

Survive and Thrive: Mental Health Resources for Judges

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TEXAS LAWYERS'
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
1-800-343-TLAP

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Roadmap

The Practice of Law and its Unique Challenges

Self-Care: What is it and why does it matter?

Self-Care strategies for increased Judicial Well-Being

TLAP Resources

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LAWYER/Judge WELL-BEING

- Lawyer well-being is part of a lawyer's ethical duty of competence.
- It includes a lawyer's ability to make healthy, positive work/life choices to assure not only a quality of life within their families and communities, but also to help them make responsible decisions for and with their clients.
- It includes maintaining their own short-term and long-term well-being through self-care.

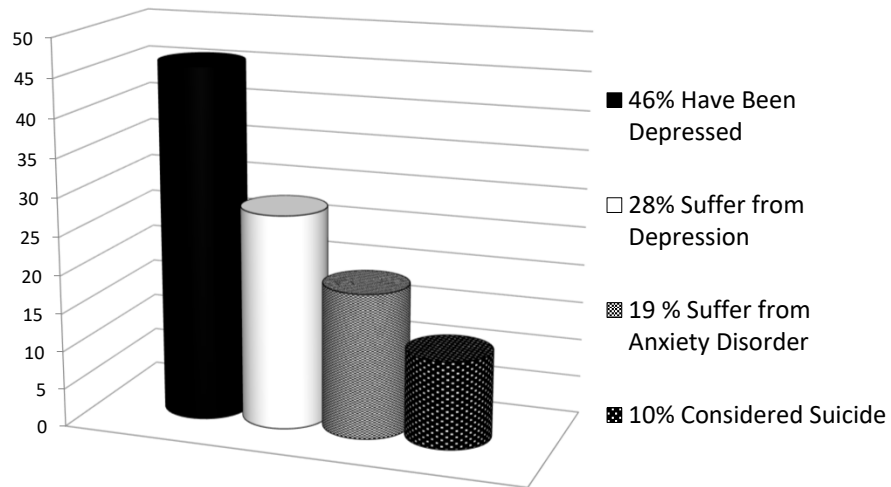
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LAW AS A NOBLE PROFESSION

- Protect Laws and Human Needs
- Maintain Order in Society
- Officer of the Court
- Uphold Justice
- Defender of the Disadvantaged
- Service-oriented profession

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2015 ABA Study of Almost 13,000 Attorneys: Attorney Mental Health Issues



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Lawyer/Judge Well-being

- 21% qualify as problem drinkers.
 - That's more than triple the rate for the general population (6%) and nearly double the rate for other highly educated professionals (12%).
- 32% of attorneys under 30 years of age qualify as problem drinkers.

"Problematic drinking" = hazardous, possible dependence

2015 ABA Survey of Almost 13,000 Attorneys

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Lawyer Mental health Concerns

2022 study of 4,450 lawyers by The University of Chicago:

- 77% reported feeling burned out
- 26% reported high rates of anxiety
- 21% reported depression
- 42% reported unhealthy or hazardous substance use
- 7% reported suicidal thoughts

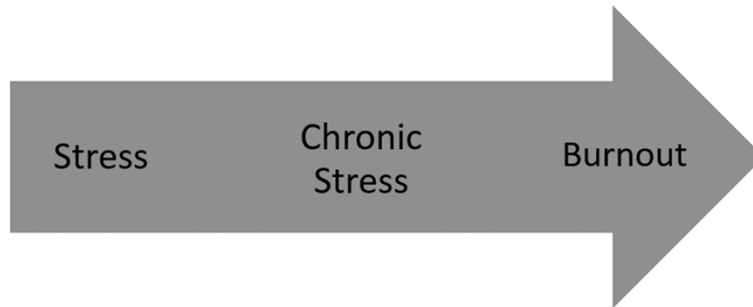
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Survey of Law Student Well-Being

Survey Comparison	2021	2014
Needed help for emotional or mental health problems	68.7%	42%
Depression	33%	18%
Anxiety	40%	21%
Suicide	11%	6%
Self-harm	15.7%	9%
Trauma	80%	Not asked
Binge Drinking	44%	53%
Marijuana	38%	25%

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Stress Continuum



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Under high stress we lose:

- Flexibility in our thinking
 - Challenge all-or-nothing thoughts
 - Think about alternatives
- Empathy for others; ability to attune to another person
- Ability to let go of fears or interrupt worry thoughts

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We suffer from “**secondary trauma**” while dealing with the stress, anger, frustration, and emotions of our clients or the people who appear before us.



We often have a sense of **perfectionism**, that everything must be exactly right, or we risk absolute failure.



We are asked to act in ways that aren’t aligned with our **core values**.



It often requires extremely **long hours** that are not physically, mentally, or emotionally sustainable.



It is an adversarial system!

Lawyers, judges, & Legal Professionals are particularly sensitive to Chronic Stress & burnout because:

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WHAT YOU OR YOUR STAFF MAY BE EXPERIENCING

Vicarious or Secondary Trauma –Traumatic Stress behaviors and emotions resulting from internalizing events experienced by another.

Compassion Fatigue – Fatigue, emotional distress, or apathy resulting from constant demands of caring for others. The weariness that comes from caring.

Burnout – Physical and emotional exhaustion that may include a negative self-concept and job attitudes, a loss of concern and feeling for others. High levels of compassion fatigue may lead to burnout.

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Wisconsin Study:
Direct Exposure to Clients' TRAUMA Causes MORE HARM TO LAWYERS THAN
INSULATED STAFF

- At risk of depression:

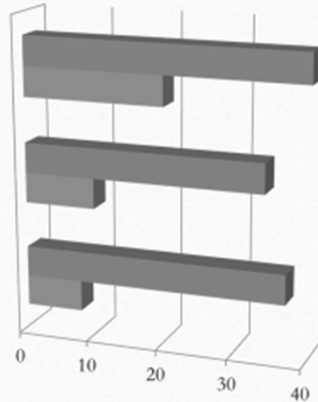
- Lawyers 40%
- Staff 20%

- Compassion fatigue:

- Lawyers 34%
- Staff 10%

- Burnout:

- Lawyers 37%
- Staff 8%

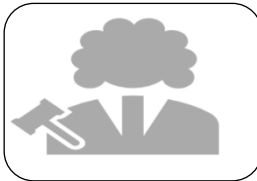


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How can You address these
concerns in your court?

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Self-Care: What is it and why does it matter?



Avoid grievances, legal actions, or professional liability



Strategy for maintaining or boosting productivity; protecting our minds and bodies for peak and long-term performance



Maintain relationships both at work (colleagues) as well as in our social and personal lives (significant others, children, friends)



Protective factor from abuse of alcohol, drugs, contemplation of suicide, or mental health distress.

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American Bar Association's Six Dimensions of Well-Being

*From the: ABA's National Task Force
on Lawyer Well-Being Framework*



Physical. Strive for regular physical activity, proper diet and nutrition, sufficient sleep, and recovery; minimize the use of addictive substances. Seek help for physical health when needed.



Emotional. Develop the ability to identify and manage our own emotions to support mental health, achieve goals, and inform decision-making. Seek help for mental health when needed.



Social. Develop a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support network while also contributing to groups and communities.

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American Bar Association's Six Dimensions of Well-Being

From the: ABA's National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being Framework



Spiritual. Develop a sense of meaningfulness and purpose in all aspects of life. Being in nature helps with grounding.



Intellectual. Engage in continuous learning and the pursuit of creative or intellectually challenging activities that foster ongoing development; monitor cognitive wellness.



Occupational. Cultivate personal satisfaction, growth, and enrichment in work; financial stability.

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Principles of Trauma-Informed Lawyering for your courtroom

Safety

Trust

Collaboration

Choice

Empowerment

Culture

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Burnout is not a sign of failure in the legal field

Burnout is not any kind of personal failure. It's an opportunity to stop and be present with yourself, and to exercise greater self-care and compassion.

Burnout can be a healthy response when our human needs aren't being met.

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Risk Factors for Lawyer Burnout?

Prior traumatic experiences;

Social isolation, both on and off the job;

A tendency to avoid feelings, withdraw, or assign blame to others in stressful situations;

Difficulty expressing feelings;

Lack of preparation, orientation, training, and supervision in their jobs;

Being newer employees and less experienced at their jobs;

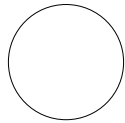
Constant and intense exposure to trauma with little or no variation in work tasks; and

Lack of an effective and supportive process for discussing traumatic content of the work.

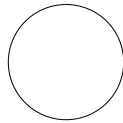
<https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma>

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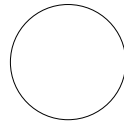
Evidenced-Based Strategies to Improve Lawyer Well-being



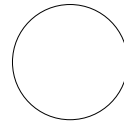
HELP HELPS



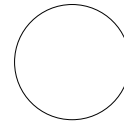
CONNECT WELL



DEVELOP AWARENESS
OF SELF-TALK



LEARN TO RELAX



PRACTICE GRATITUDE

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1. Help Helps!

- DON'T be afraid to ask for help.
- If stress and anxiety for any reason are getting in the way of daily activities, including in the practice of law, seek help.
- 80% of people suffering from depression get remission within 6-8 sessions of talk therapy. The other 20% feel better.
- Primary care physicians or providers are trained to help identify mental health issues, render care and/or refer to specialized providers, including free and confidential resources.
- TLAP can help with resources.

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TLAP Provides:

- Confidential support
- Referrals to licensed professionals with the experience or expertise you need
- Information about local group support and resources
- 'In the Moment' counseling
- One-to-one local peer support
- Self-care information
- CLE / Education on Wellness
- Service opportunities



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**Call TLAP JUDGES' LINE at 800-219-6474
if you are concerned about *yourself or a
colleague***

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WHEN YOU CALL TLAP:

**Strict
Confidentiality**

Texas Health and Safety Code Section
467.007:

"CONFIDENTIALITY. (a) Any information, report, or record that an approved peer assistance program or a licensing or disciplinary authority receives, gathers, or maintains under this chapter is confidential. Except as prescribed by Subsection (b) or by Section 467.005(c), a person may not disclose that information, report, or record without written approval of the impaired professional or other interested person."



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Connecting Judges, Lawyers, and Law Students to Funds for Needed Care

- ***Sheeran-Crowley Lawyer Wellness Trust***
 - Up to \$3,000 for outpatient counseling and medication,
 - Up to \$4,000 for intensive outpatient treatment and medication; and,
 - Up to \$10,000 for inpatient treatment.

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2. Connect WELL

It is important to create opportunities to connect with friends, colleagues, and loved ones.

Process- communicate with someone about what has happened, or go over an experience or set of actions, to achieve some sort of order or meaning concerning them.

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Psychological Safety

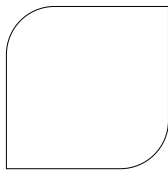


Psychological safety is the belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes

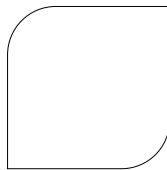


Team - Team psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a team that it's OK to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns, to speak up with questions, and to admit mistakes — all without fear of negative consequences. — Harvard Business Law

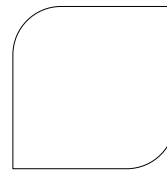
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FEEL LIKE A RESPECTED PART OF
THEIR TEAM



SEE THE VALUE OF THEIR WORK



FEEL ACCEPTED FOR WHO THEY
ARE AND THE UNIQUE
STRENGTHS THEY BRING

Benefits of Psychological safety for judges

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Unconditional regard

“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.”

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma



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What can you bring into your Workplace to improve psychological safety?

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3. Develop awareness of self-talk

Negative self-talk is a bad habit for those involved in the legal profession, and it can heavily influence stress and anxiety levels.

"Being kind to yourself" simply means changing the way you talk to yourself in your head by practicing *positive* self-talk. Not only can it help you become less stressed and anxious, but it can also help you build the courage to do things that'll bring you greater rewards.

Perfectionism feeds into imposter syndrome and burnout. When you feel like a fraud, it's often because you are comparing yourself to an unrealistic or impossible outcome.

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4. Learn to Relax

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Schedule Self-Care Time

4% of your life is 1 hour per day, make that the minimum for self-care.

Use your calendar and other technology to remind you to unplug.

By scheduling events that are away from screens, it can free you from technology.

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Self-Care:
What is it and why does it matter?

Self-care is not “selfish”

Self-care is actually essential for those in service-oriented professions, like the practice of law

Working more and more without a strategy for renewal is not sustainable in the long-term

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Autonomic Nervous System

(And why it matters in a courtroom setting)

Sympathetic System

- Heart and blood pressure increases
- Respiration accelerates, blood sugar is released from the liver
- Adrenalin, noradrenalin are released from the adrenal glands
- **Fight or flight response**

Parasympathetic System

- Heartbeat slows
- Blood pressure reduces
- Respiration slows
- Your body experiences visceral responses typical of periods of rest and relaxation
- **Rest and digest; experience safety and connection**
- “Freeze” response

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Ways to Activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System

Running/Hiking/Walking

Swimming/Lazy River

Dancing/Aerobics

Yoga/Sitting in Stillness

Playing a Musical Instrument/ Listening to Music

Painting / Creating Art

Gardening / Working with Hands

Cooking/Mindful Eating

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Take a Break

Move

- Move your body

Schedule

- Schedule time to unwind

Breathe

- deeply

Leave

- Take a walk

Activate

- Activate your senses

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5. Practice Gratitude

**Research has established
an overwhelming
connection between
gratitude and good
health.**

**Keeping a gratitude
journal causes less stress,
improves the quality of
sleep, and builds
emotional awareness.**

(Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

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To learn more about
the
Texas Lawyer
Assistance Program
scan the QR code.

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Confidential**

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