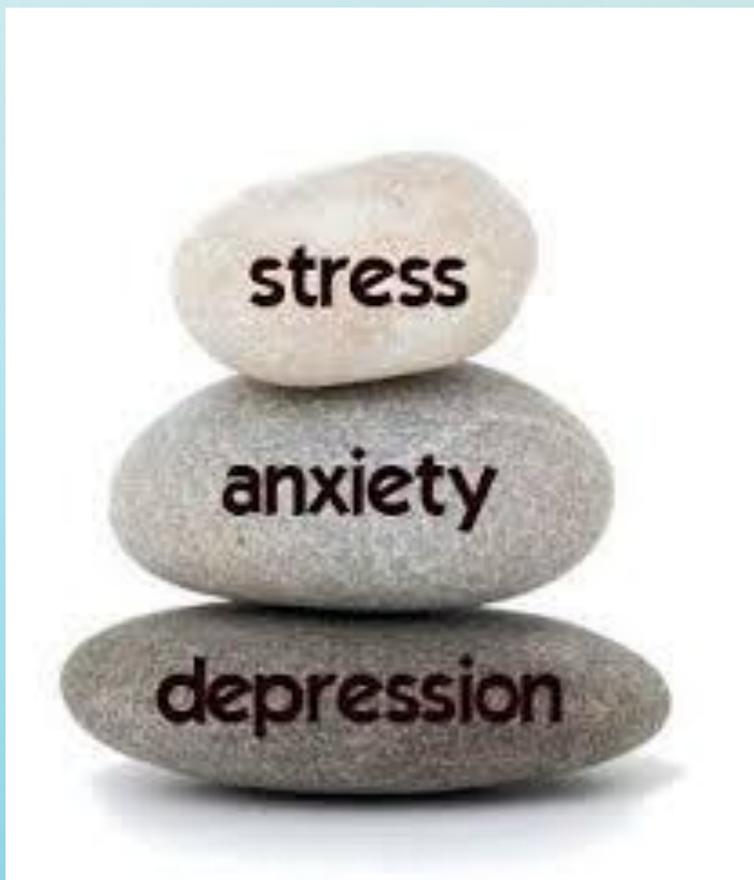
Maintaining A Work/Life Balance in Uncertain Times

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THE PROBLEMS

ABA / Hazelden- Betty Ford Study

(Published February, 2016 *Journal of Addiction Medicine*)

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale

- Depression – **28%** of all attorneys
- Stress – **23%** of all attorneys
- Anxiety – **19%** of all attorneys
- Higher rates among younger lawyers



Mental Health By The Numbers

A recent survey of Global 200, Am Law 200 and NLJ 500 firms conducted by ALM Intelligence and Law.Com revealed:

- **74%** feel the profession has had a *negative impact* on their mental health
- 44% use alcohol to deal with *stress*
- **64%** feel they suffer from *anxiety*
- 31% feel they are *depressed*
- **74%** feel their *work environment* contributes negatively
- **18%** have contemplated *suicide* at some point in their careers



Mental Health By The Numbers

- 36% use all of their vacation time
- 35% do not feel safe discussing their mental health at work
- 36% feel the billable hour has a *major* effect on stress level
- **62%** know a colleague who is *depressed* and
- **50%** know a colleague with an alcohol problem



Mental Health By The Numbers

- 65% feel they could **NOT** take an extended leave from employment to tend to mental health issues
- 78% felt it would hurt career trajectory
- 77% were fearful of what the firm would think
- 56% felt they had too much work to take an extended leave



What Causes Depression ?



Depression has many possible causes, including faulty mood regulation by the brain, genetic vulnerability, stressful life events, medications, and medical problems. It's believed that several of these forces interact to bring on depression.

“AM I DEPRESSED ?”

- Flat, apathetic, sad, and/or irritable mood most days
- Decreased pleasure and/or loss of interest
- Feelings of worthlessness, excessive/inappropriate guilt
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide
- Increased use of substances to cope (i.e., alcohol, marijuana, opiates, stimulants, etc.)
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- **Social or occupational distress/isolation**

WHAT IS STRESS ?

Psychological stress is composed of the following sequence of elements:



The thoughts and emotions are internal and subjective – part of the way we habitually respond to things – and are changeable, otherwise everyone would react in the same manner to a situation.



If we cannot interrupt or change the stimulus which produces the stress, then we must interrupt or change our appraisal of it.

HOW STRESSED ARE YOU ?

- My work requires me to do too much in too little time.
- I don't have enough time to spend with my family and friends or to pursue recreational and social activities.
- The people at my law firm or department lack collegiality – e.g., are cold, unfriendly or rude.
- My firm or department is mismanaged – e.g., not enough good clerical help, compensation or procedures are unfair.
- My firm is too focused on profit.
- The physical environment is unpleasant.
- I deal with too many unreasonable and difficult people.

HOW STRESSED ARE YOU ?

- I feel overly responsible for everything and everyone.
- I overanalyze things and am too cautious.
- I often feel depressed, defeated or hopeless.
- I often rely on alcohol or drugs to help me feel good.
- I think about quitting at least once a month.
- Occasionally, I think about suicide.



STRESS or DISTRESS ?

- Some stress is healthy. Positive stressors can energize and motivate us to be productive and creative problem solvers.
- A totally stress free life is not only unrealistic, it can actually be a harmful form of denial.
- We need to eliminate distress. Distress is harmful both physically and psychologically.
- Gradual, incremental increases in responsibilities, duties, pressures and demands at home and work combined with long work days and weeks is risky.

We become unaware that we have lost balance in our lives !!

*“Balance is the key.
Balance is everything.”*



Aloneness

Solitude vs. Loneliness

Solitude

- The *physical* state of being alone
- Need not be a permanent experience
- Balance between solitude & togetherness
- Develop an “I’m not alone” mentality



Aloneness

Solitude vs. Loneliness

Loneliness

- The *emotional* state of being alone
- Response to perceived isolation
- Belief that no one understands our circumstances, thoughts or emotions
- More importantly, a belief that no one cares



Social Isolation

Social isolation is the combination of solitude and loneliness, experienced by an individual for an extended period. Both the emotional and physical state feed off of one another and can create an inability to reengage with society in a meaningful way.



Social Isolation

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ISOLATION

Even perceived social isolation can be linked with adverse health conditions such as depression, poor sleep quality, and accelerated cognitive decline.

The issues only become more substantial when the isolation is *no longer just perceived, but immediate and ongoing.*



What is Anxiety ?

Anxiety, noun

A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome

What is Worry ?

Worry is a habit. Nearly everyone worries occasionally – it's a normal response to problems and the unknown



A thought escalates into a story – “our” story in which we play out hypothetical scenarios in our imagination.

These thoughts are often in the form of a “What if” question.

Productive worry vs. Unproductive worry

Productive – Identifying problems and using effective problem solving strategies.



vs.



- **Unproductive** - Worrying as a way of coping with problems we can't change. It adds worry and anxiety to an already unpleasant experience.

BURNOUT



WHAT IS BURNOUT ?

- **Fatigue, no matter how much someone rests** or sleeps. An exhaustion that runs deeper than sleep deprivation, and it cannot be cured by a few days off.
- **Cynicism** about life or a feeling that **nothing a person does really matters**. Burned out people are generally **disengaged**
- A sense of **inefficacy**. Burned out people feel like they are exerting significant effort, but are not making any progress or gaining any recognition.
- Burnout syndrome is **not a medically recognized condition**, thus there is no clear diagnosis or treatment. It is often misdiagnosed as anxiety, fatigue or depression.

WHAT IS BURNOUT ?

- Constant anxiety
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Changes in personality
- Irritability
- Pessimism
- Obsessive thoughts
- Feelings of inadequacy and dread



WHAT IS BURNOUT ?

- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue
- Disengagement
- Depression
- Sense of helplessness
- Lost or diminished motivation
- Heart palpitations.





WELL-BEING STRATEGIES

QUICK STRESS-BUSTERS

- Pause – lean back- give your eyes a rest for a couple minutes.
- Take three deep breaths and imagine your muscles relaxing from head to toe
- Be mindful. Focus on the immediate present. Enjoy the moment.
- Maintain a sense of humor about yourself.
- *Healthy* routines are good- don't get trapped in a rut
- Prioritize at work and home and manage your time effectively.
- **ASK FOR HELP.** Talk it out with someone you trust.

“The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, **but to schedule your priorities.**”

- Stephen Covey



Be intentional with your time and your space

- Create a dedicated workspace
- Take regular breaks
- Disconnect – let airplane mode be your friend
- Establish transition times
- Establish a routine
- Be kind to yourself – you are not alone !!

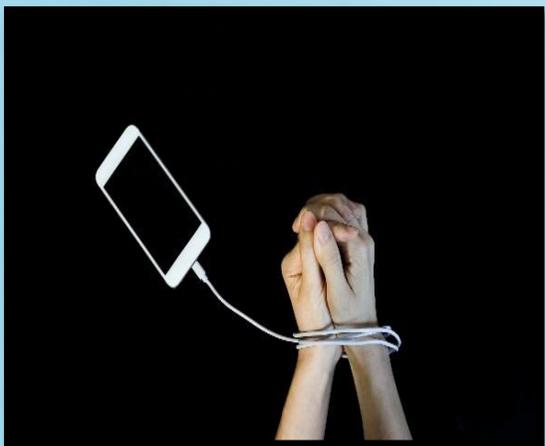
intentional

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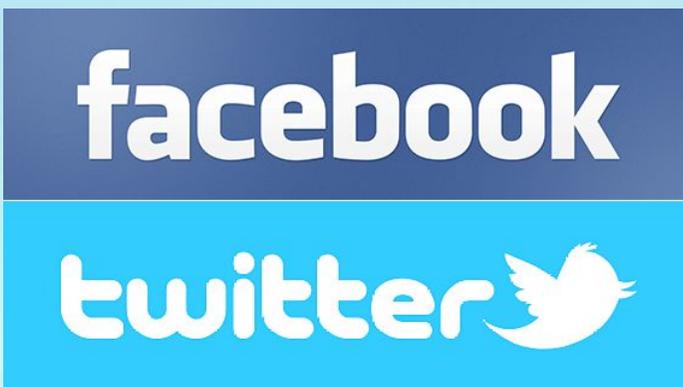
Adjective: Done on purpose; deliberate.



SET BOUNDARIES



Disconnect



QUICK STRESS-BUSTERS

- Meditate and/or pray. **CONSISTENT** stress reduction occurs with only 10 minutes of daily meditation.
- Unplug from social media when acutely stressed.
- Exercise.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Cultivate a positive attitude.
- Sleep 8 hours/ night when possible.
- Avoid overuse of alcohol or prescription drugs. These short term “fixes” just mask the problem and can lead to negative health and social consequences.

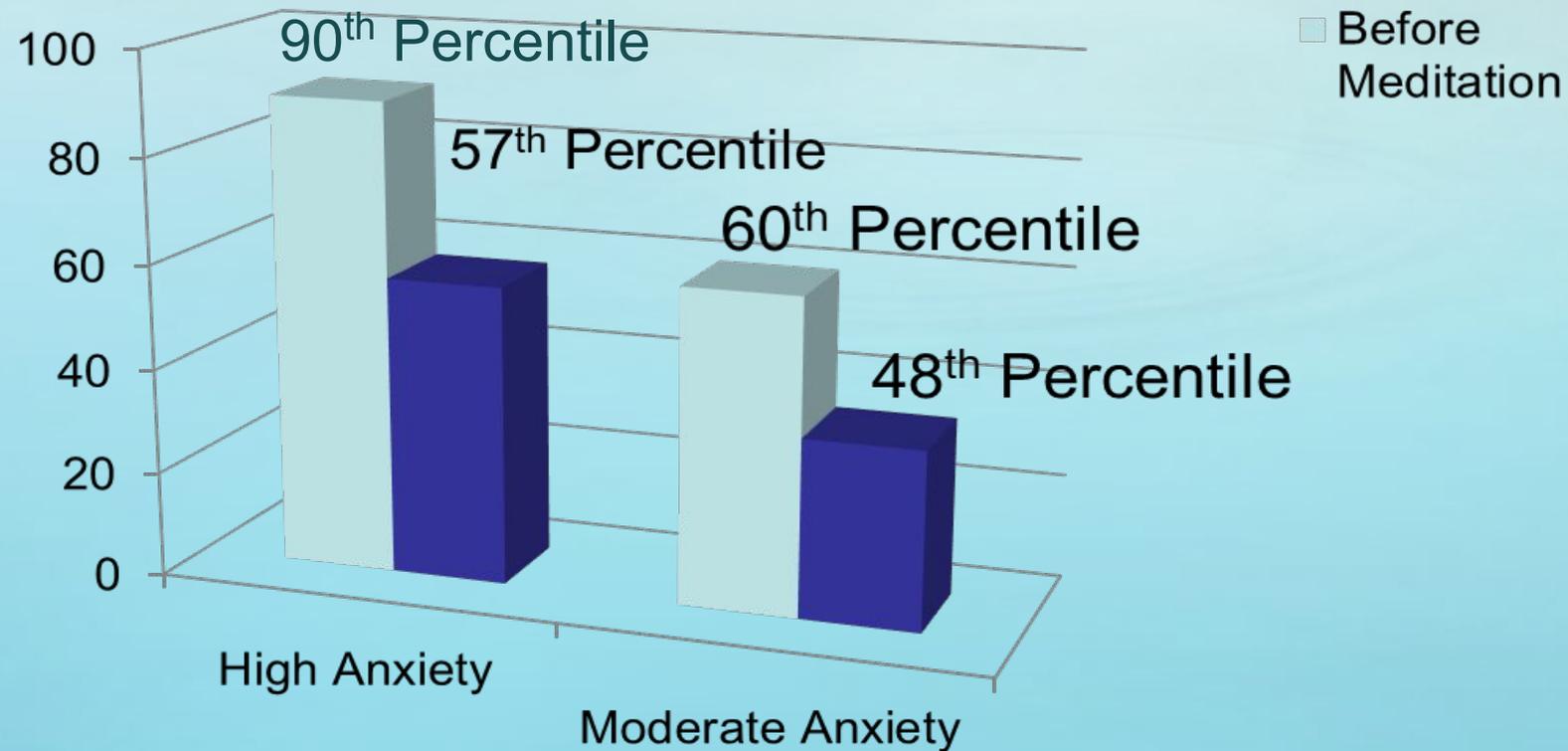


Meditation/Mindfulness

- Key to being truly present/not projecting
- Key to identifying our TRUE feelings
- Acknowledge feelings but don't attach (mountain/clouds)
- Breathing meditation
- Reduces "mental chatter"
- Helps eliminate the "what if's"
- Normal for us all to feel WAVES of emotion now



Mindfulness and Breathing Exercises



4-7-8 Breathing Exercise

Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of **4**. Hold your **breath** for a count of **7**. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of **8**. This is one **breath**.



Movement is Medicine

- 20 min. nature walk – (w/o phone)
- walking or hiking
- plank challenges
- virtual yoga
- walking w/ or w/o a dog
- Planting flowers or cutting the grass



Human Connection and Service to Others

Service to others:

- the best defense to mental chatter
- service gives us *grace from self*

Examples:

- zoom recovery platforms or meetings w/friends
- CALL someone; not text
- check on family/neighbors
- FaceTime with family, if possible
- send a handwritten note of gratitude
- help an older community member learn how to use zoom

“SERVICE TO OTHERS
IS THE RENT YOU PAY
FOR YOUR ROOM
HERE ON EARTH.”

Muhammad Ali

Gratitude

- Improves sleep
- We become more centered on others/humility
- Reduces depression
- Memorialize for reflection
- Gratitude journal
- Positive state of mind
- Directly correlated with Happiness and Peace
- Builds resiliency
- Boost productivity



Activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Running/Hiking/Walking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Playing a Musical Instrument
- Yoga
- Painting / Creating Art
- Gardening / Working with Hands
- Golfing
- Cooking



Benefits of Activating the Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Cardiovascular Health
 - Reduces stress that causes constricted blood vessels
- Blood Circulation and Hydration
 - Valve system keeps pumping
- Pain Relief
 - Improved information processing to brain
- Respiration
 - Improved oxygenation
- Digestion & Food Allergies
 - Fight or flight vs. rest and digest
- Aging process
 - Improved memory, posture



Nine Steps for Beating Burnout

1. Do not isolate
2. Declutter!
3. Take a *real* vacation.
4. Connect to greater life purposes.
5. Gratitude.
6. Promote yourself (but not too much).
7. Create new experiences and cultivate new skills.
8. Be kinder to yourself.
9. Treat yourself like a good friend who needs a break.



Why Are Legal Professionals at High Risk of Mental Health & Substance Use Disorders?

- Conflict driven and adversarial profession
- Emotional detachment
- Win-lose, black-white, often rigid thinking
- Perfectionism
- Excessive self-reliance



These traits are great for a successful career but not so great for mental health.

Why Are Legal Professionals at High Risk of Mental Health & Substance Use Disorders?

- High expectations and accountability
- Lack of work-life balance
- Always on call to solve others problems
- High stress level are consistent predictors of SUD's and their severity.
- 67% of attorneys work more than 40 hours/week.
- Inherent pessimism



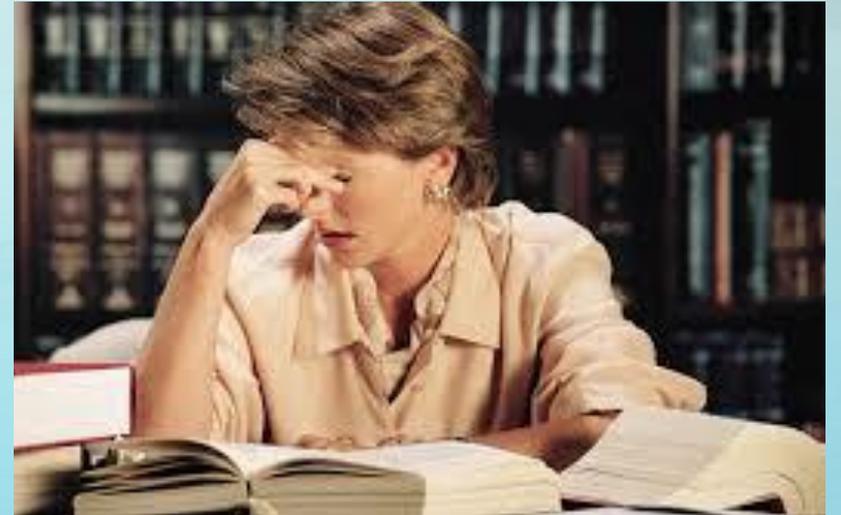
“What’s Wrong With Him/Her?”

1. Isolation; avoids interactions
2. Change in physical appearance; significant weight gain/loss
3. Mood swings; increased irritation
4. Lateness; absenteeism
5. Lots of excuses for unexplained issues
6. Missed deadlines
7. Red eyes; smell of alcohol
8. Disappearing at unexpected times



“What’s Wrong With Him/Her?”

9. Lack of concentration/ confused thinking/ forgetfulness
10. Extended breaks/lunches
11. Looking/being tired all the time
12. Decrease in productivity
13. Client complaints; trust irregularities
14. Frequent somatic complaints
15. Unsteady gait; unexplained bruises, injuries



ENABLING

“The Conspiracy of
Silence”

Are YOU an enabler ??

1. **RATIONALIZE** your colleague's behavior by blaming other situations ?
2. **CLEANUP** your colleague's messes ?
3. **IGNORE** new bad behaviors ?
4. **HIDE** your thoughts or feelings to avoid angering a colleague ?
5. **LIE & MAKE EXCUSES** for behavior to colleague's clients or coworkers ?

ENABLING

“The Conspiracy of
Silence”

Are YOU an enabler ??

6. **RESENT** your colleague because they don't seem to care ?
7. **HELP** your colleague by loaning money ?
8. **RESCUE** your colleague when impairment gets them into trouble ?
9. **BACKDOWN** from ultimatums that you know you can't meet ?
10. **GIVE A MILLION “LAST CHANCES”** to colleague for change?

What can YOU do ??

Although it is difficult, remember that your end goal is to help motivate the impaired lawyer to seek professional help they so desperately need.



What Is an LAP ?

Our mission:

To provide a caring peer assistance program to save the lives and restore the health and professional competence of lawyers and judges, members of their families, and law students who are at risk as a result of alcohol and drug use, gambling, depression or other serious mental illness. We carry out this mission through a combination of confidential helpline services, volunteer support and education.

CONTACT THE PROGRAM IN YOUR STATE FOR AVAILABLE SERVICES

We Protect Your Identity and Information

A LAP does **not** report or disclose any identifying information to the Supreme Court, the Judicial Conduct Board, the Disciplinary Board, the Board of Law Examiners or any other agency of the Supreme Court; nor do we report or disclose any identifying information to a State Bar Association, local Bar Associations or any judicial or law related organization. We do not report any identifying information to anyone without your prior consent.

You may remain anonymous and still receive our services.

YOU MUST CONSULT THE ETHICAL RULES OF YOUR STATE



While a lot of things have been cancelled,
RESILIENCY is not one of them.

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Thank you all for attending today's Continuing Legal Education program.

If you have any questions that were not answered or would like to contact me for any reason, please call or email me at the following:

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