Tips for Building and Maintaining Resiliency in the Practice of Law

Presented by
TLAP Director
Erica Grigg, JD, LPC-A, LCDC

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Major Problems for Attorneys:

- Stress / Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout / Secondary Trauma
- Alcohol / Substance Abuse
- Cognitive Impairment
- Suicide
- Gambling and other process addictions
How Graduate Students Rank for Anxiety

• Law Students: 96%
• Medical Students: 70%
• Graduate Students: 43%
# Survey of Law Student Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Comparison</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needed help for emotional or mental health problems</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trauma</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Not asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binge Drinking</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</table>
2015 ABA Study of Almost 13,000 Attorneys: Attorney Mental Health Issues

- 46% Have Been Depressed
- 28% Suffer from Depression
- 19% Suffer from Anxiety Disorder
- 10% Considered Suicide
Evidenced-Based Strategies to Improve Lawyer Well-being
1: Sleep
Why Sleep?

Cytokines- a type of protein that targets infection and inflammation, effectively creating an immune response- not released until you have been asleep for hours.

Chronic sleep loss even make vaccines less effective by reducing your body’s ability to respond.
Consistency Matters

People with a regular weekday sleep schedules are about 1.5 times more likely to report feeling well-rested.

52 to 56% of Americans reporting regular sleep schedules wake up feeling well-rested on weekdays. In comparison, only 34 to 38% of those with the most varied sleep times report the same.
• Give your body time to wind down before bed.

• Shift into sleep mode with a calming activity:
  • Knit
  • Listen to soothing music
  • Take a bath

• Turn off tech devices—the blue light that they emit can make it harder to fall asleep.
Stick to your Wakeup Time

• Don’t Press SNOOZE
  
  • Extra minutes in bed aren’t restorative.
  
  • Waking up when your alarm typically goes off helps get you back into a routine.
2: Limit Media Intake
Suggested Limitations

- Unfollow friends on Facebook that are hateful, hurtful, or distressing.
- Stop checking what is trending in the news: it’s mostly bad.
- Do follow uplifting people and resources, we are what we read.
3. Learn to Relax
Autonomic Nervous System

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

Parasympathetic System
- Heartbeat slows
- Blood pressure reduces
- Respiration slows
- Your body experiences visceral responses typical of periods of rest and relaxation
- **Rest and digest**
Ways to Activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Running/Hiking/Walking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Yoga
- Playing a Musical Instrument
- Painting / Creating Art
- Gardening / Working with Hands
- Cooking
BREATHE
4. Try to Help Others
Helping Others

Reminds us that we are lucky

Makes us feel connected

Helps us feel needed and effective

Takes our minds off our own worries

Adds a sense of purpose to our lives

Relieves Anxiety and Depression

2016 study by Psychosomatic Medicine: Journal of Behavioral Medicine - those who habitually help others:

- Have increased feelings of reward in brain imaging tests
- Have improved self esteem
- Experience less stress, cope better with stress
5. Do the Next Right Thing
Chunking

- Focus on “the next 30 seconds”
- Mentally manageable=
  - Stay present
  - Stay focused
  - Stay motivated
Language is Important

• How we talk to ourselves and others matters:

  • Intense vs Uncomfortable
  • Impossible vs Challenging
  • Try not to word-polarize
Avoid Anxiety Producing Activities

1. Wait to call mom, law partner, whomever until morning.
2. Stop checking Email right before family dinner.
3. Restrict news intake.
6. Get Outside
Take a Break

- Move your body
- Schedule time to unwind
- Place your worries on a cloud
- Leave electronic devices behind
- Activate your senses
7. Connect
• It releases endorphins
• Needed feedback- You’re OK
• Mother/infant study

Debrief

- “Sharing, with someone else, about what has happened, or going over an experience or set of actions, to achieve some sort of order or meaning concerning them”
Perils of Isolation

- Start to lose your social skills
- Start to overshare
- Become less collaborative
- Leads to depression

8. Define Spaces
Designate Use of Space

- Set up “office space” outside sacred spaces
- Charge devices outside of sacred spaces
- Make “office space” portable
9. Practice Gratitude
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping a gratitude journal caused participants to report:</td>
<td>Counseling Blessings Versus Burdens</td>
<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>16% fewer physical symptoms,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10% less physical pain,</td>
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<td>19% more time spent exercising,</td>
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<td>8% more sleep, and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25% increased sleep quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>A gratitude visit <strong>reduced depressive symptoms by 35% for several weeks</strong>, a gratitude journal <strong>lowered depressive symptoms by 30%+ for as long as the practice was continued.</strong></td>
<td>Positive Psychology Progress</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude correlated with <strong>improved sleep quality</strong> ( r = .29 ), less time required to fall asleep ( r = .20 ), and <strong>increased sleep duration</strong> ( r = .14 ).</td>
<td>Gratitude Influences Sleep Through the Mechanism of Pre-Sleep Cognitions</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>VALUES</td>
<td>IMPORTANCE (1 LOWEST – 10 HIGHEST)</td>
<td>CONSISTENCY/TIME SPENT ON VALUE (1 LOWEST – 10 HIGHEST)</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Family</td>
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<td>2. Intimate Relationships/Marriage</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3. Parenting/Caretaking</td>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>5. Work</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>5.</td>
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<td>7. Recreation/Fun</td>
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<td>7.</td>
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<td>11. Environmental Concerns</td>
<td>11.</td>
<td>11.</td>
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10. Use Online Resources for Well-Being

TLAPHELPS.ORG
TLAP Provides:

- Confidential support
- Referrals to licensed professionals
- In the moment counseling
- Local group support and resources
- Sheeran Crowley Trust
- One-to-one local peer support
- Self-care information
- CLE / Education on Wellness
- Service opportunities
Connecting Lawyers and Law Students to Funds for Needed Care

• **Sheeran-Crowley Memorial Trust**

  • Up to $3,000 for outpatient counseling and medication;
  • Up to $4,000 for intensive outpatient treatment and medication; and
  • Up to $10,000 for inpatient treatment.