



American Bar Association, Law Student Division
Mental Health Initiative

Tool Kit for Student Bar Associations
and Administrators

ABA Law Student Division

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction.....	3
II. Risk Factors.....	5
III. Signs.....	8
IV. Prevention.....	12
A) The Students Role.....	15
B) The SBA’s Role.....	18
C) The Administrator’s Role.....	24
D) What Law Schools Are Doing.....	27
E) Sample Orientation Speech.....	30
V. Getting Help.....	36
VI. Resources.....	43
VII. Selected Articles.....	52

I. INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN LAW SCHOOLS

Stress, depression, anxiety, chemical dependency, substance abuse, and other mental health conditions and impairments among law students are problems that have begun to spark a national dialogue amongst faculty, staff, and students. While students enter law school suffering from clinical stress and depression at a rate that mirrors the national average, the rate sharply increases during the first year of law school. Over the course of that first year of law school and through the duration of their legal education, the rates of law students grappling with mental health problems increase dramatically and carry into their professional careers.

“The theme for law students is consistent: you must work very, very hard, and you must excel in the competition for grades and honors in order to feel good about what you have done, have the respect of your teachers and peers, get a desirable job, and generally be successful,” says Professor Larry Krieger of Florida State University in his *Journal of Legal Education Article* “Institutional Denial About the Dark Side of Law School, and Fresh Empirical Guidance for Constructively Breaking the Silence.” His study also notes:

- Practicing lawyers exhibit clinical anxiety, hostility, and depression at rates that range from 8 to 15 times the general population.
- 20 to 40 percent of law students suffer from clinical depression by the time they graduate.
- Out of 104 occupational groups, lawyers rank the highest in depression.
- Lawyers rank 5th in incidence of suicide.
- Lawyers exhibit very high levels of substance abuse.

The American Bar Association created the Commission on Impaired Attorneys in 1988. In August 1996, its name was changed to the Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP) in order to better describe the Commission's expanded services to include stress, depression, and other mental health problems, and to avoid any stigma that its former name may have implied. Its primary goal is to advance the legal community's knowledge of impairments facing lawyers and its response to those issues. Each state and the District of Columbia also have some variation of a Lawyer Assistance Program which provide free and confidential counseling and assistance to both lawyers and law students and most are very effective. This tool kit will further advertise these programs so that more students take advantage of them.

Significant data shows that these alarming trends begin at the same time that the legal career begins: during law school. Many students, however, are unaware of the multitude of resources available in their communities to assist individuals, including law students, with these common issues. At the 2007 ABA Annual Meeting in San Francisco, Student Bar Association Presidents expressed great concern for the mental health of the students in their student bodies and decided it was time to take action. The ABA Law Student Division Mental Health Initiative was thus launched.

The first goal of this Initiative was to establish the ABA Law Student Division National Mental Health Day, which will be held this year on March 27, 2008. The second goal is to increase awareness of mental health issues and provide information on how to implement mental health training and prevention at law school orientation by way of this Mental Health Toolkit for SBA presidents and law school Deans. The third goal is to encourage every law school Dean to make available more mental health resources on the law school campuses.

This tool kit is intended to be used by SBA Presidents and Deans of Students at all law schools. It is our hope that, if anything, this will encourage students to confront some of the major mental health issues impacting law students and to erase the stigma that is often brought about by disclosure of mental health issues in law schools. Confronting these issues head on will ideally lead to practical solutions based on peer-to-peer assistance and further dissemination of all of the resources that are already out there. This tool kit generally does not try to re-create any sophisticated analysis of the problems or solutions associated with mental health in law schools. Rather, we hope that it serves as a guide to student and faculty leaders from the perspective of a student.

This tool kit is for informational purposes only and is not designed to be a substitute for independent research, professional assessment, or medical treatment.

“Dear Law Student:

I have good news and bad news. The bad news is that the profession that you are about to enter is one of the most unhappy and unhealthy on the face of the earth—and, in the view of many, one of the most unethical. The good news is that you can join this profession and still be happy, healthy, and ethical. I am writing to tell you how.”

- Shiltz, Patrick J

On Being a Happy, Healthy and Ethical Member of an Unhappy, Unhealthy and Unethical Profession, 52 Vand. L. Rev. 871 (1999).

II. RISK FACTORS

Consequences of Not Addressing

One of the main risk factors associated with mental health disorders is substance abuse. The most commonly abused “substance” among law students is believed to be alcohol, although there are increasing signs that prescription drug abuse is on the rise on law school campuses. Substance abuse is not only a rampant problem among law students but also among practicing attorneys. Law students often become dependent on and abuse substances to cope with or place a “band-aid” over an underlying mental health condition with which they are dealing. Such “coping” mechanisms almost always simply make the underlying mental health condition worse.

The effect of substance abuse and dependency issues on academic performance.

Unfortunately, there has been little research done on the effect of substance abuse on a law students’ academic performance. However, many have witnessed first hand the negative consequences of substance abuse and dependency on a law student’s academic performance, professional licensing requirements, personal matters, etc. Nonetheless, there has been an abundance of research conducted on the college student population. Here is a snapshot of those findings:

- 31% of college students met the criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and 6% for a diagnosis of alcohol dependence in the past 12 months (Knight et al, 2002)
- In 30% of all cases of a students academic failure- alcohol was a contributing factor (Gadaletto & Anderson Survey of College Administrators, 2001)
- The lower the student’s gpa the more likely that they are a heavy drinker (Ingalls et al, 1983)
- Students with gpa’s from 0 – 1.99 scored higher on their degree of alcoholism than students with higher gpa’s (Seay & Beck, 1984)
- 37.7% of students with gpa’s less than 2.0 were heavy drinkers (Engs and Hanson, 1985)
- Heavy drinkers accounted for 43% of men at bottom 1/3 of their class (Wechsler and McFadden, 1979)
- Drinking and academic impairment are associated (Perkins, 1992; Engs et al, 1996; Presley, 1996a; Wechsler, 1994, 1998, 2000b) Consistent association between lower self reported grade averages and higher levels of alcohol consumption.(Engs et al, 1996; Presley, 1996a, 1996b)
- 25% of college students report academic consequences of their drinking (Engs et al, 1996; Presley et al, 1996; Wechsler et al, 2002)
- Many of the above studies do not take into account other variables.
- One study accounted for limitations and found that alcohol played a modest role in negative educational outcomes. (Wood MD et al.,2000) Most pronounced in high academic performers during high school. Problems predated college admission (Wood, PK, 1997)

The effect of the law school environment on substance abuse and dependency.

It has been well documented that the nature of legal education and the types of individuals attracted to the profession create an excessively stressful environment for some students. A significant percentage of law students are at risk of abusing alcohol or other substances, or becoming dependent on alcohol or other substances as a means of relieving that stress.

- Moderate levels of stress have a positive impact on performance while excessive levels of stress have a negative impact on performance. (Glesner, 1991)
- 17% - 40% of law students and alumni suffered from depression (Benjamin, et al, 1986)
- Law students experienced increases in depression within 6 months of beginning law school. (Krieger, 2002)
- One coping strategy is an increase dependence on alcohol. (Daicoff, 1997; Glesner, 1991)
- 31% of law students fell in the “definite alcoholism” category (Hill, John Hopkins Study, 1992)
- Law students with a genetic or physiological background will have an opportunity to consume or abuse alcohol in law school. These students may be at risk of developing an addiction to alcohol. (Hill, 1992)
- Changing the law school environment in order to reduce stress is a daunting task. Educating law students regarding the types of jobs and stresses involved in the legal profession may reduce stressors and increase coping skills (Alfini & Van Vooren, 1995)

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III. SIGNS

The following signs and symptoms of prevalent mental health issues are in a format that can easily be transferred onto fliers and SBA or school websites. Making some website space open to advertising these symptoms may prove useful to students who overlook many of them. Publication of them also may relieve some of the stigma associated with these issues, as they are common to a significant number of law students.

Dispelling Myths about Mental Health

Mental illness is not due to personal weakness or inadequate willpower.

- Mental health is integral to and inseparable from overall health.
- Chemical regulators in the brain called neurotransmitters are responsible for sending messages between nerve cells. Research has demonstrated that impaired regulation of key neurotransmitters is responsible for both mental illness symptoms and physical symptoms such as pain.
- Like other chronic medical conditions, mental illnesses fall along a continuum in terms of severity, with some types of mental illness persistent and severe requiring long-term treatment.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression

Physical

- Poor appetite or overeating
- Low energy or fatigue
- Sleep disturbances

Psychological

- Feeling hopeless
- Low self-esteem
- Self-critical thoughts
- Feeling that no one values you
- Feeling no purpose to existence
- Recurring thoughts of death

Emotional

- Feeling sad, empty, alone, or hopeless
- Excessive crying
- Feeling more tense or anxious than usual
- Excessive worrying
- Overreacting to situations

Academic

- Decreased motivation
- Difficulty concentrating

Social

- Decreased interest in activities you enjoy
- Decreased trust in others
- Easily irritated
- Wanting to spend time alone
- Difficulty relating to people

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

Physical

- Dizziness or faintness
- Dry mouth/thirst
- Fatigue
- Gastrointestinal problems (diarrhea/ constipation)
- Headaches
- Hyperactivity
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Hyperventilation
- Knotted stomach/ tense muscles
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Nausea/vomiting
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Sexual problems
- Shaking hands or tremors
- Shortness of breath or chest tightness
- Sweating (especially of the palms)
- Tingling in extremities (“pins and needles” feeling)

Psychological

- Aggressiveness
- Compulsive shopping
- Difficulty concentrating or inability to focus
- Disruptive eating (over- / under- eating)
- Fear or panic
- Feeling apprehensive or worried
- Hyper-alert (easily startled / jumpiness)
- Impatience
- Inability to relax
- Increased smoking or alcohol consumption
- Irritability
- Isolation
- Reckless behavior
- Restlessness
- Sleep disturbances

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Physical

- Headaches
- Tight muscles
- Back or neck problems
- Sleep disturbances
- Stomach distress
- Change in appetite
- More colds and infections
- Fatigue
- Rapid breathing and heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Dry mouth/thirst
- Sexual problems

Thoughts/Cognitive

- Memory difficulties
- Indecisiveness
- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor judgment
- Fears of failure
- Self-criticism
- “Shoulds” and “Must’s”

Feelings/Emotional

- Feeling out of control
- Overwhelmed
- Irritated and angry
- Anxious
- Restless
- Helpless
- Trapped
- Hopeless
- Desperate

Behavioral

- Crying
- “Snapping” or picking fights
- Alcohol/drug use
- Skipping or sleeping through class
- Acting impulsively

- Losing things (i.e., cellphone, keys)
- Forgetting important meetings and appointments

Signs and Symptoms of Grief and Loss

- Interruptions in or prolonged sleep patterns.
- Changes in normal eating patterns.
- Becoming forgetful and confused.
- Withdrawing from social supports and avoiding all reminders of those who died.
- Turning to alcohol or drugs, thinking it will numb the pain.

Signs that Someone May Commit Suicide

- Talking directly or indirectly about committing suicide or wanting to die
- They have a suicide plan – the more specific the plan, the more serious the threat
- Suffering from serious depression
- Experiencing from marked changes in academic and/or job performance or behavior
- Engaging in other actions that could potentially cause harm to self, including
- Taking too many pills
- Purposely injuring one's self (such as cutting or burning)
- Taking unnecessary or life-threatening risks (e.g., driving recklessly, drinking and driving, walking alone at night)
- Reporting a history of suicide attempts or gestures
- Saying goodbye to friends or giving away prized possessions
- Shifting from serious depression to sudden happiness – this might be a sign of deciding to “take care of problems” by committing suicide

IV. PREVENTION

Students

Individual students, when empowered with the appropriate knowledge and tools, have the greatest ability to prevent a mental health condition from progressing to the point where it consumes their life while in law school. One of the key aspects to prevention is the ability to maintain “balance” in all areas of one’s life while pursuing a law degree. Learning how to cope with the stressors of law school in a healthy way, and ensuring that one’s identity is not tied to how well they do in law school is essential to preventing common mental health disorders and impairments. Stress, anxiety, depression, and the like, can quickly progress and consume a law student’s life before he or she even realizes it. Often, this is because stress, anxiety, depression, etc. arise while law students are pursuing the goals of any “successful” soon-to-be-attorney (e.g., law review, a high paying law firm, summer associate job, etc.). Some students might not even realize that stress and anxiety have become major, sometimes debilitating, problems for them because *everyone* around them is competitively striving for the same goals and experiencing some level of stress and anxiety in pursuit of those goals. In order to prevent a mental health condition from progressing to the point of becoming a crippling impairment, a law student must first become aware of the root of the problem.

Root Causes of Common Law Student Mental Health Issues

Let us first be clear that we are primarily dealing with common mental health issues that are acquired as a result of law school itself. Many law students also have pre-existing mental health issues (i.e. chronic depression and anxiety, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, etc.) that they bring with them into law school. Surely, the stressors of law school can further intensify these pre-existing disorders. We are focusing primarily, however, on the vast majority of law students who come into law school with no major pre-existing mental health issues, and yet, during law school acquire mental health impairments as a result of their law school experience. From talking with law students nationwide, we have identified three main sources that lead to law student burnout and a host of common mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression.

1. The Crush of Hopes/Dreams/Aspirations

Why is it that so many law students come to law school filled with excitement, passion, and purpose and then leave three years later board, apathetic, and cynical? Chances are either you or someone you know came to law school with a certain passion and purpose that they hoped their legal education would fulfill. Whether it was a desire to serve as a voice for the poor and underprivileged, to help abused and neglected children, or perhaps to even land a high paying job at a big Wall Street firm- these students at some point, during law school, come to the realization that for whatever

reason, they will not be able to fulfill their dream. There are many reasons why students cannot initially fulfill their dream whether it is because of high student debt, low grades, or job availability. However, the end result remains the same- a sense of loss and emptiness inside.

We all know the law student who came to law school wanting to represent the poorest in our society who soon discovers that with over \$100,000 in student loan debt, they must turn down their dream job with Legal Aid and instead take a higher paying job doing a type of law that provides no passion or excitement for them and simply pays the bills. We also know the law student who came into law school wanting to work for the largest and best firm in the state, and then realized after they received their first year grades that they would be lucky to land a job period, much less with their dream corporate firm.

Many students also enter law school with a strong sense of what they believe is right and wrong. Over time, however, professors and the law teaches these students to “think like a lawyer.” Now, these students must come to conclusions not because they believe it is the right thing or the fair and just result but because it is “what the law says.” The law student is trained to ignore their heart and to go with their head in all situations. They are taught that there is no real “right” answer. The right answer is determined by who can make the best argument. This can cause students to lose their passion and purpose for coming to law school in the first place. This is because they are taught to ignore their heart, and many times it was their heart that gave them their passion and purpose for entering law school initially. All of this results in one losing their purpose for even being in law school.

Entering law school is a major life decision for most students. A decision that is carefully weighed and considered. Many students move their families, quit their jobs, or put off other employment to pursue a legal degree. Usually there is a real personal motivation or passion that causes students to do this. If one allows law school to take away a major motivation and passion in their life, then depression will soon be lurking right around the corner. Law students become depressed over the realization that they have lost one of the driving motivations in their lives.

2. Living an Unbalanced Life

Law students are notoriously known for living “unbalanced” lives, and many students almost seem to take great pride in the fact that law school consumes such a great deal of their time. This is seen, especially the first year, not as the beginning stages of burnout but simply as the signs of a hard worker. Law school is known for late nights, high doses of caffeine, ignoring your family, and locking yourself away in the library for a month to study for exams. Ideas of living a balanced life, always sound good, but the reality is few law students are able to pull it off.

Yet, it is this very neglect of the other areas of one's life that leads to a host of mental health conditions, such as stress, depression, and anxiety. Being out of balance in areas of your life can make it extra difficult to excel in law school. Those living an unbalanced life no longer have time for hobbies that used to act as stress relievers and helped to add fun and excitement to life. The neglect of one's health while dealing with a heavy course load and busy schedule can make it more difficult for the body to fight off stress. Add to that a constant "on the go" eating routine, lack of regular exercise, and poor sleeping habits and quickly one can see why law students are easily susceptible to stress and anxiety.

The neglect of one's spiritual needs can contribute to mental health issues as well. For many law students their faith in something greater than themselves is what gives meaning and purpose to their lives. Take away one's purpose and meaning in life and this can quickly lead to depression as their no longer is something significant to live for.

Neglecting one's social life can also add stress and anxiety. Everyone needs time to unwind with friends, and meaningful relationships with others can greatly help during tough and stressful times. This goes for one's family as well. Neglecting time with your spouse or children as you stay late studying in the library can create extra stress and tension at home.

In order to cope with the stressors of law school it is important to maintain balance in all areas of life- spiritual, physical, mental, and social. Many practicing attorneys fail to achieve any sort of resemblance of a work-life balance. If law students fail to learn this important skill while in law school they risk letting it affect their future career and ultimate personal fulfillment and happiness in life.

3. Law School Becomes One's Identity

Another major cause of law student mental health issues occurs when law students allow their success in law school to define their own personal value and worth as a human being. For most students there is a large amount of pressure to succeed in law school. This pressure can come from family members, friends, professors, or even one's own self. It is often believed, albeit falsely, that unless a student performs well in law school they will never be able to land that high paying dream job, and their life, as a result, will end up being a complete and total failure. With so much on the line, there is no wonder that law students experience high amounts of stress and anxiety. No longer is an exam just a tool to measure a student's level of knowledge about a particular subject matter on a particular day. Exams become measures of a student's own value and worth as a person.

When students allow their success or failure in law school to define who they are as a person- they are in a no win situation. Pure statistics make it clear that 90% of law students will not be in the top 10% of the class. Most law students will never make it on Law Review either. Yet, many lawyers who had mediocre grades in law school end up enjoying highly successful careers practicing law. Law students must realize that law

school is not the end all be all for their career and future happiness. Law school is simply one of many steps on the road to a long and successful career.

PREVENTION: The Student's Role

1. Maintain a Balanced Life

For students to deal with the rigors of law school and to prevent stress and anxiety from taking over their life, it is vital that they achieve balance in all areas of life. Think about it, when do law students feel the most stressed out? Usually, it is not in the middle of the semester when finals seem a long time away, but instead it is at the end when students are in the midst of finals. Not surprisingly, this is also the time when students are least likely to be maintaining any sort of resemblance of a balanced life. A balanced life is essential for long-term success in law school and in life. You might feel like you can get away with living an unbalanced life momentarily, but eventually, if not addressed, an unbalanced life will cause you to wear down and burn out. Each person is unique and some need more attention to certain areas than others, but it is important for each student to set aside time every day for each area of their life.

- **Spiritual-** whether this involves attending weekly church services, quiet meditation in the morning, or simply believing in something bigger than yourself, it is vital to set aside time to care for your soul.
- **Physical-** for law students this is often the most neglected area. Remember to do what you know you are supposed to do: eat right, get enough sleep each night, exercise, avoid smoking, and drink moderately. If you are not addressing your physical needs, try doing so- you might just be amazed at how much better you feel after doing so.
- **Social-** remember to set aside time for some plain old fun. All work and no play will soon wear you down. Each person needs a social outlet or community where they feel welcomed and accepted, and where there are people they can trust and confide in.
- **Mental-** you might think that law school should take care of this part, but caring for your mind also includes your own thoughts and “self talk”. Have you ever stopped and thought about how you talk to yourself? If you are constantly saying defeatist things like “I’m so stupid”, “this is impossible”, “it probably will never work”, etc. then you need to change the way you talk to yourself. Ask yourself if you would talk this way to a close friend of yours. Negative thinking and a defeatist attitude can create stress and ultimately lead to depression. Try reading a few books on positive thinking. It really is true that you are what you think.
- **Personal-** when is the last time you did something just for yourself? Many law students have a hard time setting aside time for themselves. Remember to spend

time doing things that will cause you to grow as a person, and do not forget about those old hobbies that you really enjoyed before you came to law school.

2. Cope with Stress in a Healthy Way

All law students will experience stress, it is a part of life. The key indicator of success though is once you experience stress- how do you cope? If your normal way of coping with a long stressful day is to grab a bottle of Jack Daniel's- then you are not really coping you are avoiding. Law students and lawyers in general are notorious for their drinking habits. The profession itself revolves around happy hours and cocktail events. Many times, law students even rationalize their heavy drinking based on the fact that law school is so stressful and tough. This is a dangerous road to head down and can lead to a whole host of other problems.

Unhealthy Ways to Cope With Stress:

- Compulsive Behavior- overindulging in eating, drinking, gambling, sex, drugs, work etc.
- Impulsive Behavior- irrational behavior, acting without thinking of the consequences
- Withdrawing- from friends, family, hobbies (often a sign of depression)
- Substance Abuse
- Worry
- Addiction to pornography
- Avoidance- suffering from the stressor instead of dealing with it
- Procrastination

Healthy Ways to Cope With Stress:

- Exercise to relieve tension and improve your mood
- Relax! Try meditation, yoga, deep breathing, or muscle relaxation
- Be easy on yourself
- Make sleep a priority
- Find a quiet and peaceful place and go there- in person or in your head
- Keep a journal and write out what is stressing or worrying you
- Talk to a close friend or family member about your stress
- Take a long walk

Serenity Prayer

God, grant us grace to accept with serenity the things than cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Reinhold Niebuhr

3. Maintain Your Identity and Never Lose Your Passion or Your Purpose

When law students tie their own self-worth to their success in law school, they set themselves up for increased amounts of stress, anxiety, and disappointment. It is important to know who you are and know that your value as a person is not dependent on how well you do in law school. Thoughts and pressures placed on yourself such as, “If I do not get onto Law Review, land a great summer clerkship, and secure a top job at a large high-paying firm I will not be successful” do nothing but create unnecessary stress and anxiety. Defining your life and identity as a person by how well you do on a few exams is not only irrational but will place a huge load of pressure and stress on you that will actually keep you from performing at your best.

It is also vital for law students to remember why they came to law school. Do not forget your passion and purpose- whatever it may be. If you are passionate about practicing maritime law do not forget that and settle for another more comfortable job somewhere else. If your purpose for going to law school was to serve as a voice for abused and neglected children- remember that. Once you lose your passion or purpose- you lose your reason for existing. Loss of purpose is also one of the first steps towards depression.

PREVENTION: The SBA’s Role

Student Bar Associations (SBA) at most law schools exert an enormous amount of influence over their student body. SBA leaders can make a significant difference in helping students cope in a healthy way and to assist in the prevention of mental health issues. Beyond anything else, the greatest thing an SBA can do is to create awareness of law student mental health issues.

As an SBA President (or leader) here is what you can do:

1. Raise Awareness- the greatest thing an SBA can do towards addressing this issue is to create awareness of law student mental health issues. By making students aware that they are not alone in their struggle with stress, anxiety, and depression, substance abuse, etc., they can create a supportive environment that educates students on how to best cope with the many stressors of law school. There are many ways to raise awareness whether it is through programming, fliers, information about mental health services for students, a mental health day, etc. Be creative, you know your school and student body better than anyone else.

2. Programming- schedule a panel with mental health professionals, representatives from your local Lawyer Assistance Program, and alumni to come and talk about effective ways to cope with stress, start a dialogue between faculty and students about the stressors of law school and how together they can work to address the issue.

3. Promote Healthy Ways for Students to Cope- this involves more than words too. If all of your socials every week center around drinking, it is hard at the same time to encourage students to not use alcohol to cope with stress. Think about diversifying your socials to include relaxing daytime events, organize a 5K run for charity, and make sure that the socials that do center around alcohol are held at a venue that also serves non-alcoholic beverages.

4. Talk to Your Administration- as the voice of the students, the SBA is in a great position to make their administration and faculty more aware of law student mental health issues. If your school does not already provide mental health resources for students, encourage them to do so by communicating to them the seriousness of the problem. Encourage the Administration to schedule a “stress free week” right before finals and other activities or events that will help relieve law student stress.

5. Create a Student Wellness Committee within Your SBA- the SBA at Southwestern Law School has done just this by creating a student wellness committee that addresses student's general well being (i.e, stress management and nutrition).

6. Create a Student Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) Representative on Your SBA Board- Many law schools already have student LAP representatives. In fact, almost all of the New York State Law Schools have had LAP representatives for several years. The position can be as formal or informal as the SBA would like. This year, a student from almost every District of Columbia Law School became a student “liaison” to the DC LAP.

A LAP Representative at each law school would:

1. Participate in State LAP events- like conferences or trainings
2. Serve as the point of contact between the students and the state LAP. This is especially helpful since it can be intimidating for a student to reach out to the LAP directly
3. Pass information from the State LAP along to students
4. Pass along to professors article/brochures about substance abuse/depression in the legal community and/or law school
5. Send out information (emails, etc.) to students about speakers at the law school or nearby forums who address mental health issues
6. Coordinate with local LAPs and/or University counseling programs or services to make presentations to 1Ls during orientation

Many State LAP Directors would be very happy to have a student contact at each law school, and by forming a partnership with State LAPs, a Student Bar Association can make available to its students a wide variety of mental health resources.

* It's very important for SBA leaders to know that the LAP services offered are absolutely confidential. Although LAPs are funded by the state Bar, they are not otherwise connected with that Bar. Counselors on the LAP are prohibited by federal law from disclosing to *anyone* the information provided to them by law students (unless the student indicates that her/his life, or the life of another, is in immediate danger- such as an impending suicide attempt). So, the LAP counselors cannot tell the law school administration, the Bar, or anyone else what the law student shares during her/his counseling sessions at the LAP.

7. Help Start a Mental Health Student Organization- many schools have Mental Health Law Societies at their school that not only center around students who want to practice mental health law but also exist to improve the mental health of law students.

Many State Lawyer Assistance Programs also provide peer assisted counseling. Students however, may be reluctant to access those services provided by the state bar. Having a student run organization that serves as a liaison to the state bar may be an attractive alternative for some institutions. The following is an example of one student organization that was started at South Texas College of Law.

LAW STUDENTS ANONYMOUS

BYLAWS

Article I: Statement of Purpose

LAW STUDENTS ANONYMOUS (LSA) is being established in the fall of 2003 at SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE OF LAW in association with the Assistant Dean of Academic Assistance and Student Counseling with the following objectives: (1) To provide a weekly support group for those students who may need to receive the help of a group in dealing with problems such as substance abuse or other stressors. (2) Provide through the use of cooperative agreements with licensed organizations a system of assessment and referral for those students whose problems lie deeper than what a support group can provide. (3) To provide informational programs to the Faculty, Students and Staff on topics appropriate to the goals of the program such as identifying substance abuse or coping with stress. (4) To provide a help line or phone number similar to an EAP. (5) To act as a liaison to the Texas Lawyers Assistance Program.

Article II: Membership

Section 1. Any currently enrolled student at South Texas College of Law may be a member of LSA entitled to all the privileges and duties of membership herein provided.

Section 2. In order to work the help desk for LSA and act as a group leader, or serve on the Board, a student must have completed their first semester and the peer assistance training provided by LSA.

Section 3. There will be no membership dues to LSA.

Section 4. Any Student who misrepresents the policies or objectives of LSA will be subject to disciplinary action or removal from the membership.

Article III: Board of Directors

Section 1. The Board of Directors will be elected to a term of one year and their duties shall consist of:

a. Director- The Director shall oversee the Board and shall act as LSA's representative to the South Texas College of Law, Student Bar Association, and the Texas Lawyers Assistance Program. In addition, the Director will preside over meetings, receive all mail addressed to LSA and have signature authority over all bank accounts maintained by LSA.

b. Treasurer- The Treasurer shall maintain all accounting records of LSA and is responsible for maintaining the accounts). The Treasurer will have signature authority on all banking accounts maintained by LSA.

c. Secretary- The Secretary shall take minutes of all meetings, post notices of meetings and presentations and make any necessary room arrangements for meetings or presentations. The Secretary shall also be responsible for preparing any correspondence relating to any LSA matters.

d. Volunteer Coordinator- The Volunteer Coordinator shall be responsible for making all necessary arrangements for the time, room and leader of the weekly meetings and for the staffing of the phone line. The Volunteer Coordinator shall also be responsible for establishing a training schedule for student volunteers.

Section 2. Members of the Board will be elected as follows:

1. Elections will be held during the Spring Semester for the following academic year at a time to be decided by the current Board, not to be later than the third full week in April or prior to Spring Break.
2. The majority of eligible voting members who are present at the election meeting will elect Board Members.
3. Nominations will be open and taken from the floor.
4. A minimum of one (1) semester of membership is required to be nominated for a position on the board and to be eligible to vote.
5. Nominations shall be made at a special meeting to be held no less than one week prior to elections.
6. Newly elected officers shall take office on the first meeting of the fall semester.
7. Voting shall be by secret ballot and counted by the current Director and Secretary.
8. Current officers can be nominated to run, and can be re-elected to the same position for consecutive terms.

Section 3. Any officer who is deemed inactive in the performance of their duties or who misrepresents LSA or who is found guilty of any act that hinders the goals of LSA may be removed by a 2/3 majority of the voting members, provided he/she is afforded an opportunity to provide a defense.

Section 4. The Board of Directors may establish committees and delegate their authority on an as needed basis.

Article IV: Amendment Process

Section 1. These bylaws may be amended as provided herein.

Section 2. Before any proposed amendment is acted upon by the membership:

- a. It must be typewritten, double-spaced.
- b. It must be signed by at least two voting members.
- c. It must be read to the members during the meeting previous to the meeting that it is to be voted on.
- d. A copy must be posted on the LSA bulletin board and notice made to all members at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting at which action is to be taken.

Article V: Ratification

Section 1. These amendments shall become ratified and shall then become effective upon the approval of a 2/3 vote of the eligible voting members present at the meeting during which voting on the proposed amendment takes place.

Article VI: Additional Bylaws

Section 1. In the interest of time and academics, meetings shall be limited to one hour, unless the board deems it necessary to extend the time.

Section 2. In order to stay within the one-hour limit, no more than five topics will be on each agenda.

Section 3. The Board of Directors without membership approval can expend no more than \$25.00, unless already budgeted.

Section 4. Business records shall be open for membership inspection upon request; however, no record shall contain the name or other identifiers of any student receiving assistance from LSA.

Section 5. LSA will adhere to Robert's Rules of Order, with some added flexibility when conducting meetings.

Section 6. LSA officers will have executive meetings prior to every membership meeting. They will have the responsibility of consulting and agreeing upon the time and place of the meeting, how the notices shall be delivered to the membership; who will be presiding; discussion of the objectives of the meeting; and what will be on the agenda for that meeting.

Article VII: Office Hours

Law Students Anonymous is located in room 336a, South Texas College of Law.
Office hours are _____.

**Note: Law Students Anonymous is a program that can be used by any school without permission. It was founded by a student at South Texas College of Law

Another Example of SBA Initiated Mental Health Programming:

Vanderbilt Bar Association “Stress Free Week”

In January of 2008, the Vanderbilt Bar Association (VBA) worked closely with their Office of Student Affairs and the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program in organizing and implementing a “Stress Free Week.” The TLAP representative was present every day and had a table with information available, and also participated in some of the programs.

See the flier for the “Stress Free Week” on the next page →

VBA AND THE OFFICE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS,
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
TENNESSEE LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
PRESENT:

STRESS FREE WEEK

January 21st thru January 25th

*Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program (TLAP) tabling on Main Street
11 AM to 2 PM*

Monday, January 21

Grades: Myths & Realities, Panel Discussion (Flynn, Noon to 1 PM)

Panelists: *Dean Workman, Career Services Office; Bob Tuke, Trauger & Tuke; Catherine Wheaton, TLAP; Meredith Blount, Current Student*

***Pizza Lunch** Provided Courtesy of Career Services Office

Tuesday, January 22

Comfort Food courtesy of VBA at TLAP table (Main Street, 11 AM to 1 PM)

Supportive Practices Session Open to All Students (Renaissance, 4 PM to 5 PM)

Taught by Dr. Gordon Peerman, D.Min. and Kathy Woods, M.Ed., both specializing in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

Wednesday, January 23

Chair Massages courtesy of VBA provided at TLAP table
(Main Street; 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM)

Thursday, January 24

Substance Abuse Issues in the Legal Community, Panel Discussion (Flynn, 12 to 1PM)

Panelists: *Dr. Paul Ragan, M.D., Psychiatry; Dr. Mary Yarbrough, Vanderbilt Director of Health & Wellness; Sheree Wright, Vanderbilt Office of the General Counsel; Buddy Burnett, Practicing Attorney; Catherine Wheaton, TLAP*

***Platter Lunch** Provided Courtesy of Office of Student Affairs

****Satisfies 1 Hour Substance Abuse Session Necessary for some State Bar Exams**

Bar Review with special Mocktails Menu (TBA, 10 PM)

Friday, January 25

Blackacre Sponsored by VBA & Office of Student Affairs (5:00 PM)

Welcome by Dean Rubin

Dry Week Petition raffle drawing

**SPECIAL THANKS
TO OUR**

Dry Week
**PETITION
SIGNERS**

THE PETITION

Sponsored by VBA & the Office of Student Affairs

Signup on Main Street January 18th thru 25th, or on the VBA Office Door before Monday, January 21st

Stay Dry from 12 AM Monday, January 21st thru 5 PM Friday, January 25th at 5 PM, at the start of Blackacre

THE PURPOSE

To raise awareness about substance abuse issues in the legal community
To provide an opportunity to reflect on how these issues might impact us as future lawyers

To inspire self-awareness

PREVENTION: The Law School Administration's Role

Law School Administrators and Deans of Students can play a crucial role in raising awareness of law student mental health issues and helping students to cope effectively with the stressors of law school.

Address Mental Health Issues During First-Year Orientation:

First year orientation is one of the most important times to address law student mental health issues. Not only are first year students at orientation hanging on to every word that is said, but they are also at a position where they can take appropriate steps to prevent mental health issues from becoming a problem in their lives. We recommend that each first year orientation include a presentation on the following topics:

1. How to effectively cope with stress and anxiety.
2. The incidence of substance abuse/depression in law school and the legal profession.
3. The questions relating to substance abuse and mental health that the local bar asks on its application.
4. An overview of the mental health services available through the law school, the University, and the local LAP.

**Sometimes there is so much information to cover during First-Year Orientation that something as important as mental health issues can be lost. If you feel this would be a problem at your school, another option is to work with each first year section and/or legal writing professor to set aside time to discuss the topics above during the first few months of the semester. If your school has midterms, the lead up to them may also prove a good time to discuss stress-related mental health issues.

Make Students Aware of Mental Health Resources Available:

There are two problems that result from law schools not publicizing the mental health resources available to students:

1. Students feel that this is not a problem shared by many and therefore feel stigmatized as to seeking out information for help.
2. Students who really want help do not know where to find it.

PROBLEM: Students Need Mental Health Help.

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM:

- a.) Stigma
- b.) Bar Examiner Questions
- c.) Emotional Macho Law School Culture
- d.) Availability of Trusted Resources to Help

SOLUTIONS:

1. Provide as many options as possible for assistance. Including on-campus and off-campus mental health resources and mental health counselors located at the law school
2. Be sure helping resources are confidential
3. Conduct ongoing campaigns to publicize these resources
4. Conduct yearly meeting with Dean's office, Board of Law Examiners, and state LAP to develop solutions to Bar application question barriers, (e.g.)

In Washington, DC, the Chair of the DC LAP Subcommittee for Outreach to Law Students chairs regular "Deans' Luncheons" at which the Deans of Students from each local law school and representatives of the LAP discuss current mental health issues affecting students at their respective law schools, outreach efforts being implemented at the respective law schools, etc. The Deans of Students use the lunches to swap ideas (e.g., what outreach efforts were effective that semester, which efforts were not successful), brainstorm new outreach ideas, talk about mental health impairments and addictions that appear to be rampant in their law school communities, and also to stay connected with the DC LAP by hearing about what outreach efforts they are implementing.

Law School Deans and Deans of Students may want to expand this model to create similar regional arrangements to share information, whether in person or through video or phone conference.

Provide Additional Resources:

Make the increase of mental health resources a priority. One idea is to provide for a full-time counselor at the law school who is available to meet and talk with students. By making a counselor available at the law school this will help to de-stigmatize the idea of seeking out help. It will also allow students to recognize that the stress and anxiety they experience in law school is normal and shared by many of their colleagues. Bringing the resources close to students will also sometimes increase the likelihood that they will seek out help.

Many law schools also sponsor programming that emphasize healthy ways to cope with the stressors of law school. Does your law school offer any programming like this? If not, begin a discussion with your SBA on ideas to promote healthy ways of preventing and coping with law school stress.

Establish a Ground Strategy:

Those with the most severe mental health issues many times are the least likely to seek out help. That is why it is crucial to train other students and faculty to recognize signs and risk factors associated with common mental health issues. Students are often the first to recognize when their friends are going through a hard time, but more often than not, students do not know how to deal with the situation or whether they should intervene, share the situation with the Dean of Student Affairs, or simply do nothing. Caring students and faculty must be trained and given the tools necessary to recognize

risk factors in others and to help those suffering address their mental health issues. A kind and loving, non-judgmental response from a caring friend or faculty member can be just what is needed to encourage someone in need to seek out help.

Help Educate Faculty on How to Deal With Law Student Mental Health Issues:

Faculty members, often, will be the first to identify a law student dealing with mental health issues. It is essential that faculty are made aware of the mental health issues that law students face and giving the necessary training and tools to help students in addressing these issues.

Counseling Skills For Faculty:

- Nodding while person is speaking to demonstrate that you are listening
- Keeping eye contact to demonstrate that you are listening
- Reflecting student's feelings: Student sounds frustrated while giving facts of a story, so lay counselor responds with, "you sound very frustrated, this must be very hard for you".... because student has not learned how to articulate his/her own FEELINGS.
- Paraphrasing what student is saying: Student gives details about a situation and lay counselor responds with, "so you became angry with the situation and went out drinking." Even though the student may have given a 10-minute scenario of this encounter. It is important to remember both content and feeling when students are speaking. Details are important so the student knows you are listening and have the story straight, but hearing their feelings and then reflecting them back to the student will build rapport. It helps the student feel like they are being understood.
- Asking Open Ended Questions vs. Closed Ended Questions: "Tell me how you feel about your law school experience" vs. "Do you like law school?"
- Allowing for silence: This allows the student to gather thoughts and think about them more deeply before speaking. It also allows the student to reveal more about her because most people are uncomfortable with silence, so she will fill it with information to avoid it that uncomfortable silence. Also, it allows the lay counselor to not rush into trying to find a solution, as the student will develop more insight and mastery if encouraged to find solutions on their own.
- Unconditional Positive Regard for the Student: This means that the lay counselor never blames or shames the student. Never use words like "you should have" or "why didn't you" as they are value laden.

- Rewarding Positive Behavior: If a student is doing well, in both word and deed, the lay counselor can acknowledge that but not with phrases such as, “I am very proud of you” but rather, “you can be very proud of yourself for not drinking, but rather by dealing with the situation in a more healthy manner and continuing to tell your teacher how you felt.” This reinforces how the student may want to continue in their relationship development.

What Law Schools Are Doing:

Stetson University College of Law- Gulfport, FL

--In January of 2008 Stetson University College of Law implemented MentalHealthEdu.com, a training program purchased for all current faculty and staff. The three, 30-minute online interactive modules provide an educational tool to help faculty/staff identify mental health issues in the student body by understanding symptoms and warning signs as well as what to do in order to refer the student for assistance. The site is also partially tailored to the specific contact information, resources, policies and procedures of a particular campus. Implementation will be followed up at Stetson by additional educational programming and training opportunities. All new staff at Stetson will also be expected to complete the program, and it is planned to be part of New Faculty and Adjunct Faculty training sessions each academic year.

-- Stetson belongs to a network of professional psychiatrists/psychologists called Student Assistant Program (Horizons Health System) and offers students three free hours of confidential professional counseling off campus upon a Dean’s referral. Stetson also retains a nearby mental health counselor for more immediate support as needed.

-- Stetson utilizes the resources of The Florida Lawyers Assistance Program as a means of remediation before, during, and after the Bar application process for students encountering substance abuse issues that have affected their personal or professional lives. Speakers from the program participate in orientation and the Graduate Professionalism Retreat each semester.

-- The CORE instrument (nationally renown research out of Southern Illinois University) is administered to each incoming class at Stetson to gather anonymous data on real and perceived alcohol and drug use by students. The results are helpful in identifying trends and possible areas in which normative behavior can be affected and healthy decisions encouraged.

University of Virginia School of Law- Charlottesville, VA

--The University of Virginia School of Law uses a peer advisor program to help their incoming students. The program is designed to pair 2Ls and 3Ls with incoming 1L students. Included in the peer advisor training is information related to mental health. Peer advisors are encouraged to use this information with their advisees throughout the year as necessary.

-- The Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) through the University of Virginia's main campus provides time for counseling walk-in appointments year-round. CAPS has also set up special walk-in hours once a week near the law and business schools, located next to each other.

The George Washington University Law School- Washington, D.C.

-- In February of 2008 George Washington University Law School's Office of Student Affairs and GWU's Counseling Center put on special programming aimed at teaching students strategies to deal with disappointment and law school stress.

Announcement:

Feeling Disappointed or Worn Out at School or at Home? Join us on 2/21 or 2/22 and "Bounce Back Quickly from Dashed Expectations"!

Feeling disappointed with your grades? Is life not meeting your expectations? Has law school got you down? Come learn how to deal with setbacks and hardships in law school and in life.

The Office of Student Affairs and the University Counseling Center invite you to "Bounce Back Quickly from Dashed Expectations," a presentation intended to help law students with taking their own road to resilience. We hope to better inform students on strategies of adapting well in the face of adversity and significant sources of stress.

The program will be held:

Thursday, February 21, 2:00-3:30pm in Lerner 101 (Moot Court Room)
and Friday, February 22, 2:00-3:30pm in Lerner 301

Resilience is not a trait that people have or don't have. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed. If you need to bounce back from disappointment, we hope you will attend.

South Texas College of Law – Houston, TX

-- South Texas College of Law has implemented the following mental health programs:

- Fall /Spring Mental Health Day
 - Substance Abuse, Fall
 - Mental Health, Spring
- Free screening during mental health day
- Free on-line screening
- Stress management workshop

- Free professional counseling (3 times a semester)
- Partners with Law Students Anonymous
- South Texas College of Law also offers an office dedicated to academic assistance and counseling

Southwestern University Law School – Los Angeles, CA

-- Southwestern University Law School offers HelpNet, a student assistance program through which students can receive two free counseling sessions during the year and then can elect to receive further meetings for a fee. HelpNet also conducts special programs on campus, such as stress reduction, balancing life with law school, and helping students deal with “crisis” situations such as earthquakes, etc. HelpNet brochures are distributed at Orientation and are available throughout the year in the DOS office and in the SBA office.

University of San Diego School of Law- San Diego, CA

-- University of San Diego School of Law’s Office of Student Affairs and the Disability Services Office works closely with students who have identified mental health problems to provide counseling and necessary academic and exam accommodations.

--The Office of Student Affairs also offers a Mental Health clinic which is available to the public, including USD students.

--USD School of Law includes representatives from the University Offices in the Orientation Program and coordinates workshops specific for law students (in addition to the general workshops and groups available to all students) throughout the year on a variety of health/emotional well-being issues such as stress reduction.

--USD School of Law also actively encourages its students to seek out available mental health resources. They also make an effort to gather additional information about students with possible mental health issues from concerned students and faculty.

-- The University of San Diego offers extensive mental health resources. For a complete listing of resources and Student Wellness Information please visit:
www.sandiego.edu/wellness.

First Year Orientation Speech By Professor Barbara Glesner Fines

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<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/profiles/glesnerfines/bgf-strs.htm>

LAW SCHOOL AND STRESS

**Professor Barbara Glesner Fines
University of Missouri - Kansas City School of Law**

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(This is a version of an orientation speech I have given every year for the past ten years. It has become known, variously, as "The Eat Your Veggie's" speech or the "Get a Life" speech. Students have remarked that they have found it helpful to them during the first year of law school. I present it here in the hopes it may help law students elsewhere have a more successful and enjoyable law school experience. A more extensive examination of the issues raised here can be found at B.A. Glesner, Fear and Loathing in the Law School, 23 Connecticut Law Review 627-68 (1991).)

Good morning. Welcome to the profession of law. I will probably meet most of you in the three years ahead in the civil procedure or professional responsibility or family law classes. But today, I'm here to teach a different subject -- the study of law. And there will be a test.

The test will come tomorrow, and next week, and next month, and at the end of the semester, and in three years and at regular intervals for the rest of your professional career. The test will cover your ability to achieve balance and perspective in your professional career.

Sadly, many in the profession are not faring well on this test. Many attorneys do not enjoy their work -- an ABA survey in 1991 indicated that 40% of newer attorneys were dissatisfied with the practice of law. The percentages are even higher for women and minorities. No wonder lawyers are depressed -- three and a half times more so than people in other occupations, according to a 1990 study released by Johns Hopkins University. This means that attorneys have higher levels of negative coping behaviors: alcoholism, drug abuse, and others.

Now please keep in mind that I am not a psychologist. I have read and researched and written about the process of legal education and its effect on students, but much of what I know about law student stress, I know based on what I see. What I see is distressed law students. So today, I would like to explore with you the sources of that stress in law school, some of the ways in which that stress manifests itself, and some suggestions for stress management.

SOURCES OF STRESS IN LAW SCHOOL

One of the major sources of stress in law school is the shift from undergraduate to professional education. Consider why people value the work of attorneys.

- An attorney is expected to master large amounts of complex materials in a short amount of time. It's often said that a lawyer is a quick study.
- Attorneys are looked to for solutions to complex and novel human problems.
- Attorneys do hard hard -- independent, critical reading, listening & thinking -- and lots of it (many attorneys work over 2000 hours a year).
- Attorneys are noted for their ability to articulate a position confidently in the face of equally confident and articulate opposition.

Hard work.... Incisive analytical and problem-solving abilities.... Confident articulation under pressure.

It's no wonder that these characteristics of an attorney's work are also the characteristics of legal education. Moreover, legal education is, for many of you, unlike any educational experience you have had to this point. You will soon discover that the volume and intensity of work is much greater. In undergraduate programs, most of you could work hard (or maybe even not-so-hard) and complete all your assignments or even stay ahead of your assignments. In law school, you will likely feel like Alice in Wonderland, taking all the running you can do just to stay in the same place. As a general rule, you should plan on studying four hours for every class hour. (For those who aren't math majors, that means that in a 15-credit hour semester, you will be spending 60 hours a week studying outside of class). **THIS IS NOT AN EXAGGERATION.**

Moreover, there is always more you can do. In law school, as in legal practice, there is always one more possible way to view a problem; one more possible source of authority or enlightenment; one more possible solution; one more possible way of communicating your ideas.

In addition, for most of this work you are on your own. In any educational setting, you are responsible for your own learning. However, in law school, one of the primary skills you should be learning is how to exercise that responsibility. How to learn actively and independently. At first, you may feel like there is a secret you haven't been told and you will be searching for answers.

Yet this, too, is one of the differences about legal education. In undergraduate education, you could usually come to class reasonably familiar with the assignment and leave class with greater clarity and certainty about the materials. That won't happen in law school as often. Rather, you will sometimes come to class believing that you understand and have mastered the materials and leave class feeling as though you really don't understand at all. Why is that so? Because law school is designed to develop your critical thinking skill. That skill requires that you be able to generate as many questions as answers. And that uncertainty, that sense of suspended learning, can be extremely stressful.

By the way, I can help with some of that stress. You will often find yourself, in the first weeks of the semester, asking yourself, or each other "But what's the answer?" I'll tell you the answer right now. The answer is "IT DEPENDS." It depends on the facts, the politics and the cultural context, it depends on which jurisdiction, it depends on which time, it depends on which decision maker, IT DEPENDS....

There is another sense in which legal education can be stressful. Even if there were clear answers to most legal questions, you will be receiving less specific, evaluative feedback than in undergraduate education. Most faculty in the first year give mid-term exams, but few (outside of perhaps your legal writing instructors) provide the type of weekly, graded homework that you might have received in undergraduate education.

Instead, your entire grade for most classes is based on a final comprehensive exam. And those grades count for so much -- becoming a source of considerable stress as you engage in a more competitive, explicit ranking process than many of you have faced since junior high. Think about it -- you are all at the top of your class, you are all highly talented and intelligent people, you are all outstanding students -- but you can't all graduate with a 4.00 grade point average. (You can all graduate, but 90% of you will not graduate in the top 10% of the class).

So you can see, many aspects of the educational process can be sources of stress.

There is another process going on in law schools that also can cause stress. It is the subtle but pervasive process of being socialized into a profession. I can't say that I know much about this process from an academic or theoretical perspective, but I do know what I see. Every year I see the process of legal education change students in some rather fundamental ways. Some students take the new skills they are learning as law students and absorb these skills as fundamental parts of their personality. In other words, these law students learn the role of lawyer. Which isn't bad, unless the lawyer role becomes the only role one then ever adopts. For example:

- being able to see and advocate for both sides of any argument is good;
losing your own personal moral, ethical or aesthetic judgment about right and wrong, true and false; that is bad.
- being confident in stating a position and sticking to it is good;
being arrogant, overbearing, and unable to listen to others is bad.
- wanting to work in a high-paid, high-status, corporate law firm is good;
wanting that because it seems like any other choice is second-rate, and in spite of all the contrary goals or expectations you have coming into law school... well, I think that's bad.

It's easy to lose yourself in the process of legal education. And holding on to yourself can be a significant source of stress.

Finally, there are all the personal sources of stress that are made worse by law school.

Few of us has enough time. Law school takes all the time you have and then some.

Few of us has enough money. Law school is enormously expensive -- for most of you, the debt you will take out of law school will be the equivalent of a mortgage on your first home.

Few of us are in the kind of physical shape that we would like to be -- imagine the results of a diet consisting heavily of coffees, donuts and Wednesday pizza, and a workout program that consists entirely of carrying 100 pounds of law books from locker to library. (it isn't pretty)

Few of us are crystal clear about why we came to law school -- that question looms even larger when you are sitting up at midnight reading a totally incomprehensible piece of legal writing from the late 19th century.

So plan now to reduce or eliminate as much of this ordinary stress as possible. Think about your timing. I believe that the major reason many students do not succeed in law school is that they started at the wrong time: Don't start law school on the same day you are also beginning major medical treatment, a divorce, or have just had a new baby. Don't start law school without a decent plan for financial support. Do not - unless you are in a part-time program - try to "work your way through law school." You will work your way right into academic failure. Now you might be saying to yourself -- yeah, but I'm different. I'll be able to handle it. Well, maybe you will. But maybe you won't and there's little room for a second chance. And even if you do manage to get through, your education will not be the fulfilling, exciting, and truly successful experience it could be if you would just wait one more year and sort out your problems first.

Stress from the educational process; stress from the socialization process; stress from living while in law school. These are the sources of stress in law school.

Now before you all go running for refunds, let me say that nearly all law students manage this stress without major problems. Some even thrive (though I've noticed that many of those folks become law professors). How will you know if stress has become a problem for you? There will be some rather obvious symptoms.

SYMPTOMS OF LAW SCHOOL STRESS

You'll get sick: more colds and headaches.

You'll worry more than you work.

You'll notice more problems with your family and friends.

You'll have some significant change in your personal habits: you'll lose your appetite or you'll want to pig out all the time; you'll want to sleep all the time or you won't be able to sleep; you'll want sex all the time or you'll never want sex again.

You'll go into survival mode: fight, flight or freeze:

You'll fight: You'll find yourself speaking words of excuse and anger -- like "All lawyers are asses" or "All law professors are pompous, arrogant fools." or "Professor Glesner Fines is out to get me!"

You'll flee: You'll start skipping classes, skipping assignments, or -- just as much a problem -- doing the reading and coming to class but neglecting to think about either.

You'll freeze: You'll find speaking words of desperation and despair -- like "What am I doing here?" and "Everyone's smarter than me." or "I'll never keep up." or "I'll never catch on.";

So what do you do to keep from becoming overwhelmed by the stress of the legal education and socialization process piled on top of ordinary stressors?

First, let me say a word about one coping mechanism that is NOT a solution. Some students try to cope with the stress of law school through chemistry: caffeine (or stronger) to keep them up; alcohol and other substances to help them down. Not only is this strategy guaranteed to interfere with your studies, but it is a sure-fire way to guarantee that the Board of Bar Examiners will refuse your application for admission to the bar. Substance abuse and criminal records are major red flags on any application -- and yes, that little DUI ticket counts, even if you went through a diversion program and were told that your record was "clean." You need more than a "clean" record to be a lawyer -- you need a "clean" brain. If you think you may have a problem with substance abuse already, here's what you need to do -- as soon as I'm done speaking, leave the law school, go get treatment, and come back when you are in recovery.

Now, what about some better solutions. Here is my four-point, sure-fire, guaranteed (well, maybe not guaranteed, but I think it works) method for coping with law school stress.

COPING WITH LAW SCHOOL STRESS: A FOUR-POINT PLAN

First, have faith. Have faith in God (however, you may envision God) and pray. Have faith in the process. (We really mean it when we say we would not have admitted you if we did not believe you could succeed. You are an investment -- we would not squander our resources unwisely). Have faith in yourself. Become your own best cheering squad and reassure yourself with all the success you have already had that brought you to this point.

Let me ask you a question. Why are you here? Watched enough episodes of "LA Law" that you just knew that being a lawyer would be the career for you? Well, maybe you'd better schedule your study schedule to free up that programming hour each week. Following in the footsteps of a role model in your life? Better take him or her to lunch or read his or her biography regularly. Have a hunger for justice? Look around you and see all the desperate need for lawyers hungry for justice. Carve out a bit of time to volunteer. You get the picture. Have faith that law school will help you meet (or even find) your goals.

Second, live outside the law. You will have less time and energy for your family and friends -- but be sure not to neglect these important people in your life. They are your buffer against stress -- your link to the rest of your life and self. And for heaven's sake, when you are spending time with them, don't "lawyer" them. Watching a football game with your buddies is not a good time to review your knowledge of the tort doctrine of assumption of risk. Don't use an discussion with your spouse as an opportunity to practice rephrasing the issue. Instead, keep track of yourself and nurture the relationships that will nurture you.

Have faith, live outside the law,

Third, take care of yourself. Follow the advice your mother gave you (or should have given you). Pack a nutritious lunch -- don't make breakfast three cups of coffee and two chocolate doo-wahs out of the vending machines -- eat your vegees. Get enough sleep -- especially during the times you think you can least afford it. Get some exercise -- the Law Book Bench Press is not enough. Take twenty minutes a day to go for a walk at least. Keep a positive mental attitude. Don't let yourself fall victim to cognitive self-defeat and negative imagery.

Have faith.

Live outside the law.

Take care of yourself.

and fourth, if you do have problems, get some help. Ask one of your professors, ask our student support staff, ask our assistant dean, ask the campus counseling center (by the way, you should know that law students and medical students are their largest clientele, so don't think you're the only one). The law school has helped many a student, with truly horrendous crises, navigate their way through this process to graduation. But those students asked. They asked before it was too late to find effective solutions.

So there you have it. For many of the same reasons that law school can be stressful, it can also be one of the most exciting, challenging, enriching experiences you will ever have. I wish you all the greatest success.

Every year at graduation, I see students become hooded with the academic garb that signifies a master. And every year, I see students who have a variety of academic achievements about which to boast. I also see students who have equally important achievements: That student read a bedtime story to his child every night for three years. That student learned to play the piano during his second year of law school. That student

worked at the local soup kitchen every Tuesday night. I wish you academic success of course. But even more, I wish you the success of growing through this process, so that you will truly succeed as lawyers -- as the agents of justice and peace in our society.

V. GETTING HELP

There are numerous high quality treatment facilities in every region of the country. What is best for any one individual requires a thorough knowledge of the disease of addiction, a thorough evaluation of the individual, and a comprehensive knowledge of available treatment resources. Like much of medicine, the availability and quality of treatment services can change rapidly. State Lawyer Assistance Programs have a primary focus on being abreast of where the best treatment resources are in their community and are glad to consult with law administrators confidentially to share such information.

Many law schools, or connected undergraduate institutions, employ counselors that meet with students at no cost on a limited basis. These, along with local Lawyer Assistance Programs, are the very best source of help for you or a friend.

Coping with Depression

- **Challenge the negative thoughts in your head.** Depression can make you feel alone or worthless. You might find yourself thinking that nothing good ever happens, that no one cares about you, or that things will never get better. Realize that these thoughts are coming from depression – not you.
- **Be aware of your stress levels.** Now is not the time to be taking on new projects and responsibilities. Consider paring down what you are doing to make your schedule more manageable.
- **Take care of your body.** Try to eat nutritious meals, get exercise, and get enough sleep (7-8 hours a night).
- **Surround yourself with supportive people.** Friends who have a negative outlook will only make you feel more negative.
- **Take life one day at a time.** Do not get consumed with thoughts of the future: make small goals and do not think about the whole semester. Try to add more structure to your life.
- **Avoid alcohol.** It is a depressant, and will only amplify your depressive feelings.
- **Become involved** – Do not take on a huge commitment, but try to find something you enjoy. Volunteering to help others might help you to focus more on positive things.
- **Remember depression is treatable.** You may need to talk with a counselor, but you can overcome depression.
- **Express your feelings.** Do not keep your emotions bottled up. Find a way to experience feelings that is comfortable for you – talk to someone (friend, family member, counselor, religious leader, professor, etc.), write in a journal, go to a support group.

Helping a Friend Who is Depressed

- **Be supportive.** Listen to your friend. Set aside time so that you can talk without being interrupted. Let your friend know that you care and are willing to help.
- Introduce your friend to **coping techniques** such as those suggested above. If these do not seem to help, suggest that your friend seek professional help. You may wish to contact your state's Commission on Lawyer Assistance Program (contact information for each listed in Chapter 6), or visit your university health services, if available, to find resources for your friend.
- Understand that your friend is suffering from **depression**. Your friend will not just "snap out of it." Overcoming depression takes work and time.
- Remember to **take care of yourself**. Being there for your friend should not come at the expense of your own health, physical or mental. If you are overwhelmed, take a step back and consider calling a counselor for advice.

Coping with Anxiety

- **Reach out to others.** Spend time with friends or loved ones. Tell them about your fears, feelings, or uncertainties.
- **Express your feelings.** Do not keep your emotions bottled up. Find a way to experience them that is comfortable for you – talk to someone (friend, family member, counselor, religious leader, professor, etc.), write in a journal, go to a support group.
- **Focus upon a realistic assessment of your personal situation.** Try not to magnify your concerns.
- **Try to stay organized.** Keep a planner so that you know when papers and exams are coming up. Make sure to plan time for yourself away from work, class, and studying.
- **Cut down on alcohol and caffeine.** These can increase symptoms of anxiety.
- **Take care of your body.** Try to eat nutritious meals, get exercise, and get enough sleep.
- **Identify and minimize stressors.** Learn what situations or events cause you the most stress, and how to cope with them. Realize that life can be difficult, and that it is not so much a matter of what events have occurred, but what meaning we give to those events. We can not eliminate stressful events, but we can reckon with them.
- **Learn stress management and relaxation techniques.** Try yoga or meditation to help you focus on being calm. Experiment with muscle relaxation exercises, deep breathing, and mental or guided imagery.
- **Challenge the critical voice in your head.** Anxiety can make you feel like you are not normal or that you are a failure. You might find yourself thinking that other people are able to manage stress, that other people are not as scared as you, or that you are a bad student or person because you cannot handle all of your responsibilities. Realize that these thoughts are coming from the anxiety – not you. Remember, the way others look may not show how they really feel.

Coping with Stress

- Become aware of your own reactions to stress.
- Let go of negative, discouraging self-talk. Avoid the “snowball” effect of dwelling on the negative.
- Learn from past “mistakes” and move forward.
- Practice positive, encouraging self-statements.
- Focus on your good qualities and accomplishments.
- Develop assertive behaviors.
- Get a hobby or two. Relax and have fun.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a balanced diet daily.
- Talk with friends or someone you can trust about your worries/problems.
- Change worry into action. Focus on the next step.
- Learn to use your time wisely.
- When studying for an exam, study in short blocks, and stay focused. Take frequent, short breaks.
- Make a weekly schedule and try to follow it.
- Set realistic goals. Take one step at a time.
- Avoid unnecessary competition.
- Recognize and accept your limits. Remember that everyone is unique and different.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as breathing, meditation, yoga, imagery, etc. For example, whenever you feel tense, slowly breathe in calmness and breathe out tension for a few minutes.
- **Stop-Breathe-Reflect-Choose >>>>**

Coping with Grief and Loss

- Expressing your thoughts and feelings through writing and art as well as talking—especially if you do not know exactly what you are feeling.
- Recognizing that you may not do as well as usual in your courses and talking to your professors and Dean of Students about postponing exams and papers if necessary.
- Speaking with a mental health professional, especially if:
 - your sadness affects you so much that you begin to think about hurting yourself or others;
 - your weight has fluctuated more than 10 lbs. in a month; or,
 - you are experiencing any other symptoms that are worrisome to you.
- In general, seeking the support of others is helpful if they understand the grieving process. To express grief is not weak; to go on with your life does not mean you care about the person any less; you do not need to feel alone in your grief.

Panic Attacks

5 Steps to help you with Panic Attacks:

Here are 5 steps that have proven to be helpful to a whole bunch of people who experience panic attacks.

Step 1: R-e-l-a-x...

One step that helps lots of people get a handle on their panic attacks is to learn and practice **relaxation strategies**. Here are three different types of relaxation strategies you can try:

First, try changing your breathing patterns. Stress often causes us to breathe shallowly. Unfortunately, breathing shallowly can actually prolong stress by depleting your oxygen supply and increasing muscle tension. This can lead to headaches, nervousness and a lowered threshold to panic attacks. To overcome this, practice monitoring your breathing and noticing when it becomes shallow or rapid. When this happens, take a minute to slow down, get comfortable, and breathe deeply. Begin this process by slowly but forcefully blowing all of the air out of your lungs, deep-down into your belly. This allows you to slowly and effortlessly "refill" your lungs with fresh air. Try breathing in through your nose and focusing on filling the bottom of your lungs first before filling the top. As you breathe in, your abdomen should rise slowly; and, as you breathe out, it should fall slowly. Gradually breathe more deeply and more slowly until you reach a comfortable plateau. Sighhh

A second technique is to **scan your entire body**, tensing and relaxing all your muscles. Begin by sitting in a chair with your feet flat on the ground. Focus on your feet and notice any muscle tension in your feet or toes. Tense your feet muscles by curling your toes like you're trying to dig into the carpet. Tense the muscles for a five-count, then allow them to go limp and release all the tension. It helps to exhale deeply and think the word "relax" at the moment you release the tension. After relaxing your feet, move up to your calves, tense and release. To your thighs, tense and release, and so on. Try to move through all of the following muscle groups: your feet, calves, thighs, "glutes," abdomen, lower back, chest, upper back, neck and shoulders, and finally, facial muscles. To tense up your facial muscles, squint hard and press your lips together (think Clint Eastwood), then just let your face go slack and expressionless. When you've completely covered your entire body, your muscles should feel warm and relaxed. Ahhhhh....

Finally, try taking a "**mental vacation.**" No, not a trip to the Betty Ford clinic- just an imaginary visualization of a peaceful place. Mental imagery can be a great way of creating peaceful feelings. Start by imagining a peaceful, serene setting. Perhaps this will be some place you've gone before where you felt totally calm and relaxed. Or maybe it can be a fantasy place with all the ingredients to help you relax and unwind. Once you've imagined this fantasy place, take a "sensory inventory" by asking yourself: "What do I see that's peaceful or beautiful?" "What do I hear that's soothing?" "What do I smell that reminds me of pleasant, peaceful feelings?" "What do I feel on my skin (is it warm, cool,

breezy, still?)" and "What do I taste?" For example, someone who loves the beach might think about seeing a beautiful sunset over the water, hearing the waves gently lapping at the shore or the seagulls peacefully calling, smelling the scent of suntan oil, feeling the warmth of the sun and the gentle breeze, and tasting the salty air....Ahhhhh.... Imagining each of these sensations in detail actually helps to create the same peaceful feelings in your body that you'd experience if you were actually at the beach. Plus, no sand in your undies!

By themselves, deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and mental imagery can be very powerful. When you put them all together, you've got a combination that can melt away your physical tension and anxious thoughts and replace them with peace and relaxation.

Step 2: Change Habits

Sometimes it helps to make some changes in your daily routine, like adding exercise and reducing or eliminating stimulants like caffeine, nicotine and sugar. Exercise helps to burn off excess tension that might otherwise come out as anxiety or panic. Eliminating stimulants, like caffeine, helps prevent your cup from "running over" with anxiety.

If you tend to bottle up your feelings and worry a lot by yourself, it may be helpful to pay more attention to your emotions and become more willing to express them to others.

Step 3: Discover The Power of Positive Thinking

Another way of tackling panic attacks is to look at the way you talk to yourself, especially during times of stress and pressure. Panic attacks often begin or escalate when you tell yourself scary things, like "I feel light-headed . . . I'm about to faint!" or "I'm trapped in this traffic jam and something terrible is gonna happen!" or "If I go outside, I'll freak out." These are called "negative predictions" and they have a strong influence on the way your body feels. If you're mentally predicting a disaster, your body's alarm response goes off and the "fight-flight response" kicks in.

To combat this, try to focus on calming, positive thoughts, like "I'm learning to deal with panicky feelings and I know that people overcome panic all the time" or "This will pass quickly, and I can help myself by concentrating on my breathing and imagining a relaxing place" or "These feelings are uncomfortable, but they won't last forever."

Sometimes it's helpful to remind yourself of these FACTS about panic attacks:

- A panic attack cannot cause heart failure or a heart attack.
- A panic attack cannot cause you to stop breathing.
- A panic attack cannot cause you to faint.
- A panic attack cannot cause you to "go crazy."
- A panic attack cannot cause you to lose control of yourself.

If it is too hard for you to think calming thoughts or to concentrate on relaxation strategies when you're having a panic attack, find ways to distract yourself from the negative thoughts and feelings. Some people do this by talking to other people when they feel the panic coming on. Others prefer to exercise or work on a detailed project (such as gardening, deep cleaning your bathroom, sheep shearing, or reenacting historic naval battles with scale models constructed entirely from paper clips and Junior Mints). Changing scenery can sometimes be helpful, too, but it's important not to get into a pattern of avoiding necessary daily tasks. If you notice that you are regularly avoiding things like driving, going shopping, going to class, or taking buses, it is probably time to get some professional help.

Step 4: Getting Help

You might find that dealing with panic attacks will be easier if you have a person who can act as a coach as you learn how to cope with the attacks. Meeting with someone who has experience working with panic attacks and anxiety can help you find the right mixture of strategies that will work for you. This might be a therapist, psychiatrist or family doctor.

In addition to counseling, sometimes it can be helpful to talk to a psychiatrist or other physician about taking medication to help you cope with panic attacks. This has been a helpful tool for many people, though lots of people also recover from panic problems without medicine. Taking medicine for panic problems is usually temporary. It can provide relief of some symptoms while you focus on learning strategies for managing anxiety in the future.

Step 5: Keep the Faith!

Above all, have faith that you CAN learn how to handle panic attacks. If you practice the techniques you've learned about here, or seek out more information through counseling or the self-help resources below, the chances are EXCELLENT that you'll be able to overcome the panic problems in your life!

(Source: UT Counseling & Mental Health Center by Mark Zentner, Ph.D. and Jeff Kulley, Ph.D; Anxiety & Panic Workbooks)

VI. RESOURCES

Mental Health Resources

Most law schools are part of an undergraduate institution that has a comprehensive substance abuse and mental health policy. Those schools are also likely to have University Counseling Centers or other similar counseling options. These resources vary substantially by school. If your school does not have resources readily available in pamphlet for or on a website, many of the resources below are invaluable:

- ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP) Listserv for Law Students in Recovery (closed and anonymous), e-mail spilisd@staff.abanet.org
- ABA CoLAP Confidential Hotline for Law Students and Lawyers, 1-800-LAW-LAPS (529-5277)
- Active Minds, www.activeminds.org, a student-organized support group with chapters at law schools across the country. Contact them to see if one is open at yours.
- Alcoholics Anonymous, www.alcoholics-anonymous.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, www.afsp.org
- American Medical Association, www.ama-assn.org
- American Psychology Association, www.apa.org
- *Are You Living In Fear: Getting A Handle On Panic Attacks*, <http://www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/booklets/panic/panic.html>
- Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, www.samhsa.gov
- Cocaine Anonymous, www.ca.org 800-347-8998
- Debtors Anonymous, www.debtorsanonymous.org
- Directory of State and Local Lawyer Assistance Programs, www.abanet.org/legalservices/colap/lapdirectory.html
- Florida State University College of Law, Law Student Resources, www.law.fsu.edu/academic_programs/humanizing_lawschool/studentresources.html
- Gamblers Anonymous, www.gamblersanonymous.org
- *GPSolo* magazine “Bumps in the Road III” issue, www.abanet.org/genpractice/magazine/2006/oct-nov/index.html
- Habit Smart, www.habitsmart.com
- International Lawyers in Alcoholics Anonymous, www.ilaa.org
- Mental Health America, www.nmha.org
- NAMI, www.nami.org
- Narcotics Anonymous, www.na.org
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, www.health.org
- National Institutes for Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov
- National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, www.nostigma.org
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433), www.hopeline.com
- Sobriety and Recovery Resources, www.recoveryresources.org
- Nicotine Anonymous, www.nicotine-anonymous.org 415-750-0328

- *The Hidden Sources of Law School Stress: Avoiding the Mistakes that Make Unhappy and Unprofessional Lawyers*, Lawrence Krieger, www.law.fsu.edu/academic_programs/humanizing_lawschool/booklet.html
- Treatment Improvement Exchange, www.treatment.org
- Web of Addictions, www.well.com/user/woa/
- Women for Sobriety, www.womenforsobriety.org

Directory of Lawyer Assistance Programs

ALABAMA

<http://www.alabar.org/members/alap.cfm>

334-834-7576

jmleslie@alabar.org

ALASKA

Lawyers Assistance Committee

907-264-0401

oregand@alaskabar.org

ARIZONA

<http://www.myazbar.org/Members/map.cfm>

602-340-7313

Crisis Line 800-681-3057 24 hours

hal.nevitt@staff.azbar.org

ARKANSAS

<http://www.arlap.org/>

501-907-2529

confidential@arlap.org

CALIFORNIA

<http://calbar.ca.gov/lap>

Toll-free 877-LAP 4 HELP

Richard.Carlton@calbar.ca.gov

[The Other Bar- http://www.otherbar.org/](http://www.otherbar.org/)

415-482-9500

800-222-0767

resner2100@comcast.net

COLORADO

<http://www.clhp.org/>

800-432-0977 or

303-832-2233

confidential@clhp.org

<http://www.minesandassociates.com/>

A voluntary & confidential program sponsored by the Colorado Supreme Court, available
24/7/365
800-873-7138 or
303-832-1068

CONNECTICUT

<http://www.lclct.org/>

860-563-4900

info@lclct.org

DELAWARE

www.DE-LAP.org

Carol P. Waldhauser, Executive Director
301 N. Market Street
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: 302-777-0124 or 1-877-24DELAP
Fax: 302-658-5212
cwaldhauser@de-lap.org

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

[Lawyer Assistance Program](#)

Director, Denise Perme: DPerme@dcbar.org
202-347-3131 9:00 - 5:00 and answering machine
http://www.dcbar.org/for_lawyers/bar_services/counseling/index.cfm

FLORIDA

<http://www.flap-lap.org/>

800-282-8981 (National) 24 hours
mail@fla-lap.org

GEORGIA

Drug & Alcohol Resource Center
800-327-9631
dwfjr@theresourcecenter.org

HAWAII

<http://www.hawaiiap.com/>

Steve Dixon, JD, Executive Director
801 Alakea St., Ste. 209
Honolulu, Hi. 96813
(808) 531-2880
sdixon@interpac.net

Attorney & Judges Assistance Program
808-531-2880 24 hours
goddess1@lavanet.com

IDAHO

<http://www2.state.id.us/isb/gen/lap.htm>
208-334-4500
LAP@southworthassociates.net

ILLINOIS

<http://www.illinoislap.org/index.html>
Chicago Office: 312-726-6607 or 800-LAP-1233
Downstate Office: 618-462-4397 or 800-LAP-1233
Chicago E-mail: jpvoss@illinoislap.org
Downstate E-mail: jbartylak@illinoislap.org

INDIANA

<http://www.in.gov/judiciary/ijlap/>
866-428-5527 (JLAP) or 317-833-0370
tharrell@courts.state.in.us

IOWA

Lawyers Helping Lawyers
800-243-1533
hughgrady@mac.com

KANSAS

Impaired Lawyers Assistance Committee
888-342-9080
help@kalap.com

KENTUCKY

<http://www.kybar.org/persprof.htm>
502-545-1801 Cell (Confidential)
502-607-0424 Home
502-564-3225 Fax
502-564-3795, ext. 265 KBA
hebert@kybar.org

LOUISIANA

Alcohol & Drug Abuse Committee
866-354-9334 24 hours
louisianalap@worldnet.att.net

MAINE

Maine Assistance Program for Lawyers

1-800-530-4627
maineasstprog@verizon.net

MARYLAND

http://www.msba.org/sec_comm/committees/lawyerassist/index.htm
410-685-7878 Ext. 3040 & 3041 - 24 hours
800-492-1964
rvincent@msba.org or cwaldhauser@msba.org

MASSACHUSETTS

<http://www.lclma.org/>
617-482-9600 or 800-525-0210
email@lclma.org

MICHIGAN

<http://www.michbar.org/generalinfo/ljap/>
517-346-6306
800-996-5522
mburkett@mail.michbar.org

MINNESOTA

<http://mnlcl.org/>
651-646-5590
help@mnlcl.org

MISSISSIPPI

http://www.msbar.org/lawyers_assist.php
800-593-9777
24 hour confidential hotline
bdaugherty@msbar.org

MISSOURI

<http://mobar.org/law/achabu.shtml>
800-688-7859 24 hours & answering service
573-638-2262
jbrady@mobar.org

MONTANA

Lawyers Helping Lawyers
Carol Frazer - Coordinator
535 Saddle Drive
Helena, MT 59601
Phone: 888-385-9119 or 406-439-0055
Fax: 406/449-8828

NEBRASKA

<http://www.nebar.com/memberinfo/services/nlap.htm>

402-475-6527

rallan@nebar.com

NEVADA

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers

702-455-4827

GRAHAMR@co.clark.nv.us

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program

Hotline 877-224-6060 (24/7)

cecieh@lapnh.org

NEW JERSEY

<http://www.njlap.com/>

800-246-5527 24 hours

njlap@aol.com

<http://www.lawyersassistance.org/>

NEW MEXICO

Lawyers' Assistance Program

505-242-6845

505-228-1948 local helpline (24-hr)

800-860-4914 statewide helpline (24-hr)

jyeag@unm.edu

NEW YORK

[http://www.nysba.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Attorney_Resources/Lawyer_Assistance_Program_\(LAP\)/Lawyer_Assistance_Program_\(LAP\).htm](http://www.nysba.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Attorney_Resources/Lawyer_Assistance_Program_(LAP)/Lawyer_Assistance_Program_(LAP).htm)

800-255-0569 24 hours (Nationwide)

lap@nysba.org

http://www.nassaubar.org/lawyers_assistance_program.cfm

516-747-4070

888-408-6222

peter@nassaubar.org

LAP related resource in New York

[New York Lawyer Assistance Trust](#)

518-285-4545

NEW YORK CITY

New York City Lawyer Assistance Program

Enter <http://www.abcny.org/>, click onto the LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM box

to enter NYC LAP.
212-302-5787 24 Hours
etravis@abcny.org

NORTH CAROLINA

<http://www.ncbar.org/public/barCARES/index.aspx>
1-800-640-0735
hrech@aol.com or
cclcooper@cs.com

<http://www.nclap.org/>
800-720-7257
nclap@bellsouth.net

NORTH DAKOTA

State Bar of North Dakota
701-255-1404

OHIO

<http://www.ohiolap.org/>
800-348-4343 24 hours
smote@ohiolap.org

OKLAHOMA

Lawyers Helping Lawyers
800-364-7886
mirandolaw@dellnet.com

OREGON

<http://www.aaap.org/>
503-226-1057
ShariG@aaap.org

PENNSYLVANIA

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers Helpline
888-999-1941
Office Number 800-335-2572
ken@lclpa.org

RHODE ISLAND

Confidential Assistance Program
401-421-5740
hmcdonald@ribar.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

Lawyers Helping Lawyers
866-545-9590
robert.turnbull@scbar.org

SOUTH DAKOTA

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers
605-624-4449
mccahren@iw.net

TENNESSEE

<http://www.tlap.org/>
877-424-8527
tnlap@aol.com

TEXAS

<http://www.texasbar.com/members/buildpractice/tlap/tlap.asp>
800-343-8527
Voice Mail 512-463-1453
afoster@texasbar.com

UTAH

<http://www.lawyershelpinglawyers.org/pages/350744/index.htm>
Local Phone: 801-579-0404
Toll Free: 800-530-3743
sjohnson@lawyershelpinglawyers.org

VERMONT

<http://www.vtbar.org/mbrben.htm#lawyerassistance>
802-773-9109 ext. 21
barclayone@aol.com

VIRGINIA

<http://www.valhl.org/>
877-LHL-INVA
(877-545-4682) Confidential Voice Mail 804-644-3212
info@valhl.org

WASHINGTON

<http://www.wsba.org/lasd/lasd-lap.html>
206-727-8265
barbarah@wsba.org

WEST VIRGINIA

Lawyer Committee on Assistance and Intervention

304-233-1974
tindert@wvbar.org

WISCONSIN

<http://www.wisbar.org/bar/wislap.html>
800-543-2625 (24/7 helpline)
chayne@wisbar.org

WYOMING

Lawyers Assistance Committee
307-778-7663

PUERTO RICO

Committee for Lawyer Affairs
809-751-2705

VIRGIN ISLANDS

Lawyer Assistance Committee
340-773-4150
lmingus@viaccess.net

ENGLAND/WALES/SCOTLAND

<http://www.lawcare.org.uk/>
011-44-1273 461861
hilary@lawcare.org.uk

CANADA

<http://www.lpac.ca/>
800-667-5722

VII. SELECTED ARTICLES

"I wish I would have called you before"

Depression and suicide: Make sure you don't utter those words

By Don P. Jones & Michael J. Crowley

Ray was a successful prosecutor in the district attorney's office in a large Texas city. He had done well in law school, was one of the star prosecutors in his office, had a family and, by all outward accounts, could look forward to a long and good life.

However, Ray's inward life told a different story. To Ray, no matter how well he performed, it never seemed to be good enough. All of his life he had wrestled with depression, and this problem had led to alcohol and prescription drug abuse. Although he hid it well, his family life was coming apart at the seams. But Ray was raised to believe that personal problems should stay personal. He didn't believe in talking about his problems. He felt he could handle them himself.

Regrettably, I never met Ray. I only learned of his struggles from a colleague and friend of his who called me the day after Ray had shot and killed himself. Ray had very briefly confided to his friend over drinks the week before that was unhappy with his life. As he recalled the meeting, the colleague felt tremendous guilt and remorse for not having seen Ray's suicide coming.

Unfortunately, at the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program we get about five or six of these dreaded calls each year--calls that always seem to begin with, "I wish I would have called you before"

What do we know?

From reports of other Lawyers' Assistance Programs across the country, we have discovered that suicide among lawyers is all too common. Male lawyers in the United States are two times more likely to commit suicide than men in the general population, according to a 1992 study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. While we are aware of no other studies about the incidence of suicide among lawyers, here's what we do know:

- According to the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH), suicide was the ninth leading cause of death in the United States in 1993 (at more than 30,000 suicides per year), falling behind HIV, but ahead of homicide.
- On the average day, 84 people commit suicide and another 1,900 people attempt it (NIMH).
- 15 percent of people with clinical depression commit suicide (NIMH).
- Research conducted at Campbell University in North Carolina indicated that 11 percent of the lawyers in that state thought of taking their own life at least once a month.

- According to a 1991 Johns Hopkins University study of depression in 105 professions, lawyers ranked No. 1 in the incidence of depression;³
- Women attempt suicide at least two times more than men, but men are "successful" four times more than women.
- Substance abusers are 10 times more likely to commit suicide than the general population.

Suicide among lawyers is not a topic most of us care to read or talk about. But we all know it should not be ignored. But I thought

Most of us have certain ideas about suicide and its victims. Some of these ideas are accurate, and some are not. The following are some of the more common misconceptions about suicide:

False: People who talk about suicide are just seeking attention and won't really try to kill themselves.

True: Studies show that 75 percent of those who commit suicide talk about it or display other warning signs before attempting it.

False: Suicidal people are intent upon dying.

True: The majority of suicidal people are not intent upon dying. Often, they simply see no other viable option. The warning signs they give are desperate calls for help before they take this final option.

False: Talking about suicide and a person's suicidal feelings will only encourage that person to commit suicide.

True: Talking about suicide may be the only thing that can save the person's life. It can give them a sense of connection and hope. It shows the person that someone cares and finds them important enough to listen to and help.

How can I tell if someone is suicidal?

Obviously, any list of warning signs for any problem is probably going to be both incomplete and over inclusive. Someone might display none or very few of these signs and still be at risk for committing suicide. Someone else might exhibit warning signs that are not on this list. Still others might display some of these signs and have no suicidal intent whatsoever. Nevertheless, here is a list of risk factors and warning signs you should know about:

High Risk Conditions

- Recent loss (death of a friend or family member; divorce or separation from spouse; broken relationship; loss of job, retirement; loss of money, home, status, security; health problems).
- History of suicide in the family.
- Substance abuse.

- Depression, or bi-polar disorder, which is a form of depression that produces pronounced mood swings of varying durations that range from a high "manic" state to low a "depressive" state.
- Prior suicide attempt(s).

Suicide Warning Signs

- Expressions of hopelessness, powerlessness, worthlessness, shame, guilt, self-hatred, inadequacy.
- Declining performance and interest in work.
- Change in sleeping and eating habits (either direction).
- Loss of interest and participation in social activities, hobbies, relationships. Isolation.
- Explicit statements of thoughts or feelings about suicide.
- Self-destructive, reckless behavior (reckless driving, self-inflicted injuries).
- Inappropriately saying goodbyes (especially to people not seen in a while).
- Suddenly "putting all affairs in order" (making a will, giving away cherished possessions).
- Hints about suicide. ("You won't have to worry about me anymore," or "It just doesn't seem worth it anymore.")
- Acquiring the means to commit suicide (buying a gun, stockpiling prescription drugs). Working out a plan (where, when, how).

Why do lawyers have a higher incidence of suicide?

Just like the questions about why lawyers have a higher incidence of depression and substance abuse than the general population, this question is not easy to answer. About the best we can do is speculate. Based on our experience in working with lawyers in trouble, here's what we do know:

- One in four lawyers suffer from elevated feelings of psychological distress, including feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, anxiety, social alienation, isolation and depression.⁴
- Out of 105 professions studied by Johns Hopkins University, lawyers top the list in the incidence of major depression, and depression is involved in more than half of all attempted suicides.
- Research suggests that those who suffer from intense perfectionism are at higher risk for suicide. They are driven by an intense need to avoid failure. To these people, nothing seems quite good enough, and they are unable to derive satisfaction from what ordinarily might be considered even superior performance.⁵ Sound like any lawyers you know?
- Estimates from around the country indicate that the incidence of substance abuse among lawyers is as much as double the national average. Substance abusers are 10 times more likely to commit suicide.

Add to this list the fact that many lawyers start out as relatively idealistic professionals who want to help others, but as their careers advance, they may begin to feel alienated from these original principles and desires. They are highly concerned about their clients, but often have little sense of ultimate control or influence. Consequently, they may become overwhelmed by their profession and their workload.

Unquestionably, the legal profession is stressful. Once these conditions begin to take a toll on their lives, lawyers are notoriously reluctant to seek help for personal issues. You would be hard-pressed to find a set of conditions more conducive to depression and suicide. (See "Is law hazardous to your health? The depressing nature of the law," page)

What can I do to help someone who may be suicidal?

The first thing to realize is that every threat of suicide is a call for help. So, anytime anyone discloses suicidal ideations or feelings, take it seriously. It is much better to be somewhat embarrassed because you were wrong than to be remorseful that you failed to help. Once you've taken it seriously and extended your hand, here are some helpful suggestions:

- Listen, listen, listen. So often, suicidal people feel isolated, disconnected and unimportant. It is crucial to be as nonjudgmental and empathetic as you can.
- If you don't already know, go ahead and ask them if they are feeling suicidal.
- Asking that question will not make it worse; it will give them permission to talk to you about it.
- If they are feeling suicidal, ask them if they have a plan. Find out if they have the means to attempt suicide and whether they have thought about when they will make the attempt.
- If they don't have a plan, there may not be an immediate crisis, but the person nevertheless has a serious problem that requires professional assistance.
- Encourage them to seek professional help, and even offer to help them make that first call.
- If they do have a plan but are not threatening immediate action, get them to commit to you not to take any suicidal action until they see you again. Again, encourage them to seek professional help and even offer to help them make that first call.
- If they have a plan and are threatening immediate action, do not leave them alone.
- Take whatever action is necessary to get them into professional hands. If you have to, take them to the emergency room of the closest hospital.

If confronted with a suicidal person, do not do the following:

- Don't argue with them about the "right or wrong" of suicide.
- Avoid platitudes like ". . . but you have so much to live for . . ." or ". . . it will all be better in the morning . . ."
- Avoid discounting their problems with statements like ". . . oh, that doesn't seem so bad. . . ."
- Don't be sworn to secrecy--at least when it comes to calling in professional help.

More importantly, however, find out if your state has a Lawyers' Assistance Program and write down the number. These programs can help you or any colleague you know who may be suicidal. If you don't know whether your state has a program, call the American Bar Association's Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs. (See "ABA CoLAP is a key resource for bars," page 25.)

Whatever you do, it is important to do something. Don't just look the other way hoping someone else will help. Don't hesitate to offer assistance because you might be mistaken. Don't fall into the trap of believing it will pass if you just don't talk about it. Finally, don't be one of those callers we dread so much; the ones who start with, "I wish I would have called you before"

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Michael J. Crowley is a partner in the Austin, Texas, law firm of Maroney, Crowley, Bankston, Richardson and Hull, a civil litigation firm. A graduate of the Texas Tech University School of Law, he has been active in the State Bar of Texas and served as the chair of the Board of Directors. Crowley is currently chair of the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs, and is a frequent author and lecturer in this area.

1. The name and some of the other minor facts have been changed.
2. Sells, Benjamin, "Facing the Facts About Depression in the Profession," Florida Bar News, March 1995.
3. Hermann, Andrew, "Depressing News for Lawyers" (Chicago Sun-Times, Sept., 13, 1991)
4. Sells (see footnote 2.)
5. Blatt, Sidney J., Ph.D. "The Destructiveness of Perfectionism: Implications for the Treatment of Depression," American Psychologist, Vol. 49, No. 12, pp.1003-1020 (1997).

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**The devastation of depression:
Lawyers are at greater risk--It's an impairment to take seriously
By Michael J. Sweeney**

In 1995, a Portland lawyer wrote a suicide note to his family and then drove to his favorite fishing spot in central Oregon. While sitting in his vehicle, he shot himself. A year later, another lawyer practicing in the Willamette Valley of Oregon left a suicide note to the members of his law firm, and then walked to a park near his office and shot himself. Both lawyers were experiencing depression. With it came the distorted thinking that a permanent solution to a temporary problem was the answer.

I am shocked and saddened to lose a fellow lawyer due to suicide caused by depression. Lawyers suffer a high rate of depression. That is why it is important for lawyers and other bar leaders to understand the scope, nature and extent of this disorder. How extensive is the problem?

In 1991, Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore interviewed 12,000 workers about depression. Lawyers ranked No. 1 on the list of occupations that were most depressed.

While 3 percent to 9 percent of the population at any given time may experience depression, a quality-of-life survey conducted by the North Carolina Bar Association in 1991 reported that almost 26 percent of the bar's members exhibited symptoms of clinical depression. Almost 12 percent of them said they contemplated suicide at least once each month.

It is difficult to measure the economic and social consequences of lawyer depression (such as malpractice or neglect of cases), but it is estimated that depression in the United States population totals about \$44 billion in both direct cost (i.e., patient care and medication) and indirect cost (e.g., absenteeism and lost productivity), according to the National Institute on Mental Health.

Symptoms of depression

If a lawyer has a "blue" mood that lasts for more than two weeks and experiences any of the following symptoms, it is likely that person is having an episode of depression. The symptoms include:

- A change in appetite (eating too much or too little).
- Problems with sleep (either insomnia or sleeping longer than usual).
- A loss of interest or pleasures. (It may take a form of withdrawing from family or neglecting formerly enjoyed hobbies.)
- The inability to sit still, pacing or hand-wringing ("agitation"). Or slowed speech, increased pauses before answering a question, monotonous speech, slow body movements or an overall decrease in energy level ("retardation").
- A sense of worthlessness or feelings of inadequacy, and other forms of negative thinking, including inappropriate guilt.

- Recurring thoughts of death and/or suicide.
- Difficulty concentrating, slow thinking, indecisiveness (the smallest task may seem difficult or impossible to accomplish).
- Memory difficulty and easy distraction.
- Fatigue.

Episodes of clinical depression may last from six months to two years if left untreated. Most health care professionals believe that stress and genetics play an important role in the onset of depression even though they have been unable to pinpoint the cause of it.

Professional influences

Let's look at the law-related stressors. A few years ago, Standish McCleary, a lawyer-turned psychologist (with a Ph.D.), and I presented a program on stress management and burnout, and identified some of the reasons why lawyers are above the norm for depression. The stressors identified are:

- Time constraints and deadlines..
- The high stakes involved, including a loss of property, freedom and even life.
- The high expectations of expertise.
- The constant scrutiny and critical judgment of our work from opposing counsel or the courts.
- The legal process in general, which is inherently conflict-driven. An opposing counsel is always determined to prove us wrong.
- The threat of malpractice, Murphy's Law, and CYB (cover your backside) from other lawyers and even our own clients.
- A tendency to assume the clients' burdens.
- The demise of professional cordiality and camaraderie.
- The contrast between effective advocacy and personal relationships. While lawyers are trained to be aggressive, judgmental, intellectual, emotionally defended or withdrawn, and while that style may have practical value, it may not be popular outside the arena of the legal case.
- The professional training that requires us to notice and anticipate the negative and the downside in all situations.
- The group norms or culture in the law firm, which carries certain expectations, including high billable hours. On top of work obligations come CLE requirements, bar activities and community service work--all expected from the "good" lawyers.
- The depletion of energy that comes from high demands, strong focus and the need to stay on task.
- Frequent use of defense mechanisms--such as rigidity, compulsiveness, and perfectionism. (See "The depressing nature of the law: Is law hazardous to your health?", page 14.)

Burnout

Continued high levels of stress over a long period of time, without adequate coping

strategies, can lead to burnout. Burnout is nothing more than a form of depression. It has been defined as a type of depression characterized by apathy, negative feelings about the job, declining productivity, increased illness, and difficulty in personal relationships. Sometimes it includes an increase in substance abuse.

Everyone occasionally feels frustrated, depressed and dissatisfied. But when someone experiences depression or burnout, these negative emotions become chronic and last for weeks or months. There is only so much psychological energy to get us through the day, and our work may completely deplete us of this energy. When this happens, our work performance is further reduced in terms of quality and quantity. The lack of emotional energy makes it harder to deal with our personal relationships and we may become frustrated and easily angered with family and friends. Lawyers experiencing burnout may find themselves wondering "why bother?" about work that previously invigorated them. Even the word, burnout, implies that at one time they were on fire, but the flame has now flickered.

Burnout has been called a "romantic disorder" because it is characteristic of a work ethic admired in our culture. Long hours and a selfless dedication to work--to the exclusion of self-care--can lead to burnout. In the North Carolina bar survey, it is noteworthy that 36 percent of lawyers surveyed in North Carolina had not taken even a one-week vacation in the year prior to the survey. Learning how to manage stress and take care of ourselves is critical to preventing burnout. This, in turn, can help minimize the effects of depression.

Alcohol abuse

There is a definite relationship between alcohol and depression. Alcohol is a drug that operates as a central nervous system depressant, and approximately 30 percent of all depression cases are alcohol induced. When the lawyer stops drinking and remains sober for an extended period, depression disappears. When depression is the presenting problem, it is important that a trained professional evaluate the lawyer for alcohol or chemical dependency.

Studies in both Washington and Arizona show that lawyers suffer from a higher rate of alcoholism than the general population. While approximately 10 percent of the population suffers from alcoholism, the number jumps to almost 20 percent in the legal profession, or one in five lawyers. This higher rate of alcoholism in lawyers also explains the higher rate of clinical depression.

What can bar leaders do?

While it may seem daunting and even depressing to hear the statistics regarding addictions and mental health illnesses in our profession, the problem does not go away by ignoring it. In the last decade many state and local bar associations have created Lawyer Assistance Programs (LAPs) to assist lawyers suffering from impairments. Most programs initially dealt with alcoholism and drug addiction, but as programs develop and budgets increase, some LAPs have expanded to address other impairments such as gambling, career issues and burnout, as well as depression. Budget and staffing limitations prevent other LAPs from doing the same. Having a director and/or a well-

trained staff to make a correct assessment and referral to appropriate medical professionals is important.

LAPs market their services to lawyers and educate the legal community about addiction. Once a person knows enough about the disease or illness to recognize symptoms, the person can call the LAP for further assistance or information. LAPs exist because of support of bar leaders, Supreme Courts, and the general bar membership. This is a testimonial to LAPs and their effectiveness.

A few years ago I was contacted about a young lawyer who suffered from depression. I was able to match the lawyer with a peer volunteer who had spent years battling depression and had successfully overcome the illness. One day the depressed lawyer took an overdose of pills. Shortly after, he called the peer lawyer. The depressed lawyer was taken to the emergency room and his life was saved.

While the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program has helped thousands of lawyers through the years, I often think of this one lawyer because I believe he is alive today because bar leaders in Oregon had the foresight to create and support a LAP. The author is a program attorney with the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program in Portland. He provides confidential assistance to lawyers on problems including depression, relationships, stress, burnout and career issues. He developed a specific program tailored for solo and small-firm practitioners, which has more than 600 members and holds monthly meetings in six cities throughout Oregon.

Sweeney is a Certified Employee Assistance Professional, chair of the Governor's Council on Alcohol and Drug Programs and co-founder of the Oregon Partnership, a non-profit prevention, education and treatment referral service for alcoholism and drug abuse. He is also the past president of the Oregon Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addictions; past president of the Columbia River chapter of EAPA; and past member of the Oregon State Bar Committee on Combining Family and Career. He has written and lectured on impairment issues to national, state and local bar associations.

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