

The Resilient Lawyer: A Guide for Self-care

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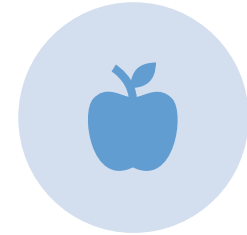
Objectives:



IDENTIFY STRESS AND ANXIETY TRIGGERS AND SYMPTOMS



DISCUSS LAWYER SPECIFIC TRAITS



IDENTIFY HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY COPING



IDENTIFY SHORT- AND LONG-TERM WELLNESS GOALS



LEARN TIPS FOR RESILIENCY



LEARN ABOUT JLAP AND JLAP SERVICES

What is Stress? Is it the same as Anxiety?

Stress

- Typically caused by an external trigger
- Work deadlines, fight with a loved one, poverty, chronic illness, etc.

Anxiety

- Persistent, excessive worries that don't go away even in the absence of stress

The symptoms are similar

- Overwhelmed
- Restless
- Crying
- Alcohol or drug use
- Impulsivity
- Forgetfulness
- Sleep disturbances
- Poor judgment
- Indecisiveness
- Irritated and angry
- headaches
- Nausea/vomiting
- Impatience
- Inability to relax
- Aggressiveness
- Sweating
- Muscle tension
- Difficulty concentrating
- Easily startled or jumpiness
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Fear or panic

HOW **STRESS** AFFECTS THE BODY

BRAIN

Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, irritability, mood, mind fog

CARDIOVASCULAR

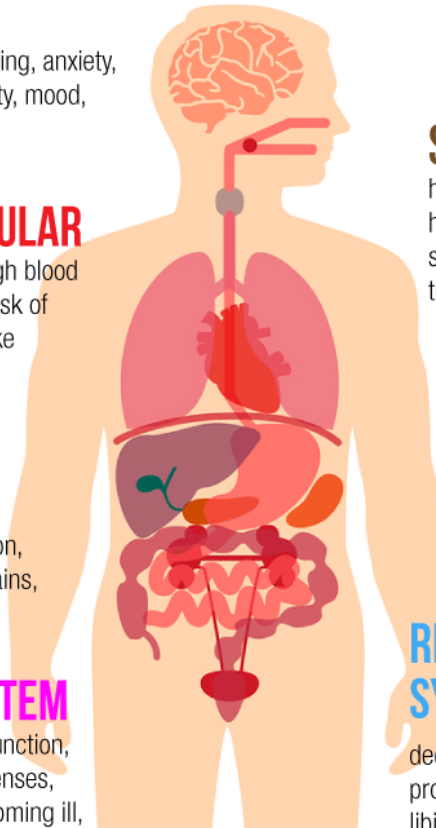
higher cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke

JOINTS AND MUSCLES

increased inflammation, tension, aches and pains, muscle tightness

IMMUNE SYSTEM

decreased immune function, lowered immune defenses, increased risk of becoming ill, increase in recovery time



SKIN

hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails, dry skin, acne, delayed tissue repair

GUT

nutrient absorption, diarrhea, constipation, indigestion, bloating, pain and discomfort

REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

decreased hormone production, decrease in libido, increase in PMS symptoms

Is Stress bad?



Eustress, or "positive" stress, helps you get tasks done if they're manageable.

Example:
Getting ready for a presentation by practicing it out loud before presenting in class is good stress.

Symptoms:
Feeling challenged, motivated and like you're getting out of your comfort zone.

Solutions:
Be aware of what feels good when it's been accomplished, and what just feels exhausting afterward.



Distress, or "negative" stress, is chronic and overwhelming- not helping you long-term.

Example:
When you have an exam and start studying the material the night before, that's distress.

Symptoms:
Body aches, getting sick more often than usual, headaches, changes in your attitude, and not sleeping well.

Solutions:
Know when what you're doing is too much and take some responsibilities off of your shoulders.

Changing “Distress” to “Eustress”

- Focus on the resources you need to meet the challenge
- Seeing the potential benefits of a situation
- Reminding yourself of your strengths
- Having a positive mindset (aka optimism)

Can “bad” Stress be reframed?



It's tougher for lawyers . . .

Two primary traits of a Lawyer:

1. Perfectionism
2. Pessimism

Negative outlook = high risk for stress and anxiety

The impact of stress on self-care

- Obsessive thoughts
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Difficulty concentrating
- A sense of worry and/or impending danger
- Sleep disturbances
- Heart palpitations
- Sweating, fatigue and muscle tension

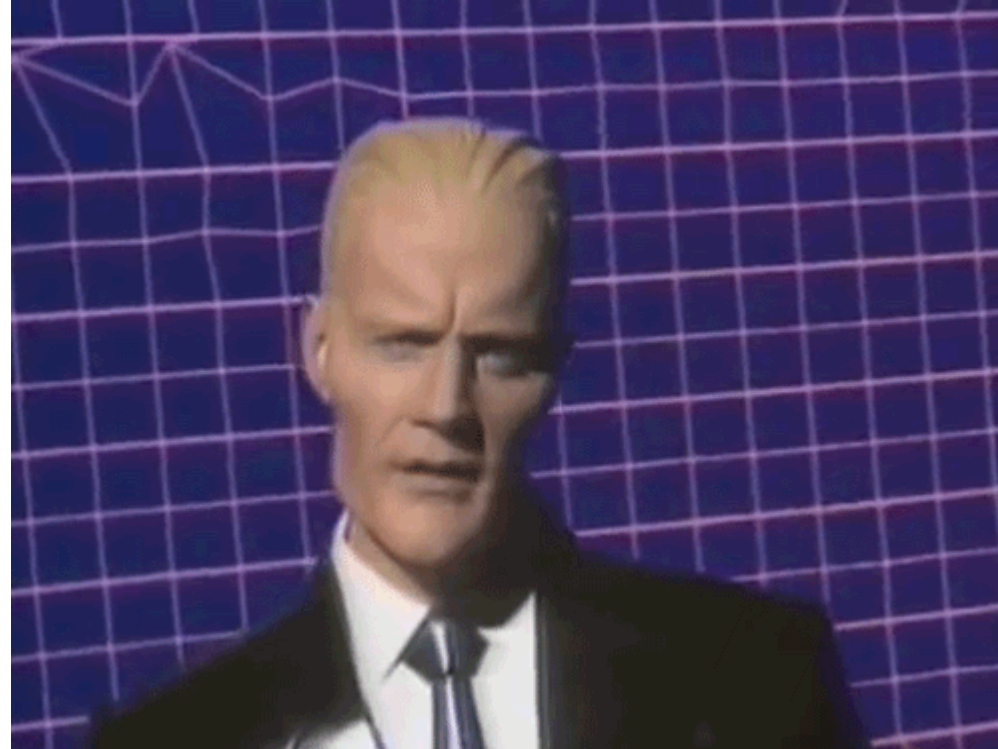


SIDEBAR: COVID 19 and Stress

Just when we thought practicing law couldn't get more stressful . . .

- We DON'T know the ultimate impact of COVID 19 on the legal profession
- We DO know that maintaining mental and physical health is paramount
- More than ever, it pays to take care of yourself and be ready for anything

e.g.: *Are Zoom Meetings Stressful?*



Is it a “Brave New World” of glitchy and distanced communications?

COVID 19 Stress and Anxiety Tips

1. Take a media break
2. Take care of your body
3. Take care of your mind
4. Catch up on your hobbies
5. Connect with others
6. Be thankful

Take a media break

Prolonged exposure to the news and video “screens” can impact your mental health in a negative way.

Ask yourself: do you feel calmer after watching the news?

Turn the screens off and go for a walk or bicycle ride around your neighborhood, work in the garden, read a book outside, etc. Get creative. Fresh air and sunlight bring a positive effect on mood.

Take care of your body

- Fuel your body by eating a healthy, well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water
- Aim to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night
- Exercise every day, even if just a walk around the block
- Take deep breaths and stretch often
- Avoid risky or destructive behaviors such as abusing alcohol or drugs, excessive gambling or ignoring public health recommendations
- Get out and about some but follow social distancing guidelines

Take care of your mind

- Mental health conditions are by nature isolating, stay connected.
- Keep the routines that make you feel good and try to modify the ones that you can.
- Reach out to friends and schedule virtual hangouts.
- Find an accountability and support buddy.
- If you have a therapist, see if they offer telephone or video-based sessions.
- Make sure you have enough medication on hand.

Connect with others

Social distancing does not mean social isolation.

Check up on your extended family, friends and neighbors. Contact old friends you haven't spoken to in a while. Share your feelings with people you trust about how the pandemic is affecting you. Connecting with other people helps us feel safer.

Renew your interest in hobbies

What hobbies have you been putting off because you are always too busy? What new hobbies would you like to learn?

During the pandemic and with stay at home orders, many people have had more down time from work and have increased life-balance.

It's healthy to use some of that down time to renew old hobbies or take up new ones. It's also an opportunity to maintain better life balance in the future when things get back to the "new normal" post-pandemic.

Be thankful for what you have

Maintain a viewpoint of *Gratitude*.

Research shows that having a positive attitude can improve your health and help minimize negative thoughts and anxious feelings. Find a gratitude partner and share with them one thing daily that you are grateful for during this unprecedented moment in our history.

Or, write a “Gratitude List” at the end of each day to help keep inventory of all the good things in your life.

Symptoms to watch for:

If any of these things become persistent or interfere with daily functioning contact your provider for help and guidance:

1. Trouble focusing on daily activities
2. Anxiety that turns into feelings of being out of control
3. Strong feelings that interfere with daily activities
4. Having emotions that become difficult to manage
5. Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness

SUPPORT GUIDE FOR COVID-19

<https://louisianajlap.com/covid-19/>

And now . . . back to *Lawyer Resilience*

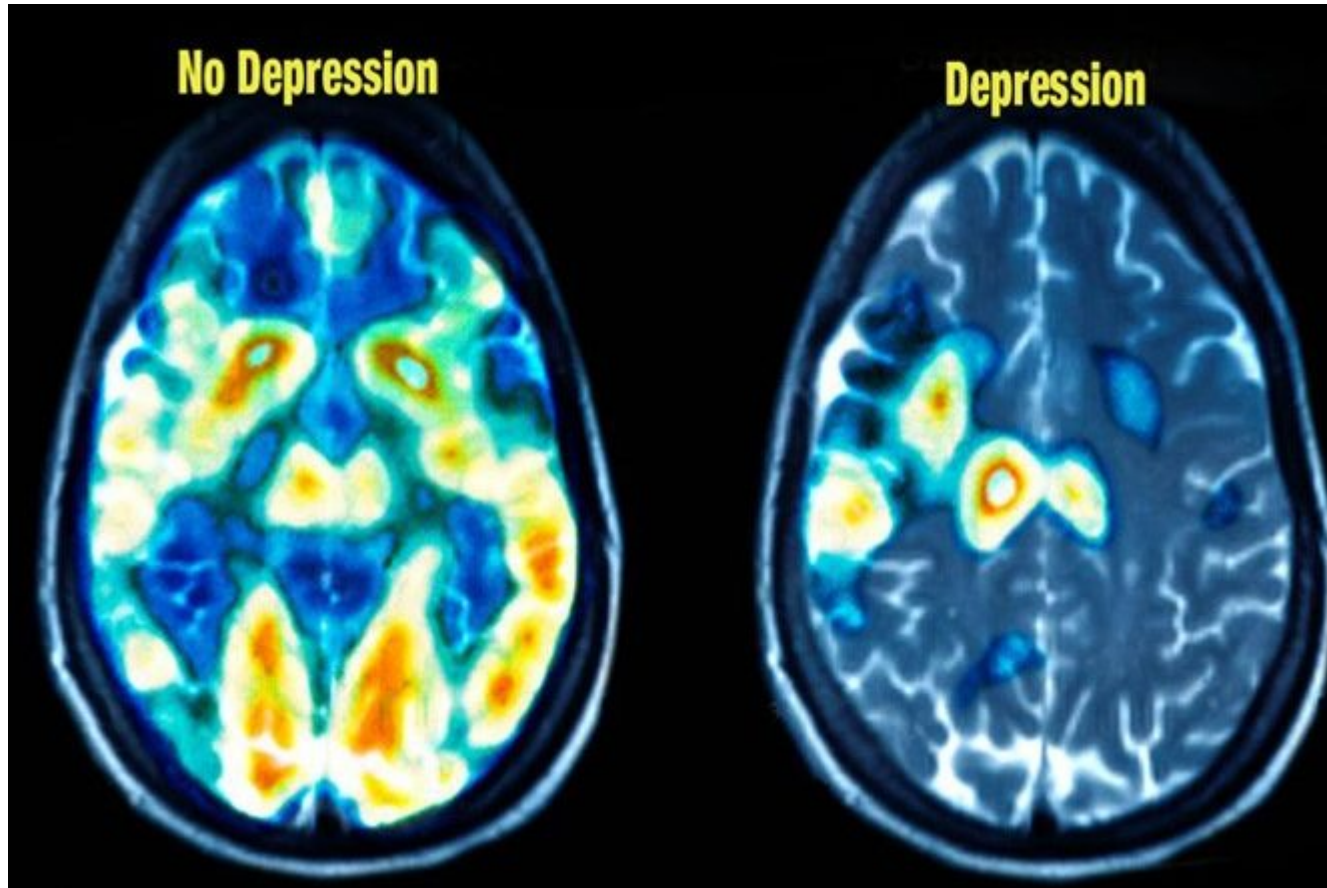
Long before the COVID 19 Pandemic, the data has proven that the legal profession suffers high rates of depression and substance use disorders.

Education and information can reduce the incidence of these issues.

What is depression?

- Not the blues
- Persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest
- Can't just snap out of it
- Affects how you feel, think and behave
- Can lead to emotional and physical problems
- Not a weakness
- Noticeable problems causing a negative impact on day-to-day activities

What depression looks like



Imbalance of serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine (Image courtesy of Mayo Clinic)

Depression signs and symptoms

- Decreased motivation
- Easily irritated
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Low energy
- Hopelessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Isolative
- Excessive worry
- Low self-esteem
- Overreacting to situations
- Tearfulness
- Decreased interest in once enjoyable activities
- Difficulty relating to others
- Recurring thoughts of death

Profession-specific statistics

- Lawyers and judges have fourth highest suicide rate – 6x higher than general population (behind doctors, dentists, and pharmacists)
- Lawyers and judges are 2x as likely as general population to suffer substance abuse and other addictive disorders
- 1/3 of lawyers and judges suffer from depression, which can begin in law school
- Out of 105 professions, lawyers and judges near top of list in major depression
- Those suffering from intense perfectionism at higher risk for suicide

A lawyer's mental, emotional and physical state affects their duties to:

The Client
The Court
The Profession

Louisiana Rules of Professional Conduct

Rule 1.1 (a) Competence

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

Are You Overwhelmed?



When you are depressed, stressed, overwhelmed or burned out you may not be making the best decisions or seeing all aspects in a case.

Coping Strategies

Maladaptive coping behaviors by lawyers seeking some control:

- Self-medicating with **alcohol** and other substances.
- Food disorders
- Gym Anorexia
- Unhealthy Sexual Behaviors
- Compulsive Video Gaming
- Hair Pulling
- Isolation and withdrawal from friends and family
- “Stuffing” feelings and ignoring mental health concerns

Lawyers "intellectually know" the foundations of a healthy lifestyle:

- Healthy Diet
- Daily Meditation to find an “Off Switch”
- Aerobic Exercise at least 3 times per week
- 8 Hours of Sleep

Why lawyers resist basic healthy habits

- Employer's demands for billable hours
- Clients' demands on top of employer's demands
- Lack of control over calendar and scheduling
- Misconception that excessive self-sacrifice is required (began in law school)
- Allowing demands of practicing law to dictate time left for friends and family
- The demands of law can't be controlled, only perfectionism in law can be
- Wanting to appear tough and invincible

The issues with lack of sleep

- Chronic sleep deprivation is linked to deficits in
 - Reasoning
 - Global cognitive status
 - Vocabulary
- Highest predictive value for depression
- Greater rate of burnout
- Increases heart attacks, blood pressure, strokes
- Less than 6 hours = 30% rise in obesity

This should be easier!



2016 STUDY

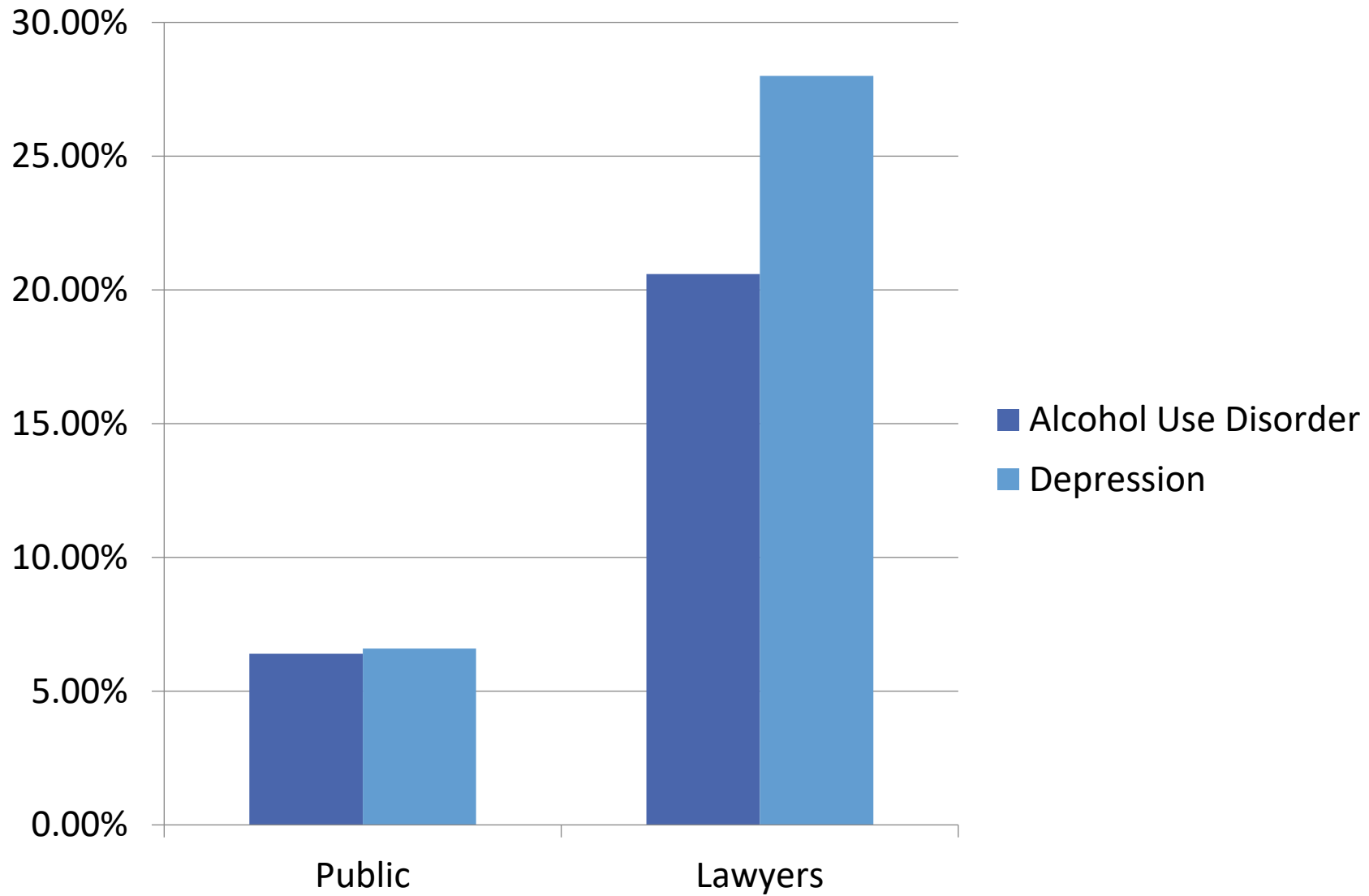
“The Prevalence Of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys”

- By: Patrick Krill, JD, LLM; Ryan Johnson, MA; Linda Albert, MSW
- Published in Journal of Addiction Medicine: January/February 2016
- 19 states participated via voluntary, online confidential ABA survey
- 12,825 licensed and employed attorneys participated

Mental Health in the Legal Profession

Participants over the course of their legal career:

- Anxiety 61.1%
- Depression 45.7%
- ADHD 12.5%
- Panic Disorder 8.0%
- Bipolar Disorder 2.4%
- 11.5% reported suicidal thoughts during their career



BALANCE and WELL-BEING . . .



ARE ABSOLUTELY ACHIEVABLE!

There is no magic formula

It takes learned, intentional, and specific health habits to carve-out and protect one's daily mental and physical health while practicing law

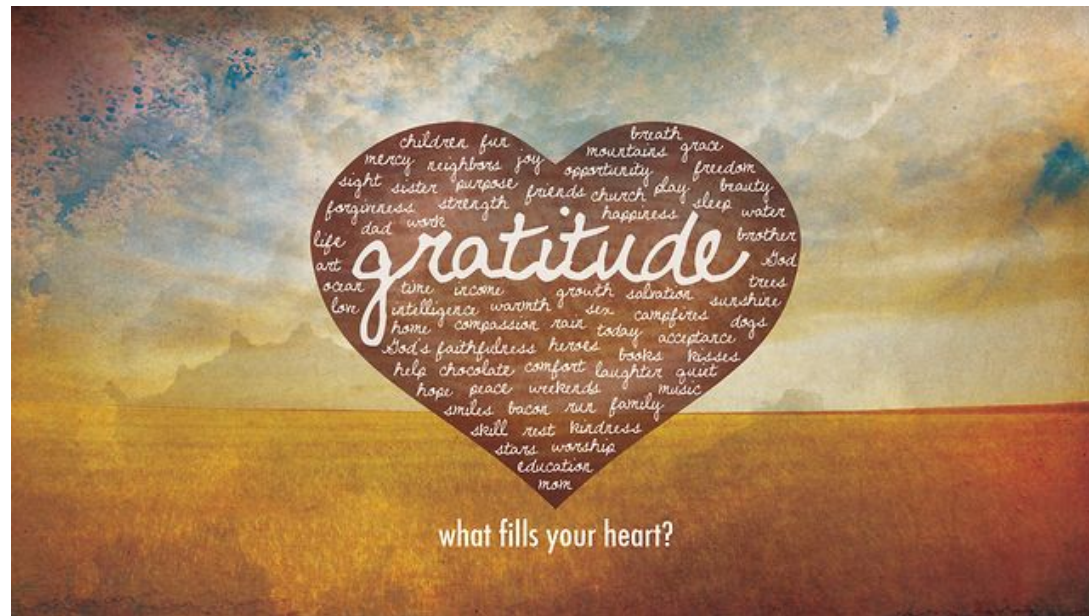
THESE HABITS NEED TO BE DEVELOPED NOW

But how?





Develop an attitude of gratitude



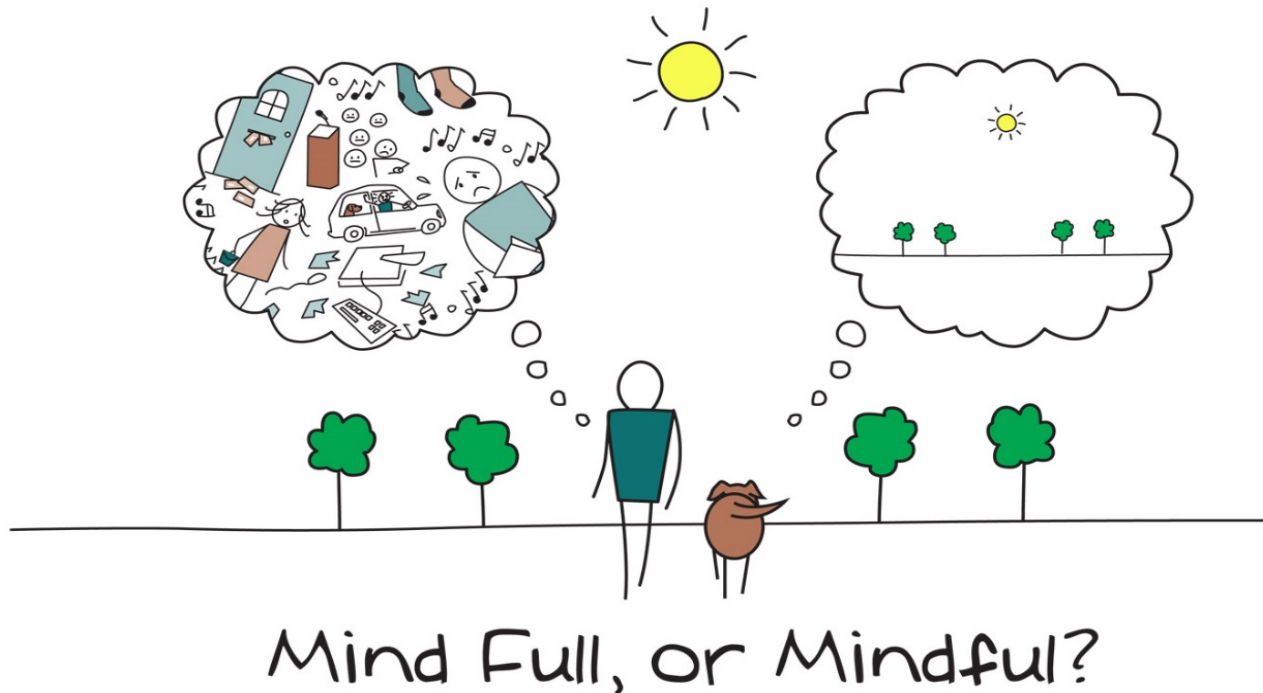
Make it a habit to express appreciation in all parts of your life, on a regular basis, for both things big and small alike

Learn flexible optimism

- Flexible optimism allows us to judge when optimism is more adaptive than pessimism.
- Optimism increases engagement in life and decreases dysfunctional thinking such as “catastrophizing” small setbacks.



Practice mindfulness

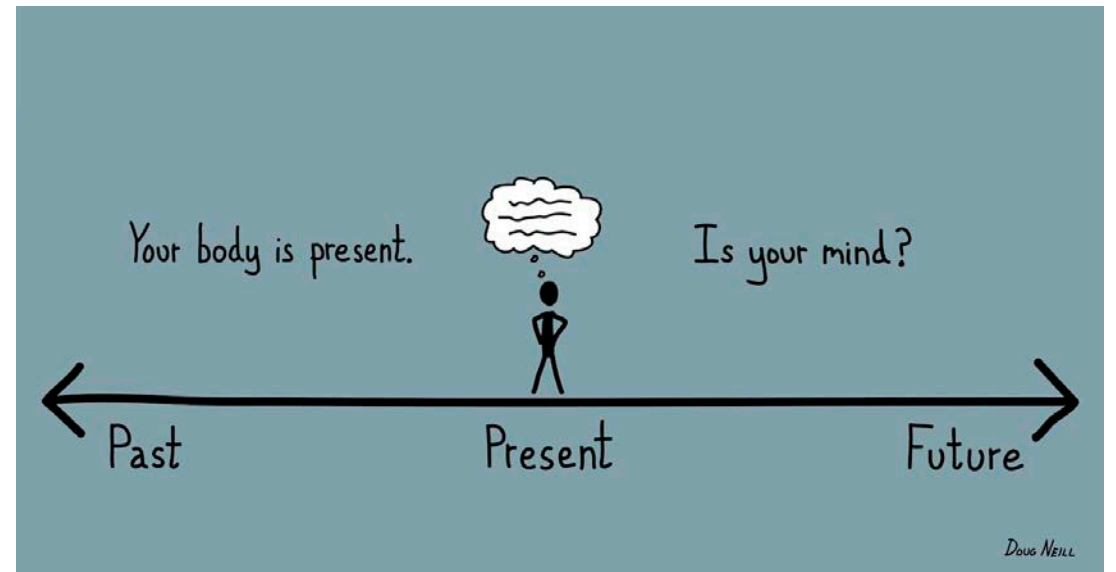


Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

Meditate

Benefits of meditation:

- Lower stress and anxiety
- Increase focus and productivity
- Let go of unwanted habits
- Better handle difficult events
- Increase self-awareness



Due to the nature of the work, lawyers:

- Spend large amounts of their time focusing keenly on solving puzzles of the past and crafting plans and predictions on the future
- Spend little or no time recognizing, appreciating, and accepting the actual “present moment” of their immediate surroundings



The paradox:

- Lawyers experience high rates of stress and anxiety
- An effective approach to reducing anxiety is mindfulness and meditation
- Mindfulness and meditation require scheduling time periods on a routine basis wherein you stop ruminating, analyzing, judging and predicting and instead surrender all analytical and judgmental thought and focus on Being
- Lawyers are typically uncomfortable at first because their professional self-worth rests upon tremendous dedication in the realm of complex Thinking
- Lawyers tend to believe that only thinking is an effective tool to deal with any issue and it is implausible that NOT thinking can help solve a problem

Find purpose

- Purpose guides life decisions, influences behaviors, shapes goals and offers a sense of direction.
- Often connected to a vocation – meaningful and satisfying work
- What gets you up in the morning?

Build meaning into your work

- Work is meaningful when we believe:
 - It matters
 - It's valuable
 - It contributes to personal growth/greater good
 - It's a good fit with your values
- Seek variety
- Seek connection

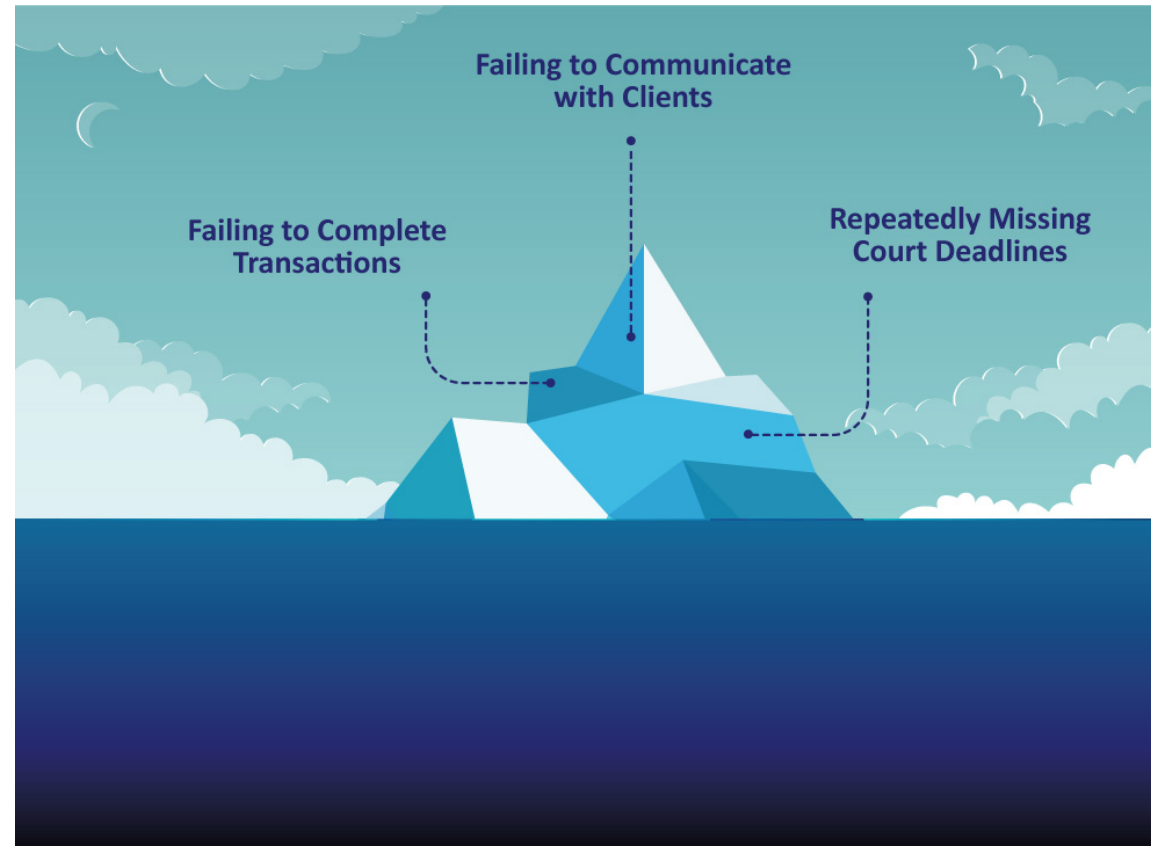
The benefits of meaning and purpose

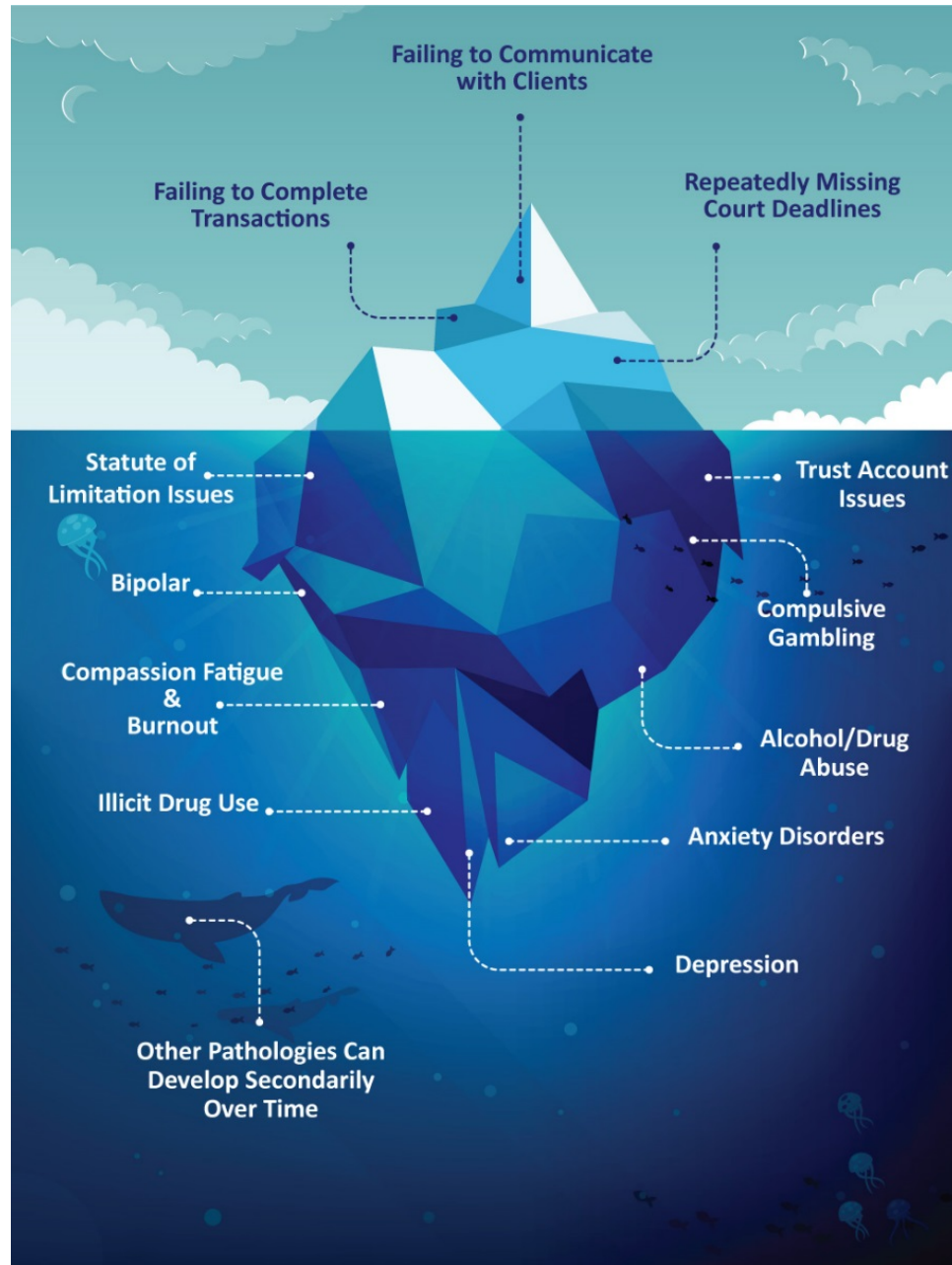
- Better emotional regulation
- Reduced risk of depression and anxiety
- Reduced substance abuse
- Healthy sleep
- Improved cardiovascular health

But for the short term...



Just the tip of the iceberg...







Attorneys are Resilient!

Psychologists define **resilience** as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of **stress** — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. ... That's the role of **resilience**.

Resilience Factors



Building Resiliency



Make Connections



Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems



Accept that change is part of living



Move towards your goals



Take decisive action

Building Resiliency



Nurture a positive view of yourself



Look for opportunities for self-discovery



Keep things in perspective



Maintain a hopeful outlook



Take care of yourself

Building Resiliency

Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful. For example, some people write about their deepest thoughts and feelings related to stressful events in their life. Meditation and spiritual practices often help people build a sense of connection.

The key is to identify activities that are likely to work for you as part of your own personal strategy for fostering resilience.

Adapted from “The Road to Resilience”
American Psychological Association, 2015

How Can JLAP Help?



Today's JLAP is Comprehensive

- Two (2) Licensed Professional Counselors, qualified to diagnose and assist with ANY Mental Disorder in the DSM 5
- Also, skilled expertise in the *specialized* area of substance use disorders and both are Master Addiction Counselors
- Hands-on clinical experience in actual SUD treatment
- JLAP's Executive Director is a Certified Clinical Interventionist
- JLAP is now a top-tier professionals' program with striking success rates



What we do and who we serve:

Services

Assessment

Information and Referral

Interventions

Consultation

Education

Monitoring

Lawyer Support Groups

Referral Sources

Voluntary

- Self
- Family
- Peers

Law Schools and Law Firms

Committee on Bar Admissions

Office of the Disciplinary Counsel

Judiciary Commission

Top reasons for not seeking help:

- Fear of losing law license
- Social stigma
- Privacy concerns
- Financial reasons or loss of income while in treatment
- Belief that they could handle problems on their own
- Not having enough time

JLAP's Primary Mission

Confidential Help

JLAP is first and foremost an absolutely confidential method of providing life-saving help to an impaired lawyer, judge, law student or family member.

Protecting the Public

Early intervention and help reduces the damage that impaired legal professionals visit upon the public.

If I call JLAP, what happens next?

- Clinical interview with a Licensed Professional Counselor
- Absolutely Confidential and Privileged
- Caller Can Remain Anonymous
- JLAP Offers Suggestions on How to Assist
- Referral to appropriate services
- Caller Decides How to Proceed, NOT JLAP
- Follow up by JLAP Clinician
- JLAP NEVER REPORTS ANYTHING TO ANYONE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reach out to JLAP Today

JLAP provides CONFIDENTIAL assistance, support, and resources to impaired lawyers, judges, law students or family members. JLAP's mission is to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues that impact the legal profession.

Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc.

(985) 778-0571

jlap@louisianajlap.com

www.louisianajlap.com

Resource Page:

- <https://www.stress.org/when-stress-is-actually-good-for-you>
- “How lawyers can avoid burnout and debilitating anxiety”; LESLIE A. GORDON 2015; ABA JOURNAL
- <https://scopeblog.stanford.edu/2019/05/02/taking-depression-seriously-what-is-it/>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007>
- *“The Anxious Lawyer; an 8-Week Guide to a Joyful and Satisfying Law Practice Through Mindfulness and Meditation”*, Jeena Cho and Karen Gifford 2016 ABA Publishing

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