



# Overcoming Stress, Burnout, Anxiety, and Depression in the Legal Profession: How a Lawyer Life Coach Can Help

**By Daniel T. Lukasik, Esq.**

---

[YourDepressionCoach.com](http://YourDepressionCoach.com)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1   OPENING STATEMENT .....	3
2   LAWYER STRESS .....	6
3   LAW SCHOOL STRESS .....	10
4   BURNOUT .....	12
5   LAWYER ANXIETY .....	15
6   LAW SCHOOL ANXIETY .....	20
7   LAWYER DEPRESSION .....	21
8   LAW SCHOOL DEPRESSION.....	27
9   WHY COACHING? .....	29
10   CLOSING ARGUMENT .....	30
11   DAN'S RECOMMENDED BOOKS & ONLINE RESOURCES .....	33
ABOUT DAN .....	41

Copyright © 2017 by Daniel T. Lukasik  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a  
retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any process—electronic, mechanical,  
photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission.  
For permission information contact DANIELTLUKASIK@GMAIL.COM.

## 1 | OPENING STATEMENT

Are you a chronically stressed or ~~burnt out~~ lawyer or law student?

Or have things become a ~~bit~~ more serious because you've been diagnosed with clinical anxiety and/or depression?



Maybe you've thought about going to a therapist or psychiatrist. But ~~don't~~ because you feel the problems you're experiencing will just go away or the stigma associated with mental health problems?


Or, you're getting treatment but need more support to recover and stay well?

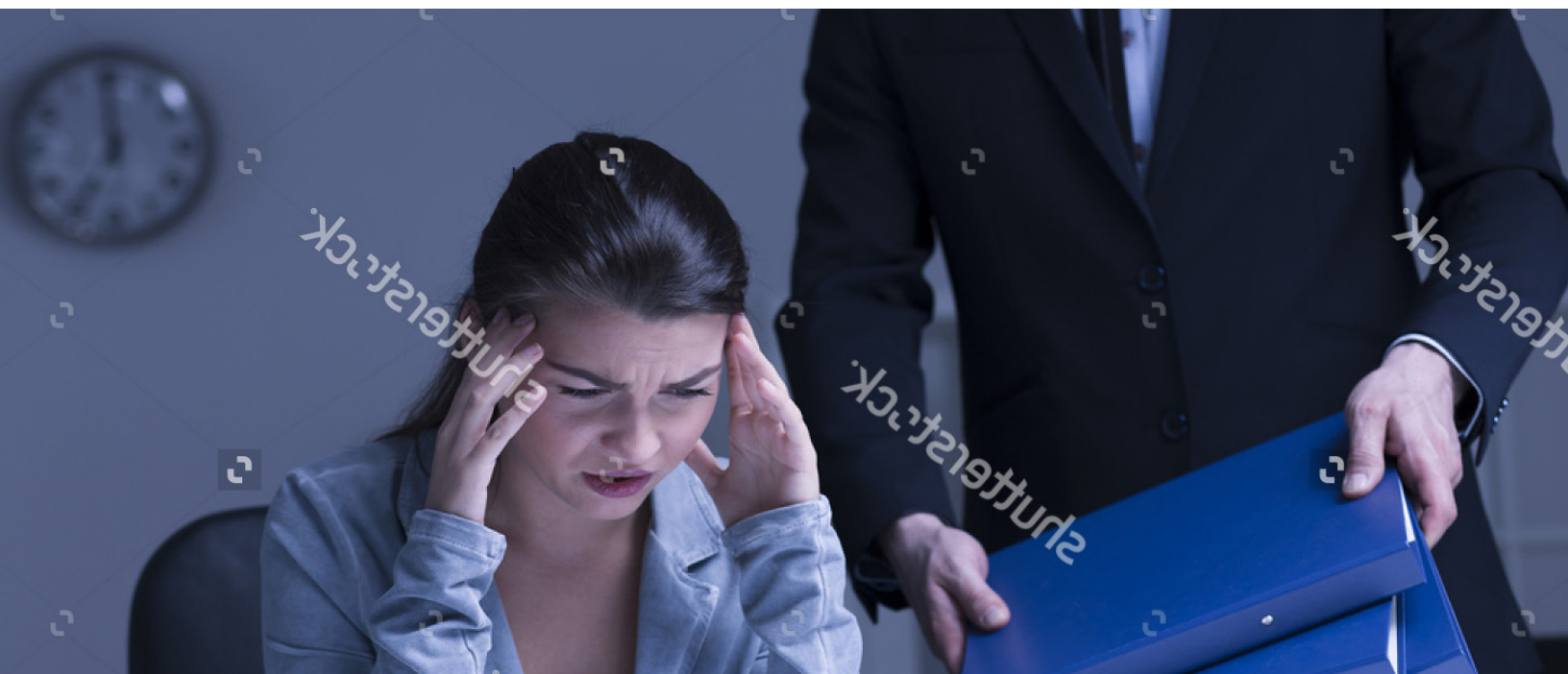
Are you in law school, having trouble studying, sleeping, concentrating and maybe wondering whether it was a good idea to go in the first place?

~~Have you thought about getting help for your problems, but haven't?~~ Or you're getting help, but it just isn't enough?

*If so, you're not alone.*

As you'll see, the rates of stress, burnout,  anxiety and depression in the legal profession are sky  high. Recent studies show ~~that that~~ the rate of such maladies ~~in the law is~~ two to three times higher than ~~those~~ found in the general population.

Deadlines, billing pressures, client demands, long hours,  the adversarial nature of the profession, changing laws and other demands all combine to ~~our work~~ one of the most stressful jobs on the planet. Throw in rising business pressures, evolving legal technologies, and climbing law school debt, and it's no wonder that lawyers are so unhealthy.



After all, ~~we're~~ expected to solve everyone else's problems, to be strong and tough. ~~We're~~ not supposed to have problems, to be "weak."

In addition to these external pressures, lawyers and law students tend to be overachieving individuals who value self-sufficiency, the ability to "pull themselves by their bootstraps" to achieve their goals. However, these same skills that make ~~us~~ good at ~~the legal profession~~, may impede ~~our~~ efforts to cope and deal successfully with depression and anxiety. After all, ~~we're~~ expected to solve everyone else's problems, to be strong and tough. ~~We're~~ not supposed to have problems, to be "weak."

You can try to go it alone and solve these problems yourself. But, too often, ~~you~~ lack self-motivation, direction, accountability, energy and commitment to make much progress. Not because you're lazy. Not for lack of self-discipline. But because your brain isn't functioning optimally, whatever the cause(s).

You may start to implement positive changes, but your efforts wane. It's not surprising, really. Being unhappy, anxious or depressed is disempowering, isn't it? It sucks your energy. You're overwhelmed and don't know which way to turn. You procrastinate and maybe, eventually, give up. And you might even hate yourself for it.

## ***YOU'RE STUCK.***

Psychiatrist James Gordon writes:

Depression is a sign that our lives are out of balance, that we're stuck. It's a wake-up call and the start of a journey that can help us become whole and happy, a journey that can change and transform our lives. Healing depression and overcoming unhappiness mean dealing more effectively with stress; recovering physical and psychological balance; redoing parts of ourselves that we've ignored or suppressed and appreciating the wholeness that has somehow slipped away from us, or that we have never really known.

### ***I want to help you become unstuck.***

I wrote this short ~~book~~, and started by ~~life coaching practice exclusively for lawyers and law students~~, to empower you to do so.

### ***And I believe I can be a strong ally to you in that effort.***



My own recovery from too much stress, anxiety, unhappiness and depression was difficult. But along the way, I learned many hard-won lessons. One of the most important ones is this:

You can't overcome these problems on your own.


It's a team effort.

You'll need help.

I can be part of your team because I've wrestled with these issues and learned to manage them. I've gone on to help, mentor and coach ~~hundreds of~~ legal professionals and law students around the country who needed practical and realistic solutions to live positive and productive personal lives and careers.

I am not a psychiatrist – I won't prescribe medicine. I am not a therapist – I won't provide counseling.

But, I am a highly accomplished veteran lawyer ~~— a lawyer (who also went through three years of law school) —~~ who has struggled with these thorny issues. I understand, **deep in my bones**, just how tough the work of a lawyer is. I know how demanding law school and studying for the bar exam can be. You don't have to educate me on that. I get it. I also “get” depression and anxiety. As a sufferer, I know their darkness and grip. But I also know they don't have the final say. You can overcome them. You can learn to manage them. You can live a better life than the one you're living now.

I use a multi-disciplinary approach to coach legal professionals. No one size fits **all!** Each of us need help to find solutions that will work in our particular circumstances. And that's what you'll get from me  Together will create a plan that's realistic, practical and works for you. I can also be an asset, a helpful adjunct to any professional care and treatment you may be receiving.

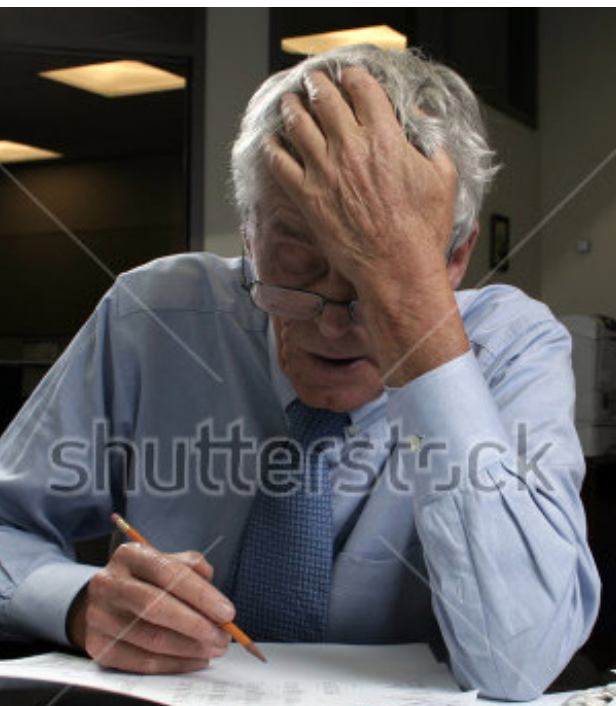
As your coach, I'll be your guide out of the dark, dank woods of depression and anxiety to a happier, healthier and more hopeful future. I will help empower you to move forward in your life.

If you're ready, let's begin the journey together. ~~I'll next address burnout before moving on to anxiety and finally, depression. Finally, I will explain my coaching practice and how I can help you address your particular problems.~~



The number of people afflicted with dangerously unhealthy levels of stress in this country has hit record numbers.

One recent survey of 5,000 U.S. households found that 63% respondents said ~~that~~ had high levels of stress at work, with extreme fatigue and feeling out of control. 53% cite the workload as the top cause, but, paradoxically, 36% say that just work harder to handle the overwhelming demands.



Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.

**Will Rogers, writer and humorist**

Stress can lead to chronic health problems like cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders and psychological disorders. One of the factors fueling such high rates of mental health problems in the law is chronic stress, a ~~known~~ trigger for depression and anxiety.

Early warning signs to look for are job dissatisfaction, sleep disturbances, headache, trouble concentrating, a short temper, an upset stomach, and poor morale. You should also be aware of a change in personal relationships, increased use of drugs or alcohol and teeth grinding.


When the brain perceives a stimulus, the sympathetic nervous system kicks into gear. It tells the adrenal glands to release the first stress hormone, epinephrine (aka adrenaline). **Epinephrine** dilates the bronchial tubes in the lungs to make space for more oxygen and charges the heart, enabling more blood to push through. It dilates the blood vessels leading away from the heart, too, so that oxygenated blood can flow freely to where it's needed most: the brain and the muscles, which must be ready to flee or fight.

Next, the hormone **norepinephrine** spurts from the nerve endings of the sympathetic nervous system. Norepinephrine constricts the veins leading to the heart so returning blood can slam more powerfully into the chamber and exit with even more force. It constricts the arteries leading to the skin, too, to slow down.

Finally, the third—and major—stress hormone, **cortisol**, joins the party, also emanating from the adrenal glands, to mobilize cells' stored energy and to keep the ~~ations~~ coming for the duration of the stressor. In non-emergency situations, cortisol follows the body's circadian rhythms: It's highest in the early morning—time to wake up—and lowest at night.

You experience good stress when you feel a sense of control over the event in question. No matter how your body may respond in the moment, you know you're going to come out fine on the other side—and perhaps even better for the experience. A roller coaster ride may send your stress-hormone levels soaring, but you know the ride will be over in minutes. ~~Sapolsky explains this as “voluntarily relinquishing a degree of control and predictability in a setting that is benevolent overall.”~~



Duration is key, but so is your perception of the external event, says psychologist Wendy Berry Mendes, of the University of California, San Francisco. Do you frame the stressor as a **challenge** or a **threat**? 

## IMAGINE YOU'RE WAITING IN THE WINGS BEFORE A PRESENTATION, FLIPPING THROUGH YOUR POWERPOINT SLIDES IN YOUR MIND'S EYE.

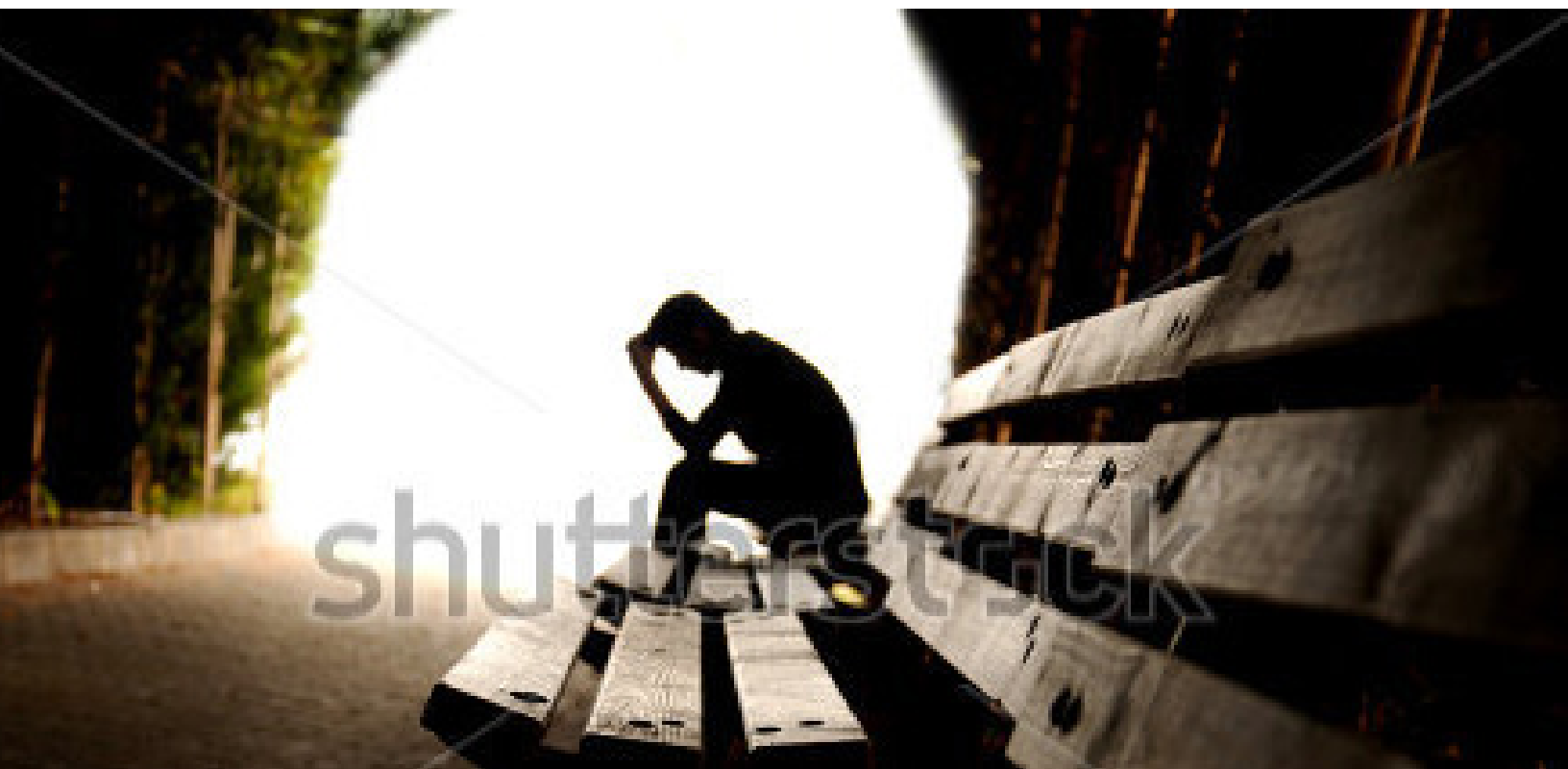
You know you can do this! Epinephrine shoots into your system; norepinephrine follows, but in lesser amounts. Your heart rate increases, your hands get warm, your eyes light up. Cortisol inches up. This is challenge stress. You're ready to fly.

But consider a scenario wherein you're so worried about the presentation you can't sleep the night before. The lack of sleep leaves your **amygdala** on high alert. Moments before the talk, you're still mentally flipping those Powerpoint slides, but you can't make out the images. Norepinephrine has beaten out epinephrine, causing more constriction than dilation of your blood vessels. Your heart rate increases, but less blood is pushed to the brain and body. Cortisol gushes. Your hands go cold and your mind goes blank. This is threat stress. Your presentation may be toast.

The story worsens if the threat continues—that is, if the stress becomes chronic. Then you experience what neuroendocrinologist Bruce McEwen ~~of The Rockefeller University, in New York City,~~ calls toxic stress—you're overwhelmed and feel out of control. “Things are coming at you left and right,” he says. “You can't keep up with them. There is the danger of developing a sort of ‘learned helplessness’”—that is, not even trying to cope anymore because you feel there is no point. “The more threatened you feel, the less capable you feel,” ~~says McEwen,~~ “and the worse your physiology is going to be as a result.”



If you're a lawyer reading this,  
it's no surprise that you feel  
stressed-out in your practice.



~~As a litigator, I was wired all the time. It was like have 50 ticking time bombs on my desk that I was trying to defuse all at the same time.~~



The official number is that something like a gazillion lawyers are stressed-out, and that amounts to a bajillion percent of the profession,” observes Will Meyerhofer, a former Biglaw attorney who practiced in NYC before becoming a psychotherapist that largely serves a distressed lawyer/law student clientele. “I see it like crazy,” he laments. Another former lawyer turned therapist, Gayle Victor who works outside Chicago, reports that stressed-out lawyers account for 75% of her practice.


A former coaching client of mine who left a 9 to 5 government position for a lucrative job in private practice told me this:








Suddenly I was dealing with some very significant money and very demanding clients and high stakes. I enjoyed what I was doing, and I was good at it, but I was terrified almost all the time. Before I got help, I was drinking a pint of vodka a day and relying on junior lawyers to do most of my work.



Patrick Krill, a former lawyer who now consults with law firms about how to address mental health problems, gave this summary of why high levels of stress abound in the law:

 (The) rampant and multidimensional stress of the profession is certainly a factor. And not surprisingly, there are also some personality traits common among lawyers – self-reliance, ambition, perfectionism and competitiveness – that aren’t always consistent with healthy coping skills and the type of emotional elasticity necessary to endure the unrelenting pressures and unexpected disappointments that a career in the law can bring.”

 Lawyers  “Intellectually know”  that sleep, diet, meditation and exercise are important. We know we feel better when we get a good night’s sleep. But attorneys sacrifice sleep and healthy habits to meet ~~unrealistic expectations~~.  They skip meals, eat out, skip exercising. It’s a snowball effect. Lawyers may also start to pull away from friends and family, to withdraw. But it’s important to feel connected to other people  or the problem compounds with isolation and shame.

## LAW PROFESSOR BRIAN CLARKE OFFERS THESE POWERFUL INSIGHTS:

But whatever the problem, the client is counting on the lawyer to fix it. Every lawyer I know takes that expectation and responsibility very seriously. As much as you try not to get emotionally invested in your client’s case or problem, you often do. When that happens, losing hurts. Letting your client down hurts. This pain leads to reliving the case and thinking about all of the things you could have done better. This then leads to increased vigilance in the next case. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, for some lawyers this leads to a constant fear of making mistakes, then a constant spike of stress hormones that, eventually, wear the lawyer down.



Law school is a very stressful time in anyone's life. Competition for good grades, slots on law review, and good summer clerkships are intense, not to mention the future worries of landing a good job and managing high student loan debt.

One may think that all grad students ~~much~~ deal with ~~such~~ stress loads, but a study shows that all such programs aren't experienced the same by their students. Whereas 96% of law students experience extreme stress, only 70% of medical students and 43 percent of graduate students are extremely stressed.

~~Law school stress is at a fever pitch.~~ The pressure to be hired by a big-name firm is so strongly ingrained in law school culture, one George Washington University student said, that even those who enroll with the intention of performing public service often find themselves redirected.

"It's a very real pressure in law school," said Helen Clemens, a law student who spoke with *The New York Times*. "It comes from all kinds of avenues, but mostly I would say it just comes from the people surrounding you. If everyone is talking about leaders from our school who have gotten jobs at a really prestigious firm, the assumption is that we all should be trying to work at a similar place."

~~A recent~~ survey conducted at Yale Law School showed that a majority respondents reported experiencing mental health challenges at law school. 70% percent of all respondents—206 students in a 296-student sample—reported having struggled with mental health


issues during law school. Even assuming that zero non-respondents faced mental health challenges (MHCs), that would mean that 32 percent, or nearly one-third, of YLS students felt that they had faced mental health challenges while in law school.

## AN ARTICLE FROM ABOVE THE LAW, REPORTS:

Students described a culture where being stressed is seen as a “badge of honor,” where “competition is palpable,” and where students, faculty, and administration all place an inordinate amount of emphasis on “winning the rat race.” Even some of those students who did not feel that they had experienced mental health challenges at law school described “highly disruptive and unhealthy” or “significant” levels of stress and even mild depression. Several noted that while they themselves had not experienced what they would describe as mental health challenges, their peers’ experiences had colored their own and cast “a cloud over the community.”





“Burnout is nature’s way of telling you, you’ve been going through the motions  your soul has departed; you’re a zombie, a member of the walking dead, a sleepwalker. False optimism is like administering stimulants to an exhausted nervous system.”

- Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly*

Does your old friend adrenaline no longer give you the burst of energy and focus you need? Is it not only that you aren’t motivated, but that you don’t care that you’re not motivated? Do you feel apathy and inertia oozing into every cell? Burnout is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion brought on by unrelenting stress, which we know is frequently brought on by overwork.

Unfortunately, workaholicism as a lifestyle is often encouraged in the practice of law. For one thing, it ensures that billables are up, up, up! And everyone is happy as long as the workaholic remains functional. But a workaholic can’t remain functional for long. It is difficult to maintain emotional bonds, adequate self care, recreational pursuits or the spiritual practices that cultivate hope. And it is the hopelessness that sets in with the stress that seems to really tanks a person suffering burnout.

According to burnout expert Anthony J. Cedoline, burnout is “a consequence of the perceived disparity between the demands of the job and the resources (both material and emotional) that an employee has available to him or her. When demands in the workplace become unusually high, it becomes increasingly impossible to cope with the stress associated with these working conditions.”



How much stress is too much stress? What is burnout?

~~Everyone has different tolerance levels for stress. Some of us freak out with small levels while others can seemingly, though this is rarer, take nuclear levels of stress.~~

Stress can be good because it can provide energy, focus, motivation. It becomes negative when it negatively impacts us physically and psychologically. We find we're depleted, "running on fumes" too often, and end up dreading the next day. If this goes on for too long, it could turn into burnout. We become like bread that been in the toaster too long. We end up dry, brittle and break easily. We've lost the joy of living life. And maybe the pleasure we used to feel in practicing law.



~~Burnout may sound a bit like depression, and often it is. The unholy trinity of workaholism, burnout and depression fuel each other. When a lawyer goes down into that dark abyss, it is dangerous both to the lawyer and to the client, because clients don't get taken care of by unreliable lawyers.~~

First, let's determine what burnout is not. It's not merely stress, although continuing, unrelieved stress can lead to burnout. It's not ennui, although people experiencing burnout become disenchanted about work that they once found fulfilling and engaging. And, while an intense workload may be linked to stress, an individual in the extreme stages of burnout stops being productive—they've stopped in their tracks.

So, how to describe burnout to those who have never experienced it? Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines it as "exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as the result of prolonged stress or frustration." In their book, *Burn-Out: The High Cost of High Achievement*, authors Dr. Herbert J. Freudenberger and Geraldine Richelson describe the condition as "a demon born of the society and times we live in," adding that burnout "is not a condition that gets better by being ignored. Nor is it any kind of disgrace. On the contrary, it's a problem born of good intentions."

Freudenberger described burnout's general progression as following 12 stages:

1. A Compulsion to Prove Oneself
2. Working Harder
3. Neglecting One's Needs
4. Displacement of Conflicts
5. Revision of Values
6. Denial of Emerging Problems
7. Withdrawal From Social Contacts
8. Obvious Behavioral Changes
9. Depersonalization
10. Inner Emptiness
11. Depression
12. Burnout Syndrome


Since these stages of burnout can appear abstract, let's describe the progression.

Nearly every lawyer can recall having just passed the bar exam, beginning their first job and being determined to not only do their very best, but to outshine their peers. There's no fault in ambition, but when it becomes a grim determination to show everyone around you that you are superlative in every way, the road to burnout begins.

Soon, you may begin to sense that things aren't going the way they should, but you don't recognize that the real problem is your compulsive work habits and growing isolation. You may start to experience physical symptoms of distress, like headaches or sleep disturbance. If the process continues without interruption, neglect of your personal needs leads to a sense of inner emptiness. While work and achievement were once important goals, people in the extreme stages of burnout can experience depression, as well as physical and emotional collapse.

While everyone's symptoms may vary, a common description one might hear is that it is "a feeling that I just don't feel like I can do what needs doing. My creativity is gone, my energy is gone, and it is a burden to do anything."

~~Burnout in the legal profession is greater than that of other professions, and perhaps now more than ever. Martin E.P. Seligman, Ph.D. published an article, "Why Lawyers Are Unhappy" in the Deakin Law Review, noting the growing unhappiness of lawyers in the legal profession. He linked it to the competitive nature of the legal system, the high pressure and limited autonomy of new associates, and the essentially pessimistic nature of legal analysis, which centers on identifying and anticipating problems.~~

~~In her Oct. 25, 2011 USA Today article, "Law Schools Pressed to Tell the Truth on Job Placement, Debt," Mary Beth Marklein pointed out that a decade later, we are faced with a lackluster economy with fewer job opportunities for new graduates entering the legal profession, often saddled with significant debt. This creates an environment for burnout to flourish. Lawyers feel a lack of control over their careers, whether it's not working in the area they prefer, having to change geographical locations, or working long hours. On the job, they may experience a lack of communication or effective feedback about the work they do. Fewer opportunities for law firm employment lead more graduates to enter solo practice immediately after law school, and they either have too few clients, or are~~  overwhelmed by demanding and difficult clients.

“I’ve had a lot of worries in my life,  
most of which never came true.”

- Mark Twain



~~Louis Menand, in an article for The New Yorker magazine~~  
~~entitled “The Prisoner of Stress: What Does Anxiety~~  
entitled “The Prisoner of Stress: What Does Anxiety  
Mean?” detailed the multifaceted understanding of the  
role of anxiety in relation to our experience as human  
beings:


“Anxiety plays a big role in other accounts of the human condition, too. In theology, anxiety has been associated with the concepts of conscience, guilt, and original sin. Reinhold Niebuhr called anxiety “the inevitable spiritual state of man.” In evolutionary psychology, anxiety is usually explained as part of the “fight or flight” reflex that gets triggered in the presence of danger. The reflex is naturally selected for: organisms that lack it might fall off a cliff or get crushed by a mastodon, because their physiologies failed to warn them of a threat to their survival. And, in some schools of sociology and cultural theory, anxiety is interpreted as a reaction to the stress and uncertainty of modern life. It’s a natural response to unnatural conditions. It’s how we know that the world is headed in a bad direction. ”





Anxiety disorders develop from a complex set of risk factors, including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events. An estimated 40 million American adults have anxiety disorders in a given year. GAD affects 6.8 million adults, or 3.1% of the U.S. population. It's not uncommon for someone with an anxiety disorder to also suffer from depression or vice versa. Nearly one-half of those diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. Women are twice as likely to be affected as men and one in four will suffer an anxiety disorder at some point in their lifetimes.

The Hazelden study found that 19% demonstrated symptoms of anxiety. This equates to almost 230,000 of this country's lawyers.

The study found that younger attorneys in the first ten years of practice exhibited the highest incidence  ~~this problem.~~

The Hazelden study found that 19% demonstrated symptoms of anxiety.

The study found that younger attorneys in the first ten years of practice exhibited the highest incidence of these problems.

Perpetual, unremitting stress is often a forerunner to the development of clinical anxiety. "If stress is chronic, repeated challenges may demand repeated bursts of vigilance," warns Dr. Robert Sapolsky, an expert on stress-related illnesses and author of the best-selling book, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers: An Updated Guide to Stress, Stress Related Diseases and Coping*. "At some point, vigilance becomes over-generalized, leading us to conclude that we must always be on guard – even in the absence of stress. And thus the realm of anxiety is entered," writes Sapolsky.

A landmark 2016 study conducted by the American Bar Foundation and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation found that 19% of the 12,825 practicing attorneys interviewed demonstrated symptoms of anxiety, a rate almost three times that found in the general population. This means that of the 1.2 million lawyers in America, almost 230,000 ~~of them~~ are struggling with anxiety symptoms.



## Common anxiety signs and symptoms include:

- Feeling nervous, restless or tense;
- Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom;
- Having an increased heart rate;
- Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation);
- Sweating;
- Trembling;
- Feeling weak or tired;
- Trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry;
- Having trouble sleeping;
- Experiencing gastrointestinal (GI) problems;
- Having difficulty controlling worry;
- Having the urge to avoid things that trigger anxiety;

Two character traits—perfectionism and pessimism—are prevalent among lawyers and may make them prone to anxiety. Perfectionism helps lawyers succeed in practice because the profession is excessively detail-oriented. ~~In the Johns Hopkins study, optimism outperformed pessimism except in the legal profession, because lawyers are hired to always look out for what can go wrong.”~~

Taken to the extreme, perfectionism transforms into a feeling that nothing is good enough. “Attorneys develop an overdeveloped sense of control, so if things don’t go as planned, they blame themselves. They think they didn’t work hard enough or they were careless. Paid worriers, lawyers are expected to predict the future, to anticipate threats and guard against anything that could arise. So they learn to see problems everywhere, even when they don’t exist. And they start to perceive threats as if they’re life-or-death matters. That’s the very definition of anxiety.”

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults or 18% of the of the population. Like depression, there are many types of anxiety including generalized anxiety disorder, PTSD, panic disorders, and obsessive compulsive disorder. The most common is generalized anxiety disorder which affects almost 7 million adults or 3% of the U.S. population.

These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. You may avoid places or situations to prevent these feelings. Symptoms may start during childhood or the teen years and continue into adulthood.



Several types of anxiety disorders exist. The most common is Generalized anxiety disorder includes persistent and excessive anxiety and worry about activities or events — even ordinary, routine issues. The worry is out of proportion to the actual circumstance, is difficult to control and affects how you feel physically. It often occurs along with other anxiety disorders or depression.

These factors may increase your risk of developing an anxiety disorder include: childhood trauma, stress buildup, personality, blood relations with an anxiety disorder, and drug and alcohol use.

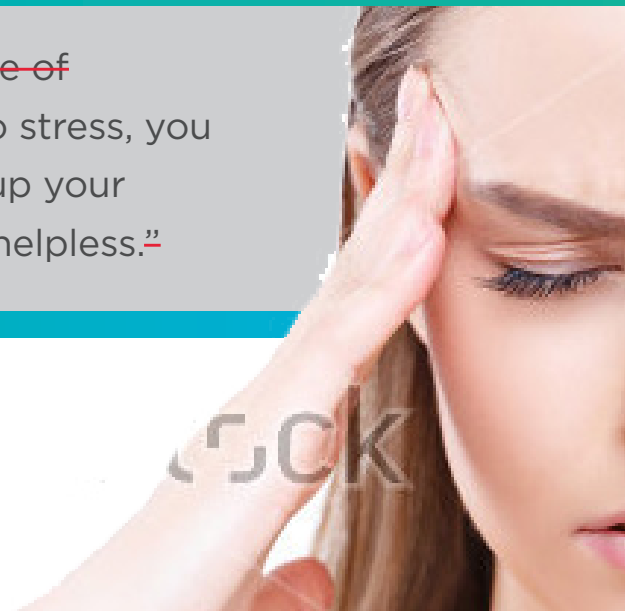
Like depression, to find out whether you have clinical anxiety, you must be evaluated and diagnosed by a physician or a mental health expert. Also, fifty percent of those who suffer from depression also struggle with clinical anxiety.

Anxiety and stress are often used interchangeably, even though they're two different experiences.

By definition, anxiety and stress are categorized by separate feelings. The stress we experience in our day-to-day lives is associated with frustration and nervousness, where anxiety often comes from a place of fear, unease and worry. Still, despite the differences, many people use the terms interchangeably. Psychologist Harriet Lerner explains why we tend to lump together each phrase pertaining to the emotional response:

In everyday conversation, we use the language of emotions that we're comfortable with and that fits our psychological complexion. I've worked with clients who don't report feeling anxious or afraid. "I'm incredibly stressed out..." is their language of choice. "Stressed" is the code word for "totally freaked out" for people who are allergic to identifying and sharing their own vulnerability. Or, at the other linguistic extreme, a woman in therapy tells me that she feels "sheer terror" at the thought that her daughter's wedding dress will not fit her properly. I know her well enough to translate "sheer terror" into "really, really, worried." Whatever your emotional vocabulary, no one signs up for anxiety, fear and shame, or for any difficult, uncomfortable emotion. But we can't avoid these feelings, either."

~~"The key difference [between the two] is the sense of helplessness," Spiegel explains. "When it comes to stress, you can deal with things and master them. By rolling up your sleeves and tackling that stress, you can feel less helpless."~~




Because the natural response to anxiety is to try and figure out what to do, you may start to think over all the possible reasons you could feel worried, and you will inevitably find one. When you are depressed your brain generates too many negative thoughts and cannot effectively shove them aside. You can get stuck in a loop of worrying one worry after another. However, because real problems are not the reason you have the sensation of anxiety, you either think and rethink in an effort to get relief or you move on to yet another worry. Thus rumination and 'serial worrying', hallmarks of anxiety fuel depression.

When people suffer from depression they often also feel anxiety and spend too much time worrying, which increases their depression. The parts of their brain that are involved in that normal reaction to ambiguity are working overtime. And the thinking brain, low on energy due to depression, cannot stop that worry train. When they worry too much and can't exert enough control, then the feeling of anxiety persists beyond any situation that includes some uncertainty.

In fact, the anxious feeling can be present before any uncertainty. Then it creates the nagging sense in your gut that something is wrong, so your helpful brain, the one that wants an explanation for every feeling you have, goes on a search to figure out what might be the source of that anxiety.

What can then happen is that looking for risk and problems moves beyond just being a job or a profession and becomes the way that lawyers approach life, says Alan Levin, who spent 34 years as a labor and employment lawyer before founding the **Care for Lawyers** therapy practice. Lawyers tend to perceive far higher stakes when they encounter adversity, Levin says. "It's like coming home with four A's and a B and only focusing on the B. Mistakes are not tolerated well. Plus, the atmosphere of law offers minimal support amidst the high pressure," contributing to a profound sense of isolation for lawyers. As a result, "without a doubt, every lawyer I see has anxiety greater than the average population."



The implication can become that you're struggling with anxiety or depression because you're not doing your yoga or not meditating or not eating right or somehow choosing to go without sleep," <sup>1</sup> Meyerhofer says, "that it's your fault for not having mastered some 'effective strategy' that would make all these issues disappear." The fact remains that law can be brutal, and most young associates are not equipped for what they find when they enter the profession, he says. "You're not tossing and turning in bed, roiled by anxiety, because you're choosing to eat badly or to skip your yoga class. It has a lot more to do with being thrown into the deep end in an extremely competitive, exploitive business driven not by compassion or collegiality or the desire to mentor but by profit and money and competition for prestige." 

A landmark 2014 study surveyed more than 3,300 law students from 15 law schools about their mental health. ~~Thirty seven~~ percent of respondents screened positive for anxiety – 23% for mild to moderate and 14% for severe anxiety. What was most alarming is that only 1 in 5 of these students sought out any help. Among the factors listed for what would discourage them from getting help:

Potential threat to bar admission	45%
Potential threat to job or academic status	48%
Social stigma	47%
Concerns about privacy	30%
Financial reasons	47%
The belief that they could handle their problems themselves	36%
Not having the time	34%

One law student blogger ~~wrote~~, “There was no one thing that triggered my anxiety. It was more like life just suddenly got overwhelming. There I was, a wide-eyed, stressed-out first year, battling to balance four subjects and a part-time job, that inevitable law school pressure, and still being told to dedicate time to ‘relax.’ Slowly, I began withdrawing from my family, canceling plans with friends. trying to pretend I was happy took too much strength. Attempting assignments seemed like falling into quicksand, hobbies no longer had appeal, and every expression of love and support slid right off of me. It was like I couldn’t feel anything anymore.”

Anxiety in law school is all too common. According ~~to the Bender study~~, ~~37% screened positive for anxiety~~. When put in perspective, that means that of the approximately 130,000 law students in the U.S., over 48,000 are struggling with anxiety.

~~According to law professor and psychologist Andrew Benjamin, J.D., Ph.D., it’s the intense focus on grades, and other external factors, shift student’s motivation from the internal sources that promote happiness (purpose, autonomy, connectedness) to external factors that detract from wellbeing.~~

~~A 2014~~ study of 206 students at Yale Law School found that 70% of all respondents reported experiencing mental health challenges during law school.

Despite the large percentage of students who faced mental health challenges while in law school at Yale, students overwhelmingly feared exclusion and stigma from a variety of sources, including state bar associations, faculty, administration, and peers. Only 50% of students who experienced mental health challenges ultimately got treatment. In the study, a chunk of the students who considered seeking treatment for mental health challenges opted not to because they feared exclusion from faculty, administrators, peers and state bar associations, which sometimes request information about applicant’s’ mental health history.





That's the thing about depression: A human being can survive almost anything, as long as she sees the end in sight. But depression is so insidious, and it compounds daily, that it's impossible to ever see the end.

- Elizabeth Wurtzel,  
Prozac Nation

According to the World Health Organization, depression is a common illness worldwide, with more than 300 million people affected. In 2015, an estimated 16.1 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States had at least one major depressive episode in the past year. This number represented 6.7% of all U.S. adults.

While major depressive disorder can develop at any age, the median age is 32.5 and most prevalent in people ages 45-64. The lifetime risk for depression is about 17%.

Depression is thought to be involved in half of all suicides and up to 15% of people with depression will die of suicide. Men commit suicide more often than women. It is thought this is due to the method men use for suicide, which often involves firearms.

When we talk about "depression," what do we really mean? I am not referring to sadness or a case of "the blues," but a serious condition known as clinical depression.

~~We all experience sadness. It comes and goes. And we move on. The sadness may even go on a bit longer than usual and we may say we have "the blues," are "down in the dumps," or even that we're "depressed."~~

But true "clinical depression" isn't everyday sadness. And recovery from it isn't about feeling happy all the time. Dr. Richard O'Connor, author of the book "Undoing Depression," writes:

“The opposite of depression is not happiness, but vitality – the ability to experience a full range of emotions, including happiness, excitement, sadness, and grief. Depression is not an emotion itself; it’s the loss of feelings; a big heavy blanket that insulates you from the world yet hurts at the same time. It’s not sadness or grief, it’s an illness.”

Because major depression is an illness, it’s important you be evaluated by a mental health professional to obtain a correct diagnosis.

Here’s a list of symptoms for major depression that a health care professional ~~will be looking for~~:

Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions;

Fatigue and decreased energy;

Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness;

Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism;

Insomnia, early morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping;

Irritability, restlessness;

Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that were once pleasurable, including sex;

Loss of pleasure in life;

Overeating or appetite loss;

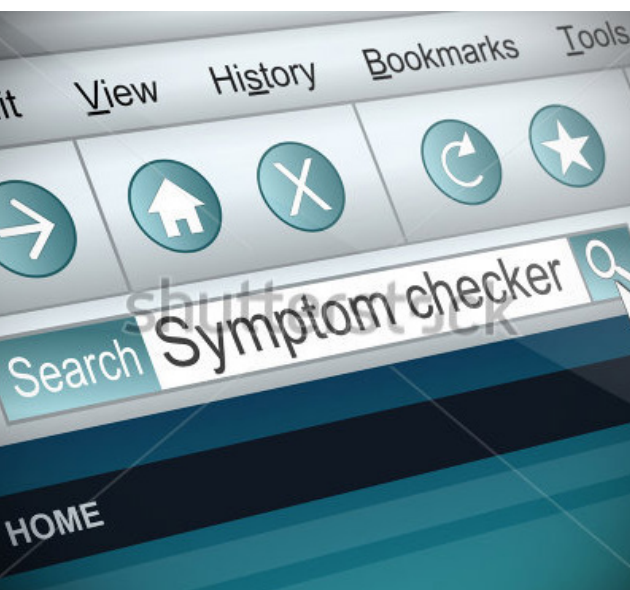
Persistent sad, anxious or “empty” feelings;

Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts.

In order to be diagnosed with major depression, there must be a period of two weeks or longer which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure, and at least four other of the symptoms listed above that impair one’s ability to function at home, work or school, or causes a disruption in daily living.

The severity, frequency and duration of the symptoms will vary depending on the individual and his or her particular illness.

Although depression may occur only one time during your life, usually people have multiple episodes of depression. During these episodes, symptoms occur most of the day, nearly every day.



Depression has many causes: A genetic history of depression in one's family, hormone imbalances, and biological differences, among others.

Major depression is not the only type of depression. There is also bipolar disorder, dysthymia ("mild depression"), seasonal affective disorder, and postpartum depression, to name a few.

Depression has many causes: A genetic history of depression in one's family, hormone imbalances, and biological differences, among others. Certain personality traits, such as low self-esteem, a pessimistic outlook, chronic stress at work or home, childhood trauma, drug or alcohol abuse and other risk factors increase the likelihood of developing or triggering depression.

Sadly, many people never get any help for their depression. This despite the fact that 70% to 80% of sufferers experience relief from their symptoms with treatment.



It's hard for attorneys to get help with their depression. They tend not to recognize it as such; they just think it's stress, or burn-out, or life. They don't expect that anyone is going to be able to help. Most of my attorney-patients have contacted me because their relationships are falling apart, but they don't see that it's depression that makes them such a lousy partner – tense, irritable, critical, joyless, tired all of the time, relying on alcohol or other drugs. If they'd gotten help for the depression a couple of years previously, their spouse wouldn't be moving out now. The truth about depression is that it not only makes you feel horrible, it wrecks your life.

I was running an outpatient clinic, and grew exasperated with seeing the people whose lives wouldn't have been so ruined if they had got some help when they first needed it – before they alienated their children and spouse, got fired, went into debt, developed a substance abuse problem, etc. I thought there was a need for an intelligent self-help book, one that points out all the bad habits that depression engenders and which, in a vicious circle, keeps reinforcing the disease. But the truth is that self-help isn't nearly enough for most depression sufferers. It's as if you stepped over an invisible cliff, and because that's what led you over the cliff in the first place. Depression is the original mind/body disease; your physical brain is damaged because of the stress in your mind, and you're unlikely to undo that damage without help. 🐟



A study conducted by John Hopkins University found that of the ~~103 occupations~~ looked surveyed, lawyers had the highest rate of depression for professionals

The Hazelden study also found that 28% of the over 12,825 practicing lawyers polled reported some problem with depression. That's more than three times the rate found in the general public. That means if you tallied every attorney in the U.S., almost 365,000 would report symptoms associated with clinical depression.

~~An earlier study conducted by John Hopkins University found that of the 103 occupations looked surveyed, lawyers had the highest rate of depression for professionals.~~

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided CNN with the latest available data on suicide deaths by profession. Lawyers ranked fourth when the proportion of suicides in that profession is compared to suicides in all other occupations in the study population (adjusted for age). They come right behind dentists, pharmacists and physicians.

## CAUSES OF DEPRESSION IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

~~Law school or practicing law does not “cause” depression or anxiety.~~

~~There are three factors unique to the training to become and practice of being a lawyer that increase the risk of developing clinical depression if they have a pre-existing vulnerability for depression by way of genetics, personality, or troubled childhood before entering the law. Such factors combine to create a “perfect storm” for depression to develop and overtake a person.~~

## PESSIMISM

Psychologist, Hara Estroff Marano writes:

“One of the features of depression is pessimistic thinking. The negative thinking is actually the depression speaking. It's what depression sounds like. Depression in fact manifests in negative thinking before it creates negative affect. Most depressed people are not aware that the despair and hopelessness they feel are flowing from their negative thoughts. Thoughts are mistakenly seen as privileged, occupying a rarefied territory, immune to being affected by mood and feelings, and therefore representing some immutable truth.”



But there is one glaring exception: Pessimists do better at law.

According to Dr. Seligman, it has to do with type of negative thinking:

“One factor is a pessimistic outlook defined not in the colloquial sense (seeing the glass as half empty) but rather as the pessimistic explanatory style. These pessimists tend to attribute the causes of negative events as stable and global factors (“It’s going to last forever, and it’s going to undermine everything.”) The pessimist views bad events as pervasive, permanent, and uncontrollable while the optimist sees them as local, temporary and changeable. Pessimism is maladaptive in most endeavors.

But there is one glaring exception: Pessimists do better at law. Pessimism is seen as a plus among lawyers because seeing troubles as pervasive and permanent is a component of what the law profession deems prudent. A prudent perspective enables a good lawyer to see every conceivable snare and catastrophe that might occur in any transaction. The ability to anticipate the whole range of problems and betrayals that non-lawyers are blind to is highly adaptive for the practicing lawyer who can, by so doing, help his clients defend against these far-fetched eventualities. If you don’t have this prudence to begin with, then law school will seek to teach it to you. Unfortunately, though, a trait that makes you good at your profession does not always make you a happy human being.”




## PERSONALITY

Dr. Tyger Latham, a psychologist in Washington, D.C. who treats many lawyers with depression, writes:


“I’ve come to recognize some common characteristics amongst those in the profession. Most, from my experience, tend to be “Type A’s” (i.e., highly ambitious and over-achieving individuals). They also have a tendency toward perfectionism, not just in their professional pursuits but in nearly every aspect of their lives. While this characteristic is not unique to the legal profession – nor is it necessarily a bad thing – when rigidly applied, it can be problematic. The propensity of many law students and attorneys to be perfectionistic can sometimes impede their ability to be flexible and accommodating, qualities that are important in so many non-legal domains.”

In the Bender study, 17% screened positive for depression and 18% indicated they had been diagnosed with clinical depression (15% for male respondents and 20% for female respondents).

Before entering law school, students have the same rate of depression as the general population. Upon matriculating, those rates rise dramatically. The Bender study found that 17% of law school students screened positive for depression  about three times the rate found in the general population.

Law schools are well aware of these troubling statistics. Law professor Lawrence Krieger writes:

“There is a wealth of which should be alarming information about the collective distress and unhappiness of our law students and the lawyers they become. We appear to be practicing a sort of organizational denial because, given this information, it is remarkable that we are not openly addressing these problems among ourselves at faculty meetings, and in committees and without students in the context of courses and extracurricular programs. The negative phenomena we ignore are visible to most of us and are confirmed by essentially unrebutted empirical evidence.”

A heavy cloud of stigma surrounds those in law school who struggle with depression and often prevents them from seeking help. Attorney Andrew Sparkler, a friend and then fellow classmate of Fordham law student David Nee who suffered from depression and committed suicide in his third year, observed: “To admit that you are depressed in law school, to yourself or to others . . . is a weakness and if you’re in a shark tank of hyper-aggressive folks around you, you’d be hesitant to expose it because why would you fess up to anyone that you have this problem.” 



It took me several years to pull myself out of the mud, but I learned to do so. I took such hard-won wisdom and skills and began coaching clients from around the country to help them cope, heal and overcome depression.

I believe I can help you if you answer “yes” to any of the following questions:

1. **You need someone to listen with a sense of compassion.** I am that person. I ~~will~~ care. I will be in your corner.
2. **You need a safe place to share.** I can be an anchor for you, a safe port in a storm, a place to go and share your deepest struggles and concerns about home and work.
3. **You need to understand.** You need someone to educate you about what depression and anxiety are and their symptoms and causes.
4. **You need help trying to figure out where and how to get help.** You need guidance as you weave through the matrix of treatment options to find a plan that works for you.
5. **You need more support.** In addition to treating with a psychologist and/or psychiatrist, you find that you get more encouragement, insight and support to help you keep moving forward.
6. **You suffer from anxiety and depression.** If so, you're far from alone. Studies show that as much as 60% of all people with depression also suffer from an anxiety disorder.

**7. You need help getting things done at work.**

You're falling behind and because of you're the depression and/or anxiety. I can help by providing insight, support and exercises to help you deal with this all too common and critical issue.

---

**8. You want to leave your job.** You've been coping with work-related depression and/or anxiety for some time and decided "enough is enough". You want to make plans to transition to another job or career. I can help you develop your game plan to do so and hold you accountable for following through and take the necessary steps to make this a reality.

---

**9. You're A "Depression Veteran".** You might be further down the road in your recovery from depression and/or anxiety, but still need help and encouragement. Or you've been struggling with off-and-on depression and/or anxiety for years. I will work with you to develop a program to make sure you do things that will help you recover and stay well. I will hold you accountable for actually following through with your program. I can help to motivate you to stick with a healthy game plan.

---

**10. You Are Just Plain Unhappy, Unfulfilled or Burnt-out.** Many of those in the legal profession, while not clinically depressed, are very unhappy with their lives and careers. They have too much stress. Aren't happy in their careers. Or don't have a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. The support and structure I provide for depression sufferers are easily transferable to getting to the heart of what's causing your unhappiness. I will work with you to build a different set of skills and make different life choices to lead a happier and healthier life.

---

**11. You Need Help Explaining Your Depression to Others.**

For loved ones and business associates that have never been through depression, it's difficult for them to really understand your pain because they really don't have a point of reference for psychic pain someone undergoes with clinical depression. They mistake it for "the blues" or everyday sadness, which it clearly is not. I can work with you to develop a language and actions that could help others understand. If you wish, I would also be happy to talk with others as your work to educate them about what depression is and ways that might be able to help and support you.





Coaching people who struggle with depression has some similarities with counseling, but coaching differs from psychotherapy in several respects.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COACHING AND THERAPY?



- Coaching is centered on the present and **action-oriented** while **psychotherapy** focuses on the past, present and future, *without being action-oriented*. I've developed my action-oriented coaching program because I've found that one of the most difficult and painful problems that depressed people have is *getting things done when depressed*. They feel stuck, lack motivation and energy. By partnering with a coach, they learn to work together with someone that can help structure their time, create to-do list, prioritize them and find resources to help them recover and grow.
- Coaching is **results-oriented** whereas psychotherapy is **process-oriented**. While it's critical to gain *insight* into one's personal history and why the depression is occurring, it's equally important to *put those insights into action*. My coaching is all about putting insights into action.
- The therapist-patient relationship is **hierarchical** while the coach-client relationship is a **partnership**. I am not a therapist. I am someone just like you who has struggled with depression and understands it **from the insight out**. Most therapists have lots of experience **treating** people with depression. Most, however, have never experienced it or never share whether **they've ever suffered from depression or not**. My sense is that this can **limit the capacity** they have to truly understand just how awful the pain of depression can really be. Both focus on behavior modification, insight, process of inquiry, personal discovery, awareness, recognizing irrational beliefs and systems
- In psychotherapy, the primary work together is done in **sessions in a therapist's office**; in coaching, work is done in a **variety of settings** including at a client's home, over the phone, in coffee shots, via e-mail and the workplace. Coaching clients have more out of session availability to their coach than a therapist.



“A hero is an ordinary person who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles”

– Christopher Reeve

Lawyers with depression often think of themselves as “less than” – less than competent, ~~less than successful and even less than, remarkably, a good person.~~ They often live successful professional and personal lives – at least ~~on the outside.~~ Looking out their office windows, they privately fear that others will find out just how incompetent they ~~really are;~~ or, worse yet, that they have depression or anxiety. ~~“Then what will they think?”~~ they worry.

Most lawyers and law students with depression or anxiety, in some fundamental sense, **feel broken.** This ~~by the illness itself – both biological~~ (poor sleep, appetite, energy levels) and psychological (distorted pessimistic thinking: e.g. “Nobody really cares about me”, “I stink at my job” or “My depression will never end.”). But this burden of brokenness isn’t just an “inside job” – crummy stuff they tell themselves about themselves. Other people, whether intentionally or not, ~~inflict~~ damaging judgments and innuendos about a suffering person’s behavior or personhood: “You’re lazy,” “If you tried harder, you’d feel better,” ~~“you’re problem is you’re just feeling sorry for yourself,”~~ are just a few of the comments depressed people ~~endure.~~

Others may tell a depressed lawyer ~~that~~ they’re letting everybody down at the office (e.g. not billing enough hours, not producing what they used to produce before they were depressed, etc.). Or, maybe a spouse tells them they aren’t contributing enough to family responsibilities. The problem is not that these aren’t important and legitimate concerns. The problem is that others, in an attempt to snap the depressive back into his or her higher functioning pre-depression state, employ ~~three~~ misguided strategies.

Even if others don't say these things, we know on some deep level that they're thinking it.

Then there is the cultural stigma – a cloud of ignorance, fear and misunderstanding – surrounding depression.

The first is to deny the immensity of their suffering by minimizing it: “Don't worry, things will get better. You're just in a slump.”

The second, ~~the well-worn American anthem~~, “Just pull yourself up by your bootstraps and stop whining.”

And the third, the plea to a depressed person ~~to just count his or her blessings~~.

When I disclosed to one of my law partner's years ~~back~~ that I was suffering from major depression, he was stunned... and angry. He snapped, “You know, you've got a hell of a lot to feel grateful about. You've got a beautiful family and a great job. For God ~~sake~~, go on a damn vacation!” Little did he know that I was ~~depressed~~, even on vacation.

American culture tends to see depression as a moral or personal weakness; the “just-get-over-it” rants of a society that likes simplistic answers to complicated problems. Dr. O'Connor captures some the irony of how our society sees depression as different from – or maybe not as real as – other forms of illness:

## WHERE IS THE JERRY LEWIS TELETHON?

Where's the big national foundation leading the battle against depression? Where is the **Jerry Lewis Telethon** and the **Annual Run for Depression**? Little black ribbons for everyone to wear? The obvious answer is the stigma associated with the disease. Too much of the public still views depression as a weakness or character flaw, and thinks we should pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. And all the hype about new antidepressant medications has only made things worse by suggesting that recovery is simply a matter of taking a pill.



This is the cruelest part of the disease: we blame ourselves for being weak or lacking character instead of accepting that we have an illness, instead of realizing that our self-blame is a symptom of the disease. And feeling that way, we don't step forward and challenge unthinking people who reinforce those negative stereotypes. So, we stay hidden away, feeling miserable and blaming ourselves for our own **misery**.

In my view, folks with depression are not so much hapless, as they are heroes.

What's a hero after all? **Someone who has a great challenge to confront? Check. Someone who must confront great adversity? Check. Someone who must get up every day and do battle with a formidable adversary?**

Some of the best people that I've been privileged to know struggle with depression. While they don't have shiny



Check. You see, for those of you who are struggling with depression right now, YOU are that person. You're the person who has to get up every day and cope with your depression. Others can help and support you, but it's ultimately your walk to walk. And what a courageous walk it is; every single step of it.

medals pinned on their lapels, there is an unmistakable strength in them – even if they don't see it. I know it's real because I see and feel it – just like when I am in a grove of giant and majestic pines during a walk in the forest.

Why can't we depressives re-imagine our self-image in relationship to our depression in a more positive light? Why can't we think of our battles with depression as, in fact, heroic? Instead of counting all of times that depression has gotten the better of us and knocked us to our knees, how about embracing and giving ourselves some ~~damn~~ credit for all of the times that we have triumphed over our depression, the times that ~~they have~~ risen to the occasion at work and home, in spite of our melancholy and the moments we've looked depression in the eye and said, "No more." Make no mistake about it that takes gumption – and lots of it!

Here is some food for thought for you heroes:

**Remember that a depression doesn't last forever.**

You will come out of it, even if you go back into the muck sometimes. Or maybe even a lot. Maybe you fall down 30 times a day, or maybe it's just a stumble. But ~~keep~~ your balance and ~~get~~ up. As the old Zen saying goes, "Fall down seven times – get up eight." That, my friends, is heroic.

**Remember that depression is only a small part of who you are – you're not your depression.**

You have an illness that needs treatment, understanding and respect.

**Remember that you have some, to lesser or greater degree, control over your depression.**

It is heroic to insist on carrying out your day's responsibilities, to the best of your ability, even when you're struggling with depression. ~~Dr. O'Connor once said to me, "Dan, depression isn't our fault. But it is our responsibility to get better."~~

**Remember that when you're in a depression and feel like you don't have some measure of control over it; that you can and will endure it until it passes – and it will pass.**

**Remember not condemn yourself when you are down, but pick yourself up and remember that you are, truly, remarkable people.**

As writer Andrew Bernstein once wrote: "A hero has faced it all: he need not be undefeated, but he must be undaunted."

Start your journey out of the dark woods of depression and anxiety. Be undaunted. Let me be your guide and together we'll get you feeling better.







## BOOKS ON DEPRESSION

### **Undoing Depression: What Therapy Doesn't Teach You and Medication Can't Give You** – Richard O'Connor, Ph.D.

Depression has often been compared to heart disease; an illness fueled by complex and interrelated factors: genetic, biochemical, environmental. In this book, O'Connor focuses on an additional factor often overlooked: our own habits. Unwittingly, "we get good at ~~depression~~". This book teaches us how to replace depressive patterns with a new and more effective set of skills. We already know how to "do" depression. And we can learn how to "undo" it. With a ~~truly~~ holistic approach that synthesizes the best of the many schools of thought about this painful condition, this book offers new hope, and new life, for depression sufferers.

### **The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression** – Andrew Solomon

Winner of *The National Book Award* following its release a decade ago, this beautifully written book by ~~depression sufferer~~ Andrew Solomon, draws on his own struggles with the illness and interviews with fellow sufferers, doctors and scientists, policy makers and politicians, drug designers and philosophers. Solomon reveals the subtle complexities and sheer agony of the disease. With uncommon humanity, candor, wit, and erudition, he not only helps us understand depression, but also the human condition.

## **The Mindful Way through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness**

– J. Mark Williams, Ph.D.

Mindfulness, a simple yet powerful way of paying attention to your most difficult emotions and life experiences, can help you break the cycle of chronic ~~unhappiness~~ once and for all. Through insightful lessons drawn from both Eastern meditative traditions and cognitive therapy, Williams demonstrates how to sidestep the mental habits that lead to despair, including rumination and self-blame, so you can face life's challenges with greater resilience. Included with the book is an accompanying CD of guided meditations, making this a complete package for anyone seeking to regain a sense of hope and well-being.

## **Listening to Depression: How Understanding Your Pain Can Heal Your Life**

– Lara Honos-Webb, Ph.D.

I first read this book five years ago and was struck by its originality: depression isn't just a disease to be fixed with medication and therapy, but a powerful warning signal that our lives are off track and need to be healed. In this sense, depression and its painful symptoms are a sort of ~~unwelcome wisdom~~. Dr. Honos-Webb argues that we too often try to cut off or numb our feelings of depression instead of listening carefully to what they are trying to tell us about our lives. *Listening to Depression* offers insightful ways to reframe depression as a gift that can help you transform your life for the better.

## **Lincoln's Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled His Greatness**

– Joshua Wolf Shenk

Lincoln is my hero. He not only was a great trial lawyer, but also struggled with depression his entire life. Giving shape to the deep depression that pervaded Lincoln's adult life, ~~Joshua Wolf Shenk's~~ *Lincoln's Melancholy* reveals how this illness influenced both the president's character and his leadership. Shenk draws from historical record, interviews with Lincoln scholars, and contemporary research

on depression to understand the nature of his ~~unhappiness~~. In the process, he discovers that the President's coping strategies—among them, a rich sense of humor and a tendency toward quiet reflection—ultimately helped him to lead the nation through its greatest turmoil.

## **Unstuck: Your Guide to the Seven-Stage Journey Out of Depression**

– James S. Gordon, M.D.

One of our country's most distinguished psychiatrists and a pioneer in integrative medicine, Dr. Gordon believes that depression is not an ~~end point~~, a disease over which we have no control. ~~It is~~ a sign that our lives are out of balance, that we're stuck. It's a wake-up call and the start of a journey that can help us become whole and happy, one that can change and transform our lives. *Unstuck* is a practical, easy to use guide explaining the seven stages of Dr. Gordon's approach and the steps we can take to exert control over our own lives and find hope and happiness.

## **Unholy Ghosts: Writers on Depression**

– Nell Casey

The only book of its kind, *Unholy Ghost* is a unique collection of essays about depression by ~~writers~~. Unlike any other memoir ~~of~~ depression, however, *Unholy Ghost* includes many voices and depicts the most complete portrait of the illness. With an introduction by Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison, *Unholy Ghost* allows the bewildering experience of depression to be adequately and beautifully rendered. The twenty-two stories that make up this book will offer solace and enlightenment to all readers.

## **Depression is Contagious**

– Michael Yapko, Ph.D.

Dr. Yapko has identified the types of relationship patterns that lead to negative ways of thinking, feeling, and relating to others and culls from the latest findings in neuroscience, social psychology, epidemiology, and genetics to provide a practical, proven plan for developing the skills and insights you need to forge stronger, healthier social connections

~~and enjoy an enriching, interconnected life.~~ The foundation for recovery is to build a healthy social life based on understanding what to expect from our relationships, what we should give, and how to relate to and accept others — skills that have been neglected by modern society. Dr. Yapko's plan of action is filled with skill-building emotional and mental exercises, anecdotes, and illuminating explanations.

### **I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression**

– Terrence Real

Depression is a silent epidemic in men who hide their condition from family, friends, and themselves to avoid the stigma of depression's "un-manliness." Problems that we think of as typically male — difficulty with intimacy, workaholism, alcoholism, abusive behavior, and rage — are really attempts to escape depression. And these escape attempts only hurt the people men love and pass their condition on to their children. Real mixes penetrating analysis with compelling tales of his patients and even his own experiences with depression as the son of a violent, depressed father and the father of two young sons.

### **What to Do When Someone You Love is Depressed**

– Mitch Golant and Susan Golant

There are few circumstances in life as hard and at the same time as important as being a friend to a person who is suffering from depression. *What to Do When Someone You Love Is Depressed* offers guidance to the friends and family of a depressed person on how to keep one's own spirits up and at the same time do what is best to help a loved one get through a difficult time.

### **Get it Done When You're Depressed**

– Julie A. Fast and John Preston, M.D.

When a depressed person can't meet the expectations of society, the depression becomes worse and a vicious cycle begins. The goal of *Getting Things Done When You're Depressed* is to break this cycle. Readers will learn how to prepare themselves mentally for working while depressed, how to structure their environment so they can work more easily, how to work with others and how to prevent depression.

### **The 10 Best-Ever Depression Management Techniques**

– Margaret Wehrenberg, Ph.D.

What I like about this book is that it provides an overview of some of the best techniques out there that scientists and therapists are using to help and heal people from depression. As Margaret Wehrenberg explains, you must first understand your brain. Drawing on cutting-edge neuroscience research presented in a reader-friendly way, Wehrenberg skillfully describes what happens in the brain of a depression sufferer and what specific techniques can be used to alter brain activity and control its range of disabling symptoms. Containing practical, take-charge tips from a seasoned clinician, this book presents the ten most effective strategies for moving from lethargy into action, taking charge of your brain, and breaking free from depression to find hope and happiness.

## BOOKS ON STRESS AND ANXIETY

### **The Mindful Way through Anxiety: Break Free from Chronic Worry and Reclaim Your Life**

– Susan M. Orsillo, Ph.D.

Anxiety isn't the same thing as stress. You can't just "get over" anxiety. In fact, the very things most people do to try to feel better—avoiding feared situations, pushing worry out of mind—only make the problem worse. This book presents a new alternative that can help you break free of anxiety by fundamentally changing how you relate to it. *Mindfulness*, a simple yet powerful way of paying attention to your most difficult emotions and life experiences, seems like it is everywhere these days and being offered as a solution to much of the mental distress that ails modern society. Yet, in my own limited experience, it is worthy of such attention because it works.

### **Undoing Perpetual Stress: The Missing Connection Between Depression, Anxiety and 21st Century Illness**

– Richard O'Connor, Ph.D.

Dr. O'Connor ~~has written another brilliant book and it's relationship to depression. on the consequences of "perpetual" stress in our lives — the alarming and escalating rates of clinical anxiety and depression.~~ This was the first book I read that made clear to me the connection between stress, anxiety, and depression. ~~The human nervous system was never designed to handle this many stressors.~~ It's as if the circuit breakers in our brains are blown by too much stress running through our brain's circuitry. This book is a perfect fit if you want to learn ~~a lot~~ about the brain and physiology of stress — I found it fascinating. If you're looking for a quick read and pick-me-up though, this isn't it.

### **The 10 Best-Ever Anxiety Management Techniques**

– Margaret Wehrenberg, Ph.D.

Medication, once considered the treatment of choice, is losing favor as more and more

sufferers complain of unpleasant side effects and its temporary, quick-fix nature. Now, thanks to a flood of fresh neurobiology research and insights into the anatomy of the anxious brain, effective, practical strategies have emerged allowing us to manage day-to-day anxiety on our own without medication. Addressing physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms, Dr. Wehrenberg draws on basic brain science to highlight her top ten anxiety-defeating tips. Everything from breathing techniques to cognitive control and self-talk are included. ~~I really like that the~~ 10 chapters are highly readable and short.

### **Things Might Go Terribly, Horribly Wrong: A Guide to Life Liberated from Anxiety**

– Troy DuFrene

This book approaches the problem of anxiety a little differently than most. Instead of trying to help you overcome or reduce feelings of anxiety, it will help you climb inside these feelings, sit in that place, and see what it would be like to have anxiety and still make room in your life to breathe and rest and live, **really and truly** live, in a way that matters to you. This approach is based upon a research-supported form of psychotherapy called "Acceptance and Commitment **Therapy**", which starts with the assumption that the normal condition of human existence is suffering and **struggle**, ACT works by first encouraging individuals to accept their lives as they are in the here and now. This acceptance is an antidote to the problem of avoidance, which ACT views as among the greatest risk factors for ~~unnecessary suffering and poor mental health.~~

### **Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life**

– Steven C. Hayes

This is another book that uses the ACT approach. However, it's different than the above book because it offers a five-step plan for coping with painful emotions such as anxiety and depression. How I love plans! I also liked



the wisdom contained here: the recognition that painful feelings cannot be controlled will open you to the possibility of fully emotional living. When anxiety arises in our bodies and minds, we erroneously believe that we have the power to rein these in, stop them and thus effectively eliminate it. However, this approach only leads us further down into the well of panic. Anxiety is not the problem. It is our attempts to squash and control it that strengthen anxiety and prevent us from coping with it effectively. Learn what steps you can take to approach ~~her~~ anxiety differently.

### **The Worry Cure: Seven Steps to Stop Worry from Stopping You**

– Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D.

For “highly worried people,” or those who suffer from the “what-if disease,” this book presents a systematic, accessible self-help guide to gaining control over debilitating anxiety. Leahy is an expert in changing thought processes, and he walks worriers step-by-step through problems in the way they think, with pointers on how to change these biases. The author then outlines a seven-step worry-reduction plan beginning with identifying productive and unproductive worry, progressing to improving skills for accepting reality, challenging worried thinking and learning to harness unpleasant emotions such as fear or anger.

### **The Anxiety and Worry Workbook**

– David A. Clark, Ph.D.

This book includes carefully crafted worksheets, exercises, and examples that reflect the author’s decades of experience helping people who really struggle with anxiety. Like depression, coping effectively with anxiety involves learning helpful new and constructive ways of thinking about the problems we all face. So often, it isn’t the reality of a situation that makes us anxious, but the stories we tell ourselves about the events that happen moment-to-moment.

### **Self-Coaching: The Powerful Guide to Beat Anxiety**

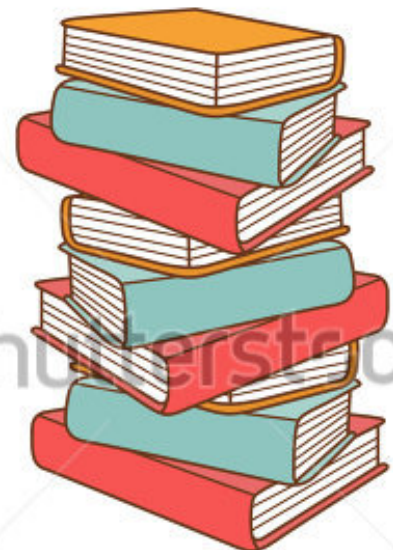
– Joseph J. Luciani, Ph.D.

This is a good book for those who don’t want to see a therapist or, if they do, need extra doses of encouragement and practice to overcome their anxiety. The author advises readers to identify themselves as specific personality types (e.g., “Worrywarts,” “Hedgehogs,” “Perfectionists”) and then gives specific instructions on how to change the particular thought patterns associated with this type of personality. **So many** people who struggle with anxiety never got what they needed while growing up – enough love, encouragement and affirmation. Lacking these core experiences, folks develop particular maladaptive strategies to cope with people and situations that push our buttons.

### **Healing Anxiety and Depression**

– Daniel Amen, M.D.

Dr. Amen is a true pioneer in uncovering the connections between the brain and behavior. In this excellent book, he provides an overview of how the brain works and how medication, diet, supplements, exercise and social and therapeutic support can help anxiety. As science’s understanding of how anxiety and depression work has grown, there is an emerging picture that both of these conditions are “whole body” problems that demand whole body solutions. ~~Like depression, we~~ can’t just take a pill. Rather, we need to look at every aspect of our lives so that we can address anxiety on multiple levels.



## BOOKS ON LAWYER WELLNESS

### **The Happy Lawyer: Making a Good Life in the Law**

– Nancy Levit and Douglas O. Linder

*The Happy Lawyer* examines the causes of dissatisfaction among lawyers, and then charts possible paths to happier and more fulfilling careers in law. Eschewing a one-size-fits-all approach, it shows how maximizing our chances for achieving happiness depends on understanding our own personality types, values, strengths, and interests. Covering everything from brain chemistry and the science of happiness to the workings of the modern law firm, Nancy Levit and Doug Linder provide invaluable insights for both aspiring and working lawyers.

### **The Reflective Counselor: Daily Meditations for Lawyers**

– F. Gregory Coffee and Maureen Kessler

This 376-page, meditation-a-day book is designed to help lawyers recover from spiritual bankruptcy. Each daily entry includes an introductory quotation, followed by a reflection inspired by that quotation. Themes found in the book include overcoming fear, personal beliefs and values, maintaining integrity, personally defining success, dealing with difficult people, and common workplace challenges.

### **The Anxious Lawyer: An 8-Week Guide to a Joyful and Satisfying Law Practice Through Mindfulness Meditation**

– Jenna Cho & Karen Gifford.

Both Cho and Gifford began meditating as practicing attorneys, and have firsthand knowledge of the difficulties and rewards of legal practice. *The Anxious Lawyer* provides a straightforward 8-week introductory program on meditation and mindfulness, created by lawyers for lawyers. The program draws on examples from Cho and Gifford's professional and personal lives to create an accessible and enjoyable entry into practices that can reduce anxiety, improve focus and clarity, and enrich the quality of life.

### **Lawyers, Anger, and Adversity: Dealing with the Stresses of the Legal Profession**

– Rebecca Nerison, Ph.D.

This book examines how anger and anxiety are related and the symptoms and costs associated with them. You'll also find advice on seeking happiness through all the stages of your career, and discover valuable tips for staying satisfactorily employed during the most stressful of times. There's also help for those living with a stressed-out lawyer, both at home or at the office.

### **Stress Management for Lawyers: How to Increase Personal & Professional Satisfaction in the Law**

– Amiram Elwork, Ph.D.

When you practice law, stress comes with the territory. Such stressors as time pressures, work overload, conflict, and difficult people can rob you of a satisfying career and personal life. It doesn't have to be that way, however. You can take effective action and this book, written specifically for lawyers, shows you how.

### **The Upward Spiral: Getting Lawyers from Daily Misery to Lifetime Wellbeing**

– Harvey Hyman, J.D.

Lawyers help others but take very poor care of themselves. In their quest to max out their earning potential and afford the best material goods our economy has to offer, lawyers lead a narrow, grimly serious existence without emotional rewards. This book, written by a former litigator, is a comprehensive self-help guide that can save the careers and lengthen the lives of lawyers under stress, and help them achieve the unthinkable - to feel happy, joyful, grateful to be alive.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### Lawyers with Depression

-[www.lawyerswithdepression.com](http://www.lawyerswithdepression.com)

I created this website 10 years ago. I did so because there wasn't a website like it and I didn't want law students, lawyers and judges to go through the pain of depression without some online support. The website features a weekly article by a depression expert, my blog about living with depression while practicing law, depression news, blogs about depression from around the web that I've chosen for my readers, and news articles related to depression in the law.

### American Bar Association's Commission on Lawyers' Assistance Programs

- [www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer-assistance.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer-assistance.html)

The ABA's Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs has the mandate to educate the legal profession about alcoholism, chemical dependencies, stress, depression and other emotional health issues, and assist and support all bar associations and lawyer assistance programs in developing and maintaining methods of providing effective solutions for recovery. Each state has a Lawyers Assistance or Lawyers Helping Lawyers program that you can contact to see what specific programs and support they have in your local community.

### Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

- [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading peer-directed national organization focusing on the two most prevalent mental health conditions in the U.S., depression and bipolar disorder. DBSA's peer-based, wellness-oriented, and empowering services and resources are available when people need them, where they need them, and how they need to receive them—online 24/7, in local support groups, in audio and video casts, or in printed materials distributed by DBSA, their chapters, and mental health care facilities across America.

### University at Michigan Depression Center

- [www.depressioncenter.org](http://www.depressioncenter.org)

This is one of my favorite depression websites because of its online depression toolkit which lets people create their own wellness plan to recover from and manage their illness.

### Dave Nee Foundation

-[www.daveneefoundation.org](http://www.daveneefoundation.org)

This not-for-profit was created ten years ago following the death by suicide of law student David Nee. The mission of the organization is to eliminate stigma surrounding depression in law schools and encourage not only diagnosis and treatment, but also education of families, friends and the disease. Through its Uncommon Counsel program, it puts on programs at law schools around the country.

### Hope to Cope

- [www.hopetocope.com](http://www.hopetocope.com)

This is the on-line website and blog of the best-selling magazine *Esperanza*, a publication specifically designed to help those who suffer from depression and anxiety.

### Mental Health Association of America

- [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

MHA is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. Their work is driven by their commitment to promote mental health as a critical part of overall wellness, including prevention services for all, early identification and intervention for those at risk, integrated care, services, and supports for those who need it, with recovery as the goal.



**DANIEL T. LUKASIK, ESQ.**

After being diagnosed with major depression, Dan launched the website [Lawyerswithdepression.com](http://Lawyerswithdepression.com) in 2007 to help those in the legal profession suffer from this illness.

Dan is a 1988 graduate from the University at Buffalo School of Law and litigates cases throughout the country. He is listed in the publication “The Best Lawyers in America” and was voted by the 4,000 members of his bar association, one of the top 10 most respected lawyers in his community.

His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, on *CNN* and in many other national and international media outlets. He is the recipient of the “Public Service Award” from the New York State Bar Association and the “Distinguished Alumni Award for Public Service” from the University at Buffalo School of Law. Dan is the Executive Producer of the original documentary, “A Terrible Melancholy: Depression in the Legal Profession” and lectures around the country to law schools, bar associations, judicial groups, and mental health organizations. He also maintains a life coaching practice specifically designed to help law students and lawyers with too much stress, burnout, anxiety and depression develop pragmatic solutions to recover from and stay healthy.

More about Dan’s life coaching practice can be found on his website, [Yourdepressioncoach.com](http://Yourdepressioncoach.com), via e-mail at [danieltlukasik@gmail.com](mailto:danieltlukasik@gmail.com).



LAWYERSWITHDEPRESSION.COM

EMAIL DANIELTLUKASIK@GMAIL.COM

VISIT YOURDEPRESSIONCOACH.COM

LAWYERSWITHDEPRESSION.COM

Copyright © 2017 by Daniel T. Lukasik

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any process—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission.

For permission information contact DANIELTLUKASIK@GMAIL.COM.