

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LET'S ALL PREPARE FOR 2020

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HAPPY NEW YEAR! I would like to begin with a special thanks to the many contributors and authors who provided input for this month's content. This month you will find a number of quality articles on several topics ranging from estate planning to medical malpractice and much more. The various contributors have provided helpful information and hints to assist each of us in our daily practice.

In the meantime—on to 2020! As with each new year, it is a time to reenergize and to start anew. In other words, it is a time for a “de novo” review of our careers and our life choices. It is very important that we each take some time at the beginning of the year to examine our past achievements, as well as our future goals and objectives. Without doubt, a bit of self-reflection pays back ten-fold. Be sure to read the article on page 12 about chronic stress and the practice of law; it includes several lists that may be helpful in self-evaluation.

As part of this self-analysis, it is always a good idea to determine what areas in our lives bring unwanted anxiety and stress. We all feel it! While stress certainly exists in any number of professions, it is well-documented as an ongoing factor in the lives of attorneys. There are any number of reasons for the occupation-related stress many of us endure—heavy caseloads, demanding schedules, hostile opponents, unrealistic deadlines, lack of work-life balance and many others. At times the word “frantic” comes to mind.

Without doubt, several of us have become experts at hiding our true feelings and the state of our mental health. Many of us have developed mechanisms to protect ourselves, and we often build barriers with our clients, friends and family. While we can attempt to dismiss these underlying feelings, they are proven to exist. Research by the American Bar Association confirmed that some 28 percent of lawyers experience mild or higher levels of depression, 19 percent

experience anxiety, 23 percent experience

chronic levels of stress and 20 percent of the participants struggled with chronic drinking. Similar results were found through the Hazelton Betty Ford Clinic study.

The definition of being an attorney can be narrowed down to the statement “dealing with the problems of others.” At times, these responsibilities can become a heavy burden. Our legal system is designed to put pressure on attorneys. To deal with these elements of practicing law, a majority of practitioners have developed their own mechanisms to cope with the various stressors



of practice. In addition, many of our members have sought assistance through the various State Bar of Nevada programs such as Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers and the Nevada Lawyer Assistance Program. Also, a new member benefit offers confidential therapy sessions that are often of great assistance to our colleagues suffering from stress and anxiety.

As part of our goal to further understand the issues our members are facing, the state bar recently completed the LET'S TALK summit in Reno and Las Vegas. The summit was directed at lawyer well-being and represented a cross-section of attorneys and judges from private practice, government and judiciary. All the panel members were invited to share their views on attorney well-being, provide their own experiences and identify issues they considered most prevalent. The roundtable discussions addressed areas such as secondary trauma, anxiety/ depression, substance abuse and

lack of civility. Much was learned during the LET'S TALK summit. As a priority, the state bar will be providing future communications regarding those resources available for members seeking information or assistance on lawyer well-being. Anyone interested in reviewing the report from the LET'S TALK summit can find the publication on the state bar website on the Lawyer Wellness page. The ultimate goal is promote happier, healthier lawyers within our state.

In researching the matter of stress and anxiety in the legal profession, I came across an excellent article in *Beyond Billables*. The article provided 10 practical tips for dealing with stress and anxiety. The list seemed reasonable and worthy of being shared. As we each plan for 2020 and recognize there are stressors in our lives, the following could prove useful:

- Set realistic internal goals and don't be swayed.
- Get better at accepting mistakes and forgiving yourself.
- Become better at prioritizing your life.

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- Take your mental health (and that of others) seriously.
- Develop more awareness of yourself.
- Learn effective stress-management habits.
- Accept that the practice of law is inherently stressful.
- Know how to play to your personal strengths.
- Maintain your balance.
 - Remember that true professionals know when to ask for help and delegate responsibility.

Regardless of your years of practice, stress and anxiety can play a significant role in our daily work and our relationships. The above list is certainly not complete, but it seems like a good place to start as we develop our goals and objectives for 2020.

Let each of us reenergize and recommit to the practice of law in 2020. Make sure to congratulate yourself on your successes during the past year, and as you make your list of goals for the next 12 months, please remember to be conscious of the many resources available to reduce stress and anxiety. Watch over your colleagues, ask for help and do not hesitate to delegate!