

Building Resiliency for Your Legal Career

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Mental Health

- Lawyers experience depression and stress at a rate 2 to 3 times that of the average adult. How will it effect you?
- Skepticism
- Handling Stress Before Negative Thinking Kicks In
- You are not a pinball bouncing between challenges!

Your Schedule

- Provides predictability and control.
- The schedule is the first key to sanity.
- Not just for appointments!
- Schedule good things into your day.



Frequently Interrupted?

- Phone? Email? Staff?
- Are you literally working on two matters at the same time.

Anxiety?

- Anxiety occurs when we don't understand our arousal. This can happen when we respond to numerous signals.
- Can lead to impaired concentration.
- Are you fused to your thoughts as truths?
- Or is Anxiety necessarily a bad thing?

Procrastination?

Avoidance

Is Not

Recharging

Success

- Success 101 = sacrifice
- Success 201 = building in supports and self-care
- Peak Performers = small goals, frequent rewards

Mood

- Do you discover that you're in a bad mood only after you've been stressed for a while?
- Knowing it is half the problem.
- What's in your tool belt?

Tunnel Vision?

- Do you feel like you just have to put your head down and not think about your options.
- Scarcity vs. Opportunity
- When we struggle to resolve dilemmas in our external environment the solving turns internal.
- Ask for help!

Addiction

- Also 2-3x average rates.
- Experiential avoidance. Using substances to regulate emotions.
- Problem drinking—not an either/dilemma.

Reasons to Drink/Use

- Because I had a good or bad day.
- Good weather or bad weather.
- For sleep?
- To bond with people?
- A holiday? A weekend?
- To avoid stress....

A Self-Directed Recovery

- Reduced drinking vs. abstinence
- Often one's partner brings this to attention.
- Natural change patterns?
Questioning habits?
- Taking a month or year off?
- How will you know if you are kidding yourself?

Recovery

- AA? Peer Advisors? Detox? Residential Treatment? Intensive Outpatient? Continuing Care?
- Relapse Prevention
- Gratitude

Compassion Fatigue

- Do your clients and their problems exhaust you?
- Are you taking on your client's stress? Thinking about their problems at the end of the day?
- Do you feel "numb" at the end of the day. Drained.

Attached to your clients/practice?

- Do you have a take-charge or a crisis worker mentality?
- Do you get confused between meeting your clients needs vs. meeting your own needs?
- Therapy may be the best setting to explore these conflicts.

Setting Boundaries

- How to **hire** your clients.
- Fee Agreement = my responsibilities, your responsibilities.
- When calls will be returned.
- Are you undercharging? vs. Pro Bono
- The professional relationship should be a win-win relationship.

The Dilemma

Difficult clients are not why you became an attorney

Clients attached to you



Are you attached to certain client dilemmas?

Clients don't really understand what you do

Signs of a High Conflict Personality

Either volatility or dependency will appear early.

Cognitive Distortions: Jumping to conclusions, emotional reasoning, projection, splitting, discounting the positive.

The Four Horsemen: Criticism, Defensiveness, Stonewalling & Contempt.

Advocates

HCPs have poor problem solving skills--seek advocates.

Negative Advocate--Believe lies, attack their enemies, escalate conflicts, protect from natural consequences. Often an HCP.

Positive Advocate--Avoid assumptions, investigate problems, provide support and information, avoid taking all responsibility, do not work harder than their clients.

Explaining Reality

Depersonalize challenges in their case.

Explain your responsibilities in terms of external factors: "the law requires that I..."

You are not responsible for the outcome. You are responsible for the standard of care. Focus on the relationship.

Under Pressure?

- Had a vacation in the last year?
- Been to the doctor lately?
- Do you have *time* to address your health (exercise, good nutrition, rest?)
- Do you have time for those who *matter* to you?
- Are you "sucking it up" or ignoring internal sensors telling you your life is out of balance?

Taking the job home?

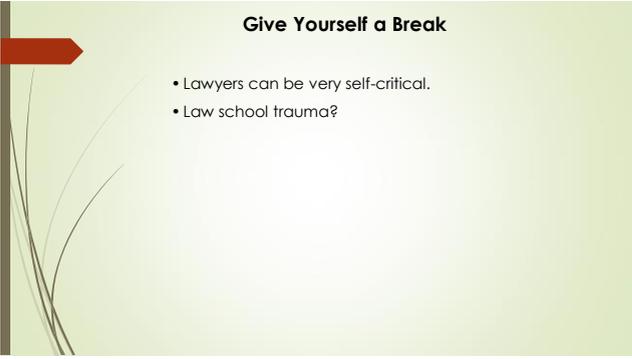
- Are you distracted? Struggle paying attention?
- Quiet, crabby, or drained?
- Do others get it?
- Are you able to explain to those around you why you are feeling that way? It can take the pressure off.

Rest and Renewal

- No exercise or eating 2 hrs before bed.
- No music or television before bed.
- No intense or personal conversations before bed.
- Not working or spending too much waking time in the bedroom.
- Are you ready for tomorrow? All packed?
- Are you "winding down" your energy level before bed?

Self-Compassion

- Criticism always hurts...especially when we agree with what is being said.
- Try to leave it at the office. But don't expect success.
- What's in your tool belt? Turn to those things you know sustain you.



Give Yourself a Break

- Lawyers can be very self-critical.
- Law school trauma?
