

Wellness and Well-Being: Ethics and Professionalism Implications

Andrew J. Demetriou
Lamb & Kawakami, LLP
Berkeley Research Group, LLC
Los Angeles, California

Recognition of Mental Health Issues in the Profession

“To be a good lawyer, one has to be a healthy lawyer.”

“The research suggests that that current state of lawyers’ health cannot support a profession dedicated to client service and dependent on the public trust.”

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Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- The practice of law is highly stressful, characterized by long hours, resolution of complex and sometimes emotionally charged issues and tight time frames.
- The successful practice of law involves anticipation of potential problems and this sort of pessimistic thinking is highly correlated with depression.
- Behavioral health problems are also present among law students, in some instances at higher rates than practicing lawyers.

Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- The Krill, Johnson and Albert Study (2016)
 - 12,825 practicing lawyers surveyed
 - Behavioral health problems detected at significantly higher rates than other highly educated participants in the workforce.
 - Key markers—depression (28%), anxiety (19%), stress (23%) and problematic drinking (20.6%).
 - Unable to draw conclusions about prevalence of substance abuse (other than alcohol) as 75% of respondents refused to answer survey questions.

Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- **The Organ, Jaffe and Bender Study (2016)**
 - 3,300 law students surveyed
 - High rates of drunkenness (53% within the past 30 days), frequent instances of binge drinking (22% reporting twice or more in the prior 14 days), illicit drug use (25% within the past 12 months) and abuse of prescription medications (e.g., Adderall).
 - High rates of anxiety (37%), depression (17%) and suicidal thoughts (6%).
 - Low rates of law students recognizing a need for help actually seeking it, with the rate among males significantly lower than females.

Aspects of Mental Health Challenges for Lawyers

- **Imposter syndrome—maladaptive perfectionism.**
- **Loneliness and isolation, correlated with depression and stress.**
 - Harvard Business Review—law practice is the loneliest profession.
- **Cognitive impairment due to aging.**
- **Suicide and suicidal tendencies.**
 - 11.5% report suicidal thoughts at some point in their careers and 2.9% report self-injurious behaviors.
 - The case of Gabriel McConail.

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