



Being an attorney creates a pathway to an amazing career where you can make a significant impact on people around you, your community, and society. We hold a unique position of trust and authority, where people entrust us with their biggest problems in hopes of crafting intricate solutions to complex problems. Being an attorney challenges your intellectual prowess, but also provides substantial financial rewards, the satisfaction of upholding justice, and making a difference in people's everyday lives. Our profession allows us to use our carefully crafted skills to lead the way to meaningful change and personal fulfillment.

Empowering Legal Minds: Navigating Stress and Achieving Well-being in the Legal Profession

BY JEFFRY A. COLLINS, ESQ.

Becoming an attorney is a prestigious and impactful career choice, but it also comes with a very big set of challenges and stressors. Demanding hours, high-stakes cases, and pressures to attain successful outcomes for your clients create the perfect setting for significant levels of stress that affect not only your mental health, but also your physical health.

Rising Stress Levels in the Legal Profession

In 2023, *The Washington Post* conducted an analysis on occupation and stress levels from data collected between 2010 and 2021. According to the data, being a lawyer is the most stressful occupation in the U.S.¹

ALM released its 2023 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Survey, which included 2,900 attorneys and focused on the mental health perspective pre-pandemic vs. post-pandemic. The findings of the study paint a vivid picture of the mental health status in the attorney profession. When asked if the attorney felt “mental health problems and substance abuse are at a crisis level in the legal industry,” 49.31 percent of respondents answered yes. When asked, “are mental health problems and substance abuse worse ...” 63.15 percent of respondents answered yes. “Are you depressed?” 38.27 percent of respondents answered yes. “Do you feel anxiety?” 71.1 percent of respondents answered yes. “Do you feel you have another mental health issue?” 31.32 percent

of respondents answered yes. The list goes on and on. With many, if not most of these questions about mental health issues, the 2023 results are the highest percentages they have been since 2019.²

Vast amounts of information have recently been published on this topic, sounding the alarm on this very dangerous trend. At the same time, more than ever, mental health and well-being are being talked about and addressed more than ever in the attorney profession. The question remains, why are the statistics about attorney mental health and wellness getting worse while awareness and discussion of the issues is increasing? The simple answer is, we need to practice what we preach and not be afraid, too proud, or embarrassed to seek out help.

Addressing Mental Health and Well-Being

No matter how hard you try or what you do, attorneys are likely to have some sort of stress. We have a stressful profession. However, we can implement and utilize strategies to help reduce stress in hopes of creating improved mental health and well-being for ourselves and/or staff. The American Bar Association (ABA) posted an article, “Strengthening Mental health and Well-Being in the Legal Profession: The Journey Continues,” which gives recommendations to anyone dealing with mental health issues.

First, “try to recognize the mental and physical signs that you may be experiencing that require further attention and assistance. These can include feelings of apathy, appetite changes, burnout, fatigue, headaches, weight loss or weight gain, changes to your usual consumption of food and/or alcoholic beverages, overzealousness, unexplainable or unpredictable moods, and withdrawal.”³

Second, try to identify the issues that are leading to mental health problems. Some of the legal profession’s most common stressors are: (1) Actual and/or perceived lack of empathy, (2) Changes in work environments and/or responsibilities, (3) Disengagement with work, (4) Dissatisfaction with work, (5) Feelings of always being “on” and accessible, (6) Feeling undervalued, (7) Increased or unbalanced workloads, and (8) Traditional demands and stressors of the legal profession.⁴ Keep in mind, this is not a complete list of issues.

Third, seek out trusted resources. The State Bar of Nevada is very committed to the health and well-being of its lawyers. There are assistance programs to help attorneys with these types of issues. These programs include:

- **Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL):** Confidential peer support for Nevada attorneys in need of support to get in – or stay – in recovery. Weekly closed door Alcoholics Anonymous meetings held statewide.
- **Nevada Lawyer Assistance Program (NLAP):** Clinical services for attorneys suffering from abuse, addiction and/or mental health issues that may impair professional competence. Program is staffed by clinical professionals statewide and when sought voluntarily, the initial assessment is provided at no charge to the attorney.
- **Therapy Benefit:** This member benefit offers therapist referrals. If an attorney wants assistance in dealing with a difficult life situation, such as divorce, depression, stress, the death of a loved one, a traumatic case, or any other stressful incident/situation, he or she can request the name of a therapist by calling 1-866-828-0022. The first three sessions are provided at no charge. The inquiry and subsequent three sessions are completely confidential.
- **Calm App:** Offered at no charge to Nevada attorneys, the Calm app provides a practical tool that you can use to improve your mental health, get better rest, and increase resiliency.
- **Stress, Anxiety, and Mindfulness Resources:** Virtual support group for Nevada attorneys experiencing stress and anxiety, plus free mindfulness webinars.⁵

The programs mentioned above are critical and invaluable resources for attorneys and judges to use. There may be many of you in the profession who are skeptical about talking about issues you are going through and worried about who will know. The good news is that most of these programs are completely confidential (excluding the Calm App, which requires you to fill out an interest form on the state bar website (<https://nvbar.org/for-lawyers/resources/business-partners/calm/>)). Each service is available but is aimed at different needs of the individual.

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers

LCL is a program created in Nevada almost 40 years ago. LCL focuses on helping attorneys suffering from alcohol, drug, gambling problems, depression, and/or stress.

The program works by providing a confidential hotline for attorneys to call (1-866-828-0022).

The attorney will only provide their first name and call back number. An individual with experience and understanding in the areas listed above will contact you and serve as a support system to help

guide you through your own situation and put you in touch with resources that you might not know are available.

The goal of LCL is to help attorneys struggling with these issues and solve those issues before you potentially ruin your reputation and career. “*Supreme Court Rule 106.5 provides confidentiality for individuals seeking assistance from LCL. All communications and actions are held in the strictest confidence and are not reported to any individual or entity outside LCL, including state bar disciplinary, admission, administrative or other state bar proceeding.*”⁶

Nevada Lawyer Assistance Program

NLAP is designed to be a formal clinical service for attorneys and/or judges who may be suffering from abuse, addiction, or mental health issues. Different from LCL, NLAP is a physical service providing direct contact with medical professionals, rather than

For confidential help, call 866-828-0022 and provide your first name only. Someone will call you back.

networking with a person with experience in similar situations.

Through the program, you will have an initial consultation with a medical professional. This initial consultation is provided free of charge to you and will be billed directly to the State Bar of Nevada via unique identifiers only known to the medical facility. If, after the initial consultation, continued treatment/therapy is recommended, it is up to you to continue that course of treatment and take care of any expenses related to that treatment. If you are in need of assistance, you can reach out directly to one of the following medical providers⁷:

Carson City

Josee Perrine, M.A., LCADC, MFT
Sierra Counseling & Neurotherapy
2874 N. Carson Street, Ste. 215
Carson City, NV 89706
775-885-7717
jperrine@scncounseling.com

Las Vegas

Mark Chase, MA, MBA, LCADC
Clinical Program Director, Professional
Recovery Network (PRN)
7465 W. Lake Mead Blvd, Suite 224
Las Vegas, NV 89128
702-562-1230
prnmark@pm.me

Landmark Recovery
3321 N. Buffalo Drive, Ste. 150
Las Vegas, NV 89129
702-903-4954

Reno

The Differents
5950 Rock Farm Road
Reno, NV 89511
888-216-7181
<https://the-differents.com/>

Therapy Benefit

The bar's therapy benefit is a program designed for attorneys and judges who are dealing with difficult personal life situations such as divorce, depression, stress, stressful cases, or similar situations. You can call a confidential hotline (1-866-828-0022). Through this hotline, you will be connected with another peer attorney. The attorney will provide you with the names of therapists.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Empowering Legal Minds: Navigating Stress and Achieving Well-being in the Legal Profession

If you decide to seek therapy, you will be provided with three complimentary sessions. You can attend the therapy session in person or virtually for your convenience. The therapist will confidentially and directly bill the State Bar of Nevada, using no personally identifiable information. All sessions and the initial phone call will be kept completely confidential.⁸

As we navigate the challenges and stresses inherent in the legal profession, it's more important than ever to focus on our well-being. The rising statistics on mental health issues among attorneys underscore a critical need for action, not just discussion. Encouragingly, there's a growing emphasis on mental health awareness and support within our field. As we become more open to seeking help and utilizing available resources, we can start to turn the tide on these concerning trends. Let's commit to practicing self-care, seeking support when needed, and fostering an environment where mental well-being is prioritized. Together, we can ensure that our profession not only demands excellence but also champions the health and happiness of those who dedicate themselves to the pursuit of justice.



JEFFRY A. COLLINS IS an attorney, author, Nevada Bar tutor, and adjunct professor at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. Collins has a passion for law and writing. His legal interests cover a range of areas, including business law, securities/cryptocurrency, trusts and estates, and criminal law.

Collins holds an associate degree from Ventura Community College, and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He also holds a J.D. from Mitchell Hamline School of Law, where he graduated Phi Alpha Delta Society of Scholars. He is pursuing a Master of Library and Information Sciences from Louisiana State University, where he is a member of the Omega Nu Lambda National Collegiate Honor Society. Collins will be beginning an LLM in Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine Caruso School of Law in 2024.

ENDNOTES:

1. Van Dam, A. (2023, January 6). The happiest, least stressful, most meaningful jobs in America ... <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/01/06/happiest-jobs-on-earth/>
2. ALM. (2023). 2023 Mental Health & Substance Abuse Survey. <https://www.alm.com/intelligence/solutions-we-provide/analyst-reports/mental-health-and-substance-abuse-survey/>
3. Strengthening Mental Health and Well-Being in the Legal Profession: The ..., www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/resources/newsletters/pretrial-practice-discovery/strengthening-mental-health-well-being-legal-profession-journey-continues/. Accessed 8 Feb. 2024.
4. Id.
5. State Bar of Nevada. (n.d.). *Lawyer wellbeing*. Lawyer Wellbeing – State Bar of Nevada. <https://nvbar.org/for-lawyers/resources/lawyer-wellbeing/>
6. *Lawyers concerned for Lawyers*. Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers – State Bar of Nevada. (n.d.). <https://nvbar.org/for-lawyers/resources/wellbeing/lcl/>
7. *Nevada Lawyer Assistance Program (NLAP)*. Nevada Lawyer Assistance Program (NLAP) – State Bar of Nevada. (n.d.). <https://nvbar.org/for-lawyers/resources/wellbeing/nlap/>
8. *Therapy benefit*. Therapy Benefit – State Bar of Nevada. (n.d.). <https://nvbar.org/for-lawyers/resources/wellbeing/therapy/>