

Your COUNSEL

Our critical resolution for 2019

People come to us with a myriad of problems. We are creative and excellent problem solvers. We put our clients first — often at the expense of our health and well-being.

By now, you know the grim facts. We suffer from alcohol abuse at a higher rate than most other groups. We have significant mental health distress. We are at a greater risk of suicide and other self-injurious behavior. Since July 21, 2016, three of our colleagues have died as a consequence of substance abuse or mental health problems.

What concerns me most is that we do not know how to help ourselves. The ABA 2017 Report on Lawyer Wellbeing cited several reasons why, including: (1) we do not recognize the symptoms; (2) we do not know how to identify or access treatment; (3) we are afraid of what others will think of us; (4) we are ashamed to seek help; and (5) we do not have time to help ourselves.

Join me in making a critical resolution for 2019: **I will care for myself more and will look out for my brothers and sisters in the law.**

Here are concrete steps we can take to meet this resolution:

1. Be aware of common symptoms of anxiety and depression such as irritability, obsessive thinking, poor concentration, excessive worrying, poor sleep, sweating, fatigue and feelings of self-inadequacy.

2. Be aware of common signs of anxiety and depression such as withdrawal from peers, friends and family, loss of interest in activities the individual used to enjoy, missed work days



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or deadlines, and maladaptive coping such as self-medicating with alcohol or other substances.

3. Take comments about death or suicide seriously. Experts say it's best to be direct: "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" or "Are you thinking of ending your life?"

Provide appropriate resources for people in need. Listen and offer hope.

4. Meditate and be mindful. Be aware of yourself and enjoy life rather than always thinking about work or how to address the next challenge.

5. Make time for healthy eating and exercise. Try to enjoy a meal rather than eating while working. Make time for a daily walk or other physical activity to relieve physical tension and restore energy.

6. Rest adequately. Sleep deprivation can make you more vulnerable to stress and anxiety.

7. Promote a healthy work environment in your firm or office. Collaborate on effective time and workload management.

8. Schedule vacations, long weekends and occasional days off. When on vacation, be on vacation. Avoid bringing work with you.

9. Stay connected to friends and family. Professional life should not be your entire life.

10. Know about and use these avail-

able local resources:

a. Confidential & Free Counseling: In collaboration with Tree of Hope Counseling, the MCBA offers FREE assistance for a range of issues including anxiety, depression, grief/loss, parenting, relationships, stress reduction, LGBT and more. In addition to an initial call, you will receive four free counseling sessions if you desire. Interactions are confidential. All calls are returned within 24 hours. The MCBA Helpline is (585) 353-1541.

b. Peer to Peer Lawyers Support Group for Self-Care & Well-Being: We meet the second Wednesday of every month for one hour (5 to 6 p.m.) at the SatiVirya Studio, 20 North Goodman Street, Rochester, NY 14607. Open to anyone. No RSVP needed.

c. Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCFL) aids those impaired by alcohol and substance dependency. Interactions are discreet and confidential, and access is available 24/7 at (585) 234-1950.

d. Support of Lawyers, All Concern Encouraged (SOLACE) is a network of people in our legal community willing to assist others in need due to sudden catastrophic events such as illness, injury, fire, etc. Lawyers, judges, non-lawyers and their family members may qualify. If you or someone you know needs help, send an email to solace@mcba.org.

e. Health & Well-Being Programming Committee: The MCBA has a dedicated committee that works on educational and social programs that focus on the health and well-being of

attorneys in Rochester. Come to a program, suggest a program for us and get involved.

f. Triage Task Force: We accept calls or communications from lawyers and judges who are concerned about themselves or others and triage how to help. The task force members are Brad

Kammholz, Paul Leclair, Terry Emmons, Monroe County Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Frazee, MCBA Executive Director Kevin Ryan, MCBA Membership and Communications Manager Liz Novak Henderson and yours truly. Please reach out to us and encourage others to do so.

I wish us all a very happy, healthy and “self-caring” 2019.

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