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Why in the Legal Profession?

- **Alcohol and Drug Problems:**
Roughly one in four attorneys in a recent study
- **Anxiety and/or Depression symptoms:**
Nearly one in five attorneys
- **General adult population: one in ten**

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Substance Use and Depression Disorders

What differentiates those of us who suffer from these problems from those of us who do not?

3

Certain Brain Chemistry

Having the correct quantity of two chemicals (neurotransmitters) present in the brain helps regulate mood states AND helps us cope with stress:

- Dopamine
- Serotonin

SSRIs—Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors—popular antidepressants that help regulate the quantity and effects of Serotonin

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The Diseases of Addiction and Mental Illness

- 50% Genetic
- 50% Environmental
- NOT biology versus environment—these factors act together to produce addiction and mental health issues
- ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (“ACES”):
Parental:
 - Alcoholism
 - Drug Addiction
 - Depression or Bi-Polar
 - Violence in the home
 - Extreme Poverty

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Substance Use and Depression Disorders

But why would these problems be greater in the legal profession?



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What Personality Traits are Attracted to the Field of Law?

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Lawyers vs. General Population
(Susan Daicoff, PhD, JD)

AS PRE-LAW STUDENTS

Characterized by:

- Need for dominance and leadership
- More authoritarian
- Low interest in emotions and other's feelings
- Normal levels of psychological distress

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Lawyers vs. General Population
(Susan Daicoff, PhD, JD)

EFFECTS OF LAW SCHOOL

- Increased aggression under stress
- Preference for competition
- Failure to rely on peers for social support
- Increased tension, insecurity, and substance abuse (confirmed by numerous studies)

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Lawyers vs. General Population
(Susan Daicoff, PhD, JD)

AS LAWYERS

- ❑ Competitive, argumentative, aggressive
- ❑ Low interest in emotional concerns (their's or other's); disproportionate preference for "Thinking" versus "Feeling"
- ❑ Higher incidence of distress and substance abuse
- ❑ *Pessimistic outlook on life*

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Pessimists Do Better At Law
(Martin Seligman, PhD)

- Tested the entire entering class of Virginia Law School (1990) with a measure of optimism versus pessimism and then followed these students for all three years.
- Pessimists outperformed the more optimistic students on traditional measures of success such as grades and law journal.
- Pessimism level was higher than the beliefs of clinically depressed individuals.

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Form of Pessimism in Lawyers

- Pessimism was internal (its all my fault if things go wrong)
- Stable (bad things happen frequently)
- Global instead of situational attribution (the problem is pervasive—will ruin my career)
- While positive events are external, unstable and situational (when good things do occasionally happen, happen by chance—not because of me)
- **Does this pessimistic thinking SOUND FAMILIAR??**

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Prof. Krieger: Thinking like a lawyer **“is a legal skill, not a life skill.”**

- Your skills as a lawyer are useful in certain professional contexts, but need not and should not dictate how you approach your personal life nor assume your entire identity.

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STRESS !!!

(And how to Cope with the legal profession)

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Thinking Vs. Circumstances

E V E N T	I N T E R P R E T A T I O N	STRESS!!
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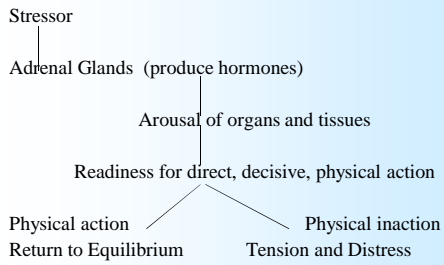
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“These things are neither good nor bad; is thinking that makes it so.”

Hamlet, William Shakespeare

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The Stress Response



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WORRY

18

When it comes to managing stress, your MIND is your own WORST ENEMY

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“I’ve known many troubles in my life—most of which didn’t happen.”

Mark Twain

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Do you feel that your training and work experience has made you more pessimistic in the manner in which you approach your life? How about your work?
- How does pessimism or negativity contribute to the stress of your work—if at all?

“Coping with the Unique Challenges of being an Administrative Law Judge.” Richard Carlson, MPH 2019

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THE POWER OF NOW

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MINDFULNESS
A meditation practice:

The practice of paying absolute attention to where you are and what you are doing

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Managing Client Expectations

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CELL PHONE NUMBER

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Pace

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What were futurists writing fifty years ago?

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How Did We Get Here?

- The pace of life has changed tremendously in our lifetimes
- The practice of law has changed even more rapidly and significantly
- We weren't designed for this pace

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Time Shifting

- Its not only about TIME MANAGEMENT
- Its also about deciding HOW HARD and for HOW LONG you are willing to drive on
- Its about creating some *balance* in your life
- Its about creating spaces and places in your life where you can "downshift" to a more normal pace

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