Compassion Fatigue: Sustaining the Professional Self

Illinois Lawyers' Assistance Program
www.illinoisLAP.org
312-726-6607

How Clients Got to LAP FY 2019

Age Range of LAP Clients 2019
2019: Primary Problems Identified

- Substance Use: 33%
- Mental Health: 55%
- Other: 12%

2016 National Study of 12,825 Licensed Employed Lawyers
Funded by ABA, Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation

- Alcohol: 23%
- Depression: 19%
- Anxiety: 28%
- Chronic stress: 10%

Reported Treatment Rates from Study

- % Received Mental Health services, treatment or help: 63% Yes, 37% No
- % Received AODA services, treatment or help: 93% Yes, 7% No
What is Compassion Fatigue?

When the cumulative physical, emotional, and psychological effects of being continually exposed to the pain and desperation of others begins to affect one's own personal life.

Why is the Legal Community vulnerable?

- Degree of risk is not realized
- Lack of training
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of coping mechanisms

Learned Helplessness in Lawyers?

By Sanford Portnoy
Resilient Lawyers

- Need a supportive work environment including the people you work with, good management, good administrators, and a good boss who conveys common and achievable goals for the group.
- Negative colleagues and incompetent management/bosses cause negativity to spread amongst the ranks leading to higher levels of dissatisfaction, attrition and malaise.

Prevention and mitigation go beyond the individual...

Work environment matters
Professional Liability Risk Factors

- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Professional Uncertainty
- Vicarious Trauma
- Ambiguous Endings to Cases
Seven areas of Burnout Creation/Prevention

Burnout Creation
- Work Overload
- Lack of control
- Insufficient Reward
- Breakdown of Community
- Unfairness
- Values conflict
- Lack of fit between the person and the job

Burnout Prevention
- Sustainable work
- Feelings of choice and control
- Recognition and Reward
- A sense of community
- Fairness, respect, and justice
- Meaningful, valued work
- Goodness of fit

Sustaining the Professional Self

Creating a greenhouse effect

- Increasing professional success
- Meaningful work
- Thinking long-term
- Professional Self understanding
- Professional support and mentoring
- Creating individual development templates
- Increasing experience of professional success
- Relishing small victories
Sustain or Deplete Behaviors

Sustaining behaviors
- Feel successful with clients
- Meaningful human interactions and contact
- Good professional boundaries
- Peer support
- Supervisor support
- Low organizational conflict
- Sense of humor/fun
- Focus on long term professional development
- Sufficient salary and benefits or educational credits when limited

Depleting behaviors
- Feeling unsuccessful with clients
- Too little self care encouraged
- Low peer support
- Low supervisor support
- High organizational conflict
- Excessive seriousness
- No long term professional development plans
- Insufficient salary and benefits
- Idealism versus realism

Four Dimensions of Health

- Physical Health
- Emotional & Social Health
- Intellectual Health
- Spiritual Health

Practitioner Resiliency
Coping Strategies

- Mindful meditation—improves concentration, increases energy levels, reduces stress response
- Work-life balance—Prioritizing family, friends, emotional connections away from work so that you are not focused only on your clients’ needs
- Developing a relationship with a trusted colleague—to serve as a resource and person to whom you can turn for advice and support
- Pro bono work—provides you with a sense of purpose, value, pride and self-worth

Seeking Help when all else fails...

- If your personal life and/or professional life is being negatively impacted by your work, it may be time to seek professional help
- Utilize LAP, your EAP, or seek out a mental health professional who can assist you in increasing your mental health well being

Why LAP

- Free
- Confidential
- Familiar with legal environments
- Services tailored to judges, lawyers and law students (i.e. support groups)
- Peer Support
- Referrals for ARDC & Character and Fitness issues
Talking to someone about LAP

- Call or email LAP. We will coach you on what to say to your colleague
- Show them the LAP website/social media
- Highlight LAP’s guaranteed confidentiality
- Say:
  - “Calling LAP is easy, free and totally confidential. No one has to know.”
  - “Let’s call LAP together right now.” (and dial the phone)
  - “Do you want me to call LAP for you?”

What happens next

- If the person is willing to come in or be contacted an assessment will be done and a treatment/action plan created
- If the person is not willing, then LAP will:
  - Reach out to the person and invite them to come in.
  - Contact trained LAP Volunteers (bound by confidentiality) who may already have a relationship with the person to see if they can help connect the person with LAP.
  - Intervention

ILLINOIS LAWYERS’ ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
Always Free + Confidential

WE CAN HELP WITH
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Grief
- Depression
- Career Transitions
- Addiction
- Substance Abuse
- Much More

Services tailored to the legal profession:
- Short-term counseling
- Support Groups
- Referrals
- Interventions
- Help with ARDC Concerns

CONTACT US:
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