

## Secure Your Mask First, Then Help Others: The Importance of Prioritizing Self-Care and a

### Culture of Wellness

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## What is “self care” & why is it important?

- ▶ *“Love yourself first, and everything else falls in line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world”.~~Lucille Ball*
- ▶ Self care is defined as “the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one’s own health”.
- ▶ In a world where we take care of others (family, friends, clients, community, professional), self-care is important to avoid burnout, compassion fatigue and depression, and to handle stress in a healthy way.

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## The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change

- ▶ Published in August 2017 by the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being
- ▶ *“To be a good lawyer, one has to be a healthy lawyer. Sadly, our profession is falling short when it comes to well-being. The two studies (referenced in the report) reveal that too many lawyers and law students experience chronic stress and high rates of depression and substance use. **These findings are incompatible with a sustainable legal profession, and they raise troubling implications for many lawyers’ basic competence.** This research suggests that the current state of lawyers’ health cannot support a profession dedicated to client service and dependent on the public trust.”*
- ▶ Report contains specific recommendations for stakeholders (attorneys, judges, legal employers, law schools, and lawyers’ assistance programs).

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## Negative Impact of Stress on Attorneys

### Depression & Substance Abuse

- ▶ 2016 ABA/Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation Study found that 28% of licensed attorneys suffer from depression, 19% with anxiety, and 23% with stress.
- ▶ Study further found that 21-36% of attorneys fall into the definition of “problem drinker”
- ▶ Lawyers have double the rate of alcohol abuse than the general population (Cidambi, Psychology Today, 7/17/17)
- ▶ Depression and substance abuse can lead to everything from job dissatisfaction to incivility, malpractice, at the extreme, suicide.

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## Wellbeing and Competency

- ▶ Rule 1.1 of the Arkansas Rules of Professional Conduct
- ▶ Rule 1.1 of the Mississippi Rules of Professional Conduct
- ▶ Rule 1.1 of the Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct
- ▶ ***“A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.”***
  - ▶ It is difficult to provide competent representation when experiencing distress, depression, substance abuse and/or a lack of sleep.
  - ▶ We owe it to our clients, our law partners, and most of all ourselves and our personal relationships to practice self-care.

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## Self-care measures to cope with stress

(This is the “securing your mask first” part of the program)

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## Sleep

- ▶ Lack of sleep impacts memory, cognitive processes and concentration.
- ▶ Lack of sleep is a factor in high blood pressure, obesity, and inflammation due to an increase in C-reactive protein.
- ▶ Tips for better sleep:
  - ▶ Establish a sleep time ritual
  - ▶ Stay away from caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate and some pain relievers) after 2 p.m.
  - ▶ Eat your last meal about 3 hours before bedtime to allow time for digestion.
  - ▶ Go to bed and wake up close to the same time every day (yes, even on the weekends).
  - ▶ Put down the electronics about an hour before bedtime.

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## Nutrition

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## Walk it out!

Can't find time to hit the gym? Walking briskly three times per week is documented to decrease blood pressure, decrease waist and hip measurements, and can be done without special equipment (Dogs are helpful, though)!

Some ways to incorporate movement into your day:

- Suggest walking meetings if you don't need a PowerPoint presentation

- Walk at lunch or take a break during the day to get some fresh air

- Choose a parking spot that's further away to get in more steps

- Set up a walking challenge with friends, family or co-workers



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Science has shown that meditation can change the brain, resulting in decreased stress.

- ▶ Regular meditation decreases blood pressure, decreases inflammation, and increases immunity.
- ▶ There are several apps (Calm, Headspace) that can help you with your meditation practice (added bonus—they both have sections devoted to helping you sleep better).
- ▶ It's called a meditation *practice* for a reason! Don't get discouraged or frustrated—it takes time.

## Breathe in, breathe out. Rinse and repeat.

- ▶ Deep breathing is relaxing, can calm stress, and can help you focus.

Time for audience participation

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Set healthy boundaries. Get off the grid.  
Take a break from electronic devices. And a  
break from work.



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## Practice Gratitude

Gratitude can refocus your thoughts from the negative to the positive.

Gratitude can lead to optimism, positivity, and happiness, which in turn has significant health benefits.

Keep a Gratitude Journal: list three things every day for which you are thankful.

Reframe a negative experience into a positive.



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## Connections



- ▶ Networking opportunities, such as your state and local bar associations, can provide strong connections to other who understand the stress of being an attorney. It's good to have friends and connections that understand your professional life. But...
- ▶ Be sure to have connections that do not want to talk about the law—it gives you a break and provides other perspectives that may help you look at the practice of law differently.

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## Rome wasn't built in a day...

- ▶ Don't try to make several changes at once!
- ▶ Pick one or two self-care changes (sleep is a great place to start) and incorporate those into your daily routine.
- ▶ Success builds enthusiasm!
- ▶ TBA has a new program, Choose Your Path to Wellbeing, that can help guide you on your journey to wellbeing in Movement, Nutrition, and Mental Health.

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## The Importance of a Culture of Wellbeing in the Workplace

- ❖ It can improve recruitment efforts
- ❖ It can improve employee retention
- ❖ It can decrease professional malpractice costs
- ❖ It can decrease health insurance costs

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“Today’s young workers have been called lazy and entitled. Could they, instead, be among the first to understand the proper role of work in life—and end up remaking work for everyone else?”

Claire Cane Miller and Sanam Yar, “Young People are Going to Save Us All From Office Life,” *The New York Times* (September 17, 2019).

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Don't be afraid to ask for help. It's the ultimate in self-care. As an attorney, you can reach out to your state lawyers assistance program for help.



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## Resources

- ▶ Arkansas Judges & Lawyers Assistance Program: [www.arjlap.org](http://www.arjlap.org)
- ▶ Mississippi Lawyers & Judges Assistance Program: [www.msbar.org/programs-affiliates/lawyers-judges-assistance-program.aspx](http://www.msbar.org/programs-affiliates/lawyers-judges-assistance-program.aspx)
- ▶ Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program: [www.tlap.org](http://www.tlap.org)
- ▶ The Path to Lawyer Wellbeing: <http://lawyerwellbeing.net/>
- ▶ TBA Choose Your Path to Wellbeing: [Choose Your Path to Well Being \(tba.org\)](http://tba.org)
- ▶ TBA Journal, Wellbeing Edition: [Tennessee Bar Journal \(tba.org\)](http://tba.org)

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## More Resources

- ▶ Success Through Stillness by Russell Simmons
- ▶ Eat Smarter by Shawn Stevenson
- ▶ Sleep Smarter by Shawn Stevenson
- ▶ Move the Body, Heal the Mind by Jennifer Heisz, PhD
- ▶ The Model Health Show podcast (Shawn Stevenson)
- ▶ Apps: Calm, Headspace, Peloton, MyFitnessPal

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## Questions???

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