

CLE-In-A-Box: Attorney Wellness Outline

Introduction

- Title Slide & Bio
 - Your Legal Background
 - Your Journey in State Bar Leadership
- Non-Representation Disclaimer
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- General Introduction
 - It's no secret that our profession is buckling under the weight of stress, anxiety, substance use, and depression. But we're all in this together, and our colleagues are suffering. Let's end lawyer suicide, destigmatize mental health challenges, and promote wellness in our profession. This CLE is about learning how to find balance in your life and practice, identify the warning signs in yourself and others, and create a culture of wellness in your workplace.

Warning Signs

- Alcohol
 - What qualifies as a medical diagnosis for alcoholism?
 - Medical professionals recommend assistance if two or more of the following CAGE questions are answered affirmatively:
 - Have you ever felt like you should cut down on your drinking?
 - Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
 - Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
 - Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get over a hangover?
- Anxiety
 - What qualifies as a medical diagnosis for general anxiety disorder (GAD)?
 - Health professionals are advised to diagnose GAD if three following symptoms presents:
 - Excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation), occurring more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities (such as work or school performance).
 - The anxiety and worry are associated with three (or more) of the following six symptoms: (1) restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge; (2) being easily fatigued; (3) difficulty concentrating or mind going blank; (4)

irritability; (5) muscle tension; (6) sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless, unsatisfying sleep).

- The anxiety, worry, or physical symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance, another medical condition, and is not better explained by another mental disorder.

- Depression

- What qualifies as a medical diagnosis for major depressive disorder (MDD)?

- According to the DSM-5, medical professionals are advised to diagnose MDD if:

- Five or more of the following symptoms present and are experienced at least once a day for a period of two weeks: (1) You feel sad or irritable most of the day, nearly every day; (2) You are less interested in most activities you once enjoyed; (3) You suddenly lose or gain weight or have a change in appetite; (4) You have trouble falling asleep or want to sleep more than usual; (5) You experience feelings of restlessness; (6) You feel unusually tired and have a lack of energy; (7) You feel worthless or guilty, often about things that wouldn't normally make you feel that way; (8) You have difficulty concentrating, thinking, or making decisions; (9) and/or You think about harming yourself or committing suicide.
- Depressed mood or a loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities for more than two weeks.
- Mood represents a change from the person's baseline.
- Impaired function in one's social life, work, or education.
- The symptoms are not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication), another medical condition, and the symptoms are not explained by any psychotic disorder.

- Data & Research

- The American Bar Association, as part of its mission to promote professional competence as well as support its attorney members and the sustainable practice of law, funded a comprehensive study to determine

the levels of mental health, alcohol and substance abuse within the profession, in addition to the factors relating to these issues

- Among other things, the study found an overall 20.6 percent of the respondents scored at a level signifying problematic drinking, and that the rate of problem drinking among younger attorneys (defined as 30 or younger) was 31.9 percent, a rate nearly double the rate disclosed by their colleagues aged 51 to 60, and again, nearly double the 14% problem drinking rate of general American public.
- Of all (including older) study participants who endorsed use of a specific substance class in the past year, stimulants had the highest rate of weekly usage at 74.1%, followed by sedatives (51.3%), tobacco (46.8%), marijuana (31%) and opioids (21.6%).
- The most common mental health conditions reported were anxiety (61.1%), followed by depression (45.7%), social anxiety (16.1%), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (12.5%), panic disorder (8.0%), and bipolar disorder (2.4%). Women, the study found, were more likely than men to suffer from anxiety, while men were more likely to suffer from depression, and problematic drinking was found to positively correlate with both mental health conditions. These mental health issues were found to track similarly to alcohol abuse in that they generally decrease as both age and years in the field increased.

Achieving Wellness

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Meditation
- Breathing Technique
- Tech Tips
- Work/Life Balance
- Managing Stress
- Sleep
- Managing Anxiety

Culture of Wellness

- Law Firms, In-House Legal Teams, and Government Attorneys
 - Develop a wellness committee or task force to plan and organize your wellness efforts
 - Provide service opportunities for your lawyers and staff
 - Provide education on health and wellness topics such as diet/nutrition, healthy cooking, exercise, mindfulness, and meditation

- Monitor workloads and help lawyers working long hours manage the work and get the help and resources they need
- Law Schools
 - Host events with practicing lawyers to discuss the stress and rigors of practicing law
 - Help students learn about different practice areas and which ones might fit their personalities and goals and promote long-term happiness
 - Host a wellness day to promote wellness and highlight resources for students and faculty
- Local Bar Associations
 - Develop a committee to plan and coordinate the organization's wellness initiatives
 - Provide service opportunities for members
 - Host events aimed at raising awareness and destigmatizing substance use and mental health challenges
 - Host a wellness day to promote wellness and highlight resources for your lawyers and staff
- The Judiciary
 - Encourage your colleagues to socialize and avoid isolation
 - Balance caseloads so no single judge or clerk is overloaded or lacks diversity in his or her cases
 - Host a wellness day to promote wellness and highlight resources for judges, clerks, and staff

Finding Help Now

- An Emergency/Urgent Health Crisis
- Help with Chronic Mental Health Challenges
- Assistance Relating to the Practice of Law
- Health Insurance
- No Health Insurance, but can afford some out-of-pocket expenses
- No Health Insurance and cannot afford out-of-pocket expenses

Summary/Conclusion

- Overview of Useful Resources