

IN THIS ISSUE

Perspectives: Lawyers, Anxiety, and Depression

• Page 1

Handling Fear and Stress During a Prolonged Crisis

• Page 5

Lawyers in Transition Presentation Calendar

• Page 8



OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Helping lawyers, judges, and law students since 1982

503.226.1057
1.800.321.OAAP
WWW.OAAP.ORG

Problem Substance or Alcohol Use

Health and Wellness

Compulsive or Challenging Behavior

Career Satisfaction

Anxiety, Depression, and Other Mental Health Concerns

Challenging Times

A free, not for profit, confidential program for you.

Perspectives: Lawyers, Anxiety, and Depression

Well over half of all lawyers report having had depression or anxiety over the span of their legal career. Below, lawyers share their experience practicing law with anxiety or depression: the challenges they faced, what helped, and what they would like other lawyers to know.

At its most challenging, how did anxiety or depression impact you?

- *One of the constant themes in my first few years of practicing law was the overwhelming anxiety that I was missing something in my analysis of an issue. Anxiety undercut my confidence and competence.*

- *I felt frozen. I couldn't answer the phone, open the mail, or check email. I knew I had to, but I didn't care. Of course, the longer I put it off, the worse it got.*

- *I felt a sense of hopelessness about ever having an engaged, meaningful, and peaceful life, and that this would never get any better. I had obsessive negative thoughts about everything – a lot of self-blame, and the belief that life wasn't worth living.*

- *When anxiety is at its worst, I can't see anything good. I see only where I caused all the problems or have no control over solving the problems. Nothing is positive, including the positive things. All things are negative.*

- *I just didn't care about anything. I felt blank and checked-out. I didn't want to leave the house.*

- *I felt so uncertain about everything, I would second-guess anything my brain would tell me. I couldn't make decisions. My confidence eroded.*

- *I felt a deep guilt for being present. I was certain that my friends, family, and clients would be better off without my presence in their life.*

What encouraged you to seek help?

- *An acute set of life circumstances led to pain and sadness that became intolerable.*

- *I've had bouts of depression for a long time. Depression had been a lifelong struggle. My family really wanted me to get help.*

Continued on page 2

- A colleague at work noticed I wasn't doing well and reached out. He told me that he had seen a therapist for depression and thought it might help me, too.

- I couldn't tolerate the way I felt anymore. It was choose suicide or choose to get help. I have young kids, so suicide didn't seem right.

- I thought that I had failed in representing a particularly troublesome client and was having trouble sleeping, eating, or doing other work. When I told my PLF claims attorney, she referred me to the OAAP.

What challenges did you face in getting help for your depression or anxiety?

- It was hard to ask for help because I really felt like I was the only one who felt this way and that other people wouldn't or couldn't understand. It turns out that wasn't true.

- It took a while to find the medication that worked for me, but persistence paid off.

- Depression is the absence of any motivation to get up, move around, work, or even eat. That made it hard to reach out for help.

- It was hard to find understanding at work. I didn't feel like I could talk to my supervisor. I knew I needed help, but I also needed the money, so I decided to just suffer and hope it would go away. That was unsustainable.

- I first struggled with the idea of taking medication; I felt I would be weak if I took medication for anxiety. I had the same feeling even after taking medication and knowing that it was helping. Getting over this feeling of weakness has been an ongoing challenge, but it's so worth it.

- I thought that everyone felt anxious and depressed but that everyone else was just better at handling those feelings than I was.

What do you find to be most helpful or supportive from the people nearest you?

- Whenever anybody tries to help, that feels really good. But having people feel sorry for me is not helpful – even though they mean well.

- Having acceptance and understanding is helpful. Some people couldn't understand that my brain was different. If someone in your life has depression and anxiety, read about it and educate yourself. If you just go with your instincts, you might be wrong.

- My therapist told me early on that they were holding hope for me until I could find hope for myself. That really meant a lot.

- Having someone just be there for me. You don't have to fix it – just be supportive. Laughter helps.

What are some things that are helpful to you in your recovery?

- Talk therapy and changing lifestyle habits – social connection, proper food, good sleep, and exercise.

- The ability to talk to friends and family about it. I am lucky to have a partner who is willing to listen and support me in my path to greater control over my anxiety and depression.

- I have to remember that anxiety is a liar. It lies to me about my strengths, disguising my strengths as weakness and my weakness as proof that I'm a terrible person. It gets easier to remind myself that those things are, factually, not true.

- Finding acceptance: It's OK that I don't always feel good. I don't have to feel bad about feeling bad – it's temporary.

- Whether it's what you do for fun, your social life, or your work, ask for what you need.

- Exercise, changing scenery, grounding. Just noticing what's happening in the moment.

- I try to go for a walk, even if it is raining, and I drink water.

- Sometimes the news gets me down. I always try to pull myself away from my computer to get a different perspective.

- Doctor-prescribed anti-anxiety medication. However, my first prescription didn't help; so keep going back until you feel your medication is working and you feel good.

- I make a point of seeing my therapist regularly to ensure that I stay on track with my mental health.

How has recovery from anxiety and depression affected your personal and professional life?

- I'm more understanding, a nicer person, and more accepting of others' troubles. My understanding and experience gives me a better connection to humanity.

Continued on page 4

Did You Know?

- In 2017, around 17.3 million adults age 18 or older in the United States had experienced at least one major depressive episode in the last year (6.7% of adults in the U.S.).
- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population every year.
- A 2016 survey indicated that the most common mental health conditions reported by lawyers over their legal career were anxiety (61.1%), depression (45.7%), and social anxiety (16.1%).
- Anxiety is highly treatable, yet only 36.9% of those suffering receive treatment.
- Between 80% and 90% of people with depression respond well to treatment. Almost all patients gain some relief from their symptoms.
- At least one study has found that survivors of COVID-19 are at increased risk of developing mental health issues like anxiety, depression, insomnia, and PTSD for the first time within 90 days of diagnosis.

If you are concerned about your safety or well-being, or that of a friend or colleague, you can get help 24/7 by calling:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1.800.273.8255
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

For More About Depression and Anxiety:

ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs Mental Health and Substance Use Resources – https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/links_of_interest/

Anxiety and Depression Association of America – <https://adaa.org/>

About Depression (National Institute Of Mental Health) – <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>

About Anxiety (National Institute Of Mental Health) – <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>

Jeffrey Fortgang and Shawn Healy, *The Full Weight of the Law: How Legal Professionals Can Recognize and Rebound from Depression* (2017)

Sources:

1. "The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys," Patrick R. Krill, JD, LLM, Ryan Johnson, MA, and Linda Albert, MSSW, *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, January/February 2016, Vol. 10, Issue 1 – https://journals.lww.com/journaladdictionmedicine/Fulltext/2016/02000/The_Prevalence_of_Substance_%20Use_and_Other_Mental.8.aspx
2. Anxiety and Depression Association of America – <https://adaa.org/>
3. "Bidirectional Associations Between COVID-19 and Psychiatric Disorder: Retrospective Cohort Studies of 62 354 COVID-19 Cases in the USA," Maxime Taquet, PhD, Sierra Luciano, BA, Prof. John R. Geddes, FRCPsych, Prof. Paul J. Harrison, FRCPsych, *The Lancet*, November 9, 2020 – [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(20\)30462-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(20)30462-4/fulltext)
4. "What Is Depression? The American Psychiatric Association – <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>

- *I'm less reserved with the people around me and more present with the people in my life. It's easier to just be me.*

- *My work life has definitely changed. Work was too stressful. I reorganized my life around non-profit activities that gave me purpose. I changed my lifestyle to reduce stress.*

- *I've become clearer in my professional life that life is short, so I try to do more things that I enjoy and that are meaningful to me.*

- *I'm more confident, and it's easier to get work done. Being able to let go of some of my constant fears has helped me function better.*

- *My practice has improved because I have better skills to cope with those troubling thoughts that jump in my mind to throw me off course.*

- *When I saw anxiety for what it was, I leaned in and now ask people if there is something I'm missing. I don't say it that way, of course. I ask clerks in administrative agencies if there is something that they wonder why I haven't brought up. I ask clients if there is something that they expected to talk about that hasn't been discussed yet. And I ask opposing counsel (after litigation!) if there was anything in particular "behind the curtain" they hadn't shared before. Most times the answer is no, but in the rare situations when the answer is yes, I always learn something new, and it helps my anxiety.*

Are there any suggestions you would give to a lawyer considering seeking help for anxiety or depression?

- *Go get help right away. You don't have to battle this on your own. Life can be easier, and it will be once you get some help.*

- *Keep working on it and don't give up. You can find a path to feel better. Seek help. Sustained continuous effort.*

- *Remember that it's a medical condition and that with accurate diagnosis you get better treatment.*

- *You can find a way to continue to work and get treatment.*

Trans Law Professionals Peer Support Group

The OAAP is pleased to offer a biweekly peer support group. This inclusive group is open to all transgender, trans-questioning, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, and intersex judges, lawyers, law students, and legal professionals. This group will be facilitated by OAAP Attorney Counselor Kyra Hazilla, JD, LCSW. At this time the group is meeting remotely during the noon hour. For more information, contact Kyra at 503.226.1057 or 1.800.321.6227, ext. 13, or at kyrah@oaap.org. Not ready for a group? Feel free to reach out to Kyra for alternative resources.

- *Depression is treatable, and it takes effort and time to recover.*

- *It comes in degrees; it's manageable until it's not. Work with it right away.*

- *Your life is more important than your job.*

- *Connecting with other people who have experienced the same thing is helpful. Find a group that you can join.*

- *Talk to a therapist! Take that first step of being vulnerable, and you'll see your hard work pay off.*

- *I know it's hard to reach out. There is help. It is effective. It's worth it. You're worth it. Just reach out if you're feeling any of this. Don't give up.*

My deep appreciation goes to the lawyers who took the time to share their thoughts with me for this article.

To talk to an attorney counselor about depression or anxiety, call the OAAP at 503.226.1057. Our services are confidential.

BRYAN R. WELCH, JD, CADC I
OAAP ATTORNEY COUNSELOR

Handling Fear and Stress During a Prolonged Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all of us in ways we never expected. Social distancing, schools shuttered, courts closed, layoffs, events canceled, financial insecurity. The list goes on.

How Are We Supposed to Cope With So Much Rapid Change in Our Lives?

Begin with an acknowledgment that it feels very unsettling to be reminded how little direct control we have over our lives – particularly over the elements of our lives that are most important to us. It is completely normal to struggle with this.

While unforeseen crises in our lives are stressful, they can also be opportunities. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to convince you to put on rose-colored glasses and pretend all is well. I am suggesting that it can be helpful to remind yourself that the coronavirus crisis is affecting all of us.

So, What's the Best Approach to Handling the Stress We're Feeling?

First, to deal with the control issue, distinguish between what is within your direct control and what is not. Then direct your time and energy at the former.

Start with a personal check-in. How are you doing with this "new normal"? What are you feeling? What aspects of this change are the most challenging for you? What potential benefits do you see from spending more time at home, working remotely, possibly having more time on your hands, or having your children home from school?

Then, based on what you need, consider trying a few of these suggestions.

Stick to Routines and Reinforce Habits

Working remotely or staying at home for extended periods can be disorienting because it disrupts routines and habits. Routines and daily habits not only keep us centered, but they also save

time because we have to make fewer decisions. I don't need to decide what I'm going to do if I have already committed to something as part of my routine. The absence of that routine now forces me to spend time and energy making more decisions. To reduce this demand on your time and energy, form new routines in your current situation. For example, even though it might not seem necessary, give yourself a schedule to follow at home just as if you were going into the office.

Don't Neglect the Basics

Prioritize healthy sleep routines, diet, exercise, breaks throughout the day, and healthy boundaries with yourself and others. Social supports are crucial, so keep up your social interactions, too. Use technology and creativity to foster relationships, even while following health guidance, observing safety protocols, and complying with legal orders.

Continued on page 6

Immigration Practice Well-Being

Practicing immigration law is hard. The chronic stress of being exposed to other people's traumatic experiences, coupled with long hours, heavy caseloads, and overburdened systems, take their toll on attorney well-being. This can lead to professional dissatisfaction, stress, secondary trauma, and burnout. Beginning in early 2021, the OAAP will hold an 8-session workshop and support group for immigration lawyers, co-facilitated by OAAP Attorney Counselors Kyra Hazilla, JD, LCSW, and Bryan Welch, JD, CADC I. This workshop will meet remotely, and will help participants identify when they are at risk for work-related ramifications and learn skills to respond with resilience. For more information, contact Kyra at 503.226.1057, ext. 13, or at kyrah@oaap.org; or Bryan at 503.226.1057, ext. 19 or at bryanw@oaap.org.

Seek Out Social Connections

If you are used to interacting with people effortlessly as part of your typical routine, you may not have had to consciously seek out social interactions in the past. If you are more extroverted, you might have been energized by these interactions and not even realized it. We often do not realize how important those regular social contacts are until they are gone. Even though it might feel clumsy to initiate those contacts now that your routine has changed, take the chance that your co-workers or colleagues also miss socializing and would appreciate you reaching out.

Consider Technology Your Friend

It's no surprise that many organizations have suddenly started using videoconferencing programs and cloud-based project management systems to connect across disparate work locations. In addition to using more technology to complete work and enable client contact, explore how tech-

Speaking of Procrastination

In our professional world of deadlines and time-sensitive commitments, habits of procrastination and avoidance often challenge the lives of many otherwise productive lawyers. In Spring 2021, the OAAP will present a 4-session workshop (1 ¼ hr./session) focusing on learning about procrastination and developing techniques, strategies, and healthy practices to successfully address and overcome it. The workshop is free and confidential. Space is limited. The workshop will be conducted remotely via Zoom. Facilitators: OAAP Attorney Counselors Doug Querin, JD, LPC, CADC I, and Kyra Hazilla, JD, LCSW. To reserve a place, contact Doug Querin at 503.226.1057, ext. 12, or at douglas@oaap.org.

nology can offer a temporary replacement for the social connections you are suddenly missing due to the disruptions in your routines.

Help Others

In situations where we feel significant stress, it is common to feel disempowered. One way to feel more confident in the face of uncertainty is to find ways of helping others. Especially if you are losing work hours or are unemployed, identifying ways to help those around you can be very healthy for your self-esteem and overall mental health.

Drink More Water

It may sound a bit silly, but we all need to drink more water. A common way to pass the time is to snack when you feel bored ... or when you're hungry ... or when you want a break or ... whenever. Drinking more water can help us stay hydrated, allow us to better distinguish our hunger from our thirst, and give us something to do when we are bored instead of snacking on carbs that we will later regret.

Get Outside

Again, it might seem silly to put this on the list, but there is a significant benefit to going outside every day, breathing fresh air (even if it is cold and rainy), and looking at a tree for even just one minute. Seriously, research shows that looking at a tree for 60 seconds has a positive impact on your well-being.

Use Downtime to Accomplish a Neglected Household To-do List

I know I am not alone in having a long "I intend to get to this someday" list of tasks that I have long neglected, usually because I feel too busy with other pressing matters. If you aren't able to use your time as productively as you would like (whether due to a lack of work, distractions at home, or a wandering mind), give yourself permission to try accomplishing one of the tasks on said list.

Resurrect Old Hobbies and Explore New Ones

Instead of filling your time with activities that have little to no reward, try reconnecting with hobbies that you once enjoyed. If they brought you enjoyment when you were younger, they might once again. Also, explore new hobbies, given your current situation. Hobbies that involve creating something or cultivating a new ability provide a lasting reward that reminds us that our time and energy can produce something tangible and long term.

Change for the Good: Take Advantage of What You Learn

One benefit of a drastic change to our routines is the opportunity to re-evaluate them. It's easy for people and organizations to get into the "this is just how we do things" rut. Now that so many things have turned on their head, brainstorm about making changes that would be helpful not only in the present moment but in the future. This could be far-reaching – for example, allowing more flexible work options permanently, or moving your practice to the cloud.

Or, the changes you make might focus on your personal productivity and happiness. For exam-

ple, right now I am experimenting with playing some upbeat instrumental music while writing this article. Normally, I would be concerned about how music might affect my co-workers. Since they aren't physically in the same workspace, I feel freer to experiment with what might be helpful to accomplish tasks.

Remember: Even though the future is uncertain, you do not have to go through this alone. Many resources are available. If you or someone you know is struggling, reach out for help.

Be well.

SHAWN HEALY

This article originally appeared on www.attorneyatwork.com, on March 23, 2020. Reprinted with permission.

Shawn Healy is a licensed clinical psychologist with Massachusetts Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, Inc. (LCL). He runs stress management groups for law firms and provides training sessions on time and stress management to bar associations, solo attorneys, and law firms. A frequent writer on the topics of conflict resolution, anxiety management, resilience, and work-life balance, he is a contributor to the LCL blog and tweets for @LCL_MassLawyers.

The OAAP is here to help you through any personal or professional issue – confidentially and free of charge.

503.226.1057 • 1.800.321.6227



OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
helping lawyers, judges, and law students since 1982



The OAAP is a program managed and funded by the Professional Liability Fund



Tanya Hanson, JD, Editor
503.639.7203

OAAP ATTORNEY COUNSELORS

Douglas S. Querin, JD, LPC, CADC I
503.226.1057, ext. 12
douglas@oaap.org

Kyra M. Hazilla, JD, LCSW
503.226.1057, ext. 13
kyrah@oaap.org

Bryan R. Welch, JD, CADC I
503.226.1057, ext. 19
bryanw@oaap.org

FINDING MEANINGFUL WORK

The OAAP holds a periodic 6-session networking and support group for lawyers making job or career transitions called “Finding Meaningful Work.” The sessions assist lawyers in creating a personalized job search plan; developing a mission statement and elevator speech; learning and practicing networking skills; and honing job search skills. Presently, sessions meet virtually through videoconference. To participate or for more information about the next group, please contact OAAP Attorney Counselor Bryan Welch, JD, CADC I, at 503.226.1057, ext. 19, or at bryanw@oaap.org.

CAREER SELF-ASSESSMENT

The OAAP attorney counselors can help you assess your career path and career opportunities. If you would like information about self-assessment, contact OAAP Attorney Counselors Doug Querin, JD, LPC, CADC I, at 503.226.1057, ext. 12, or at douglas@oaap.org; or Kyra Hazilla, JD, LCSW, at 503.226.1057, ext. 13, or at kyrah@oaap.org; or Bryan Welch, JD, CADC I, at 503.226.1057, ext. 19, or at bryanw@oaap.org.

LAWYERS IN TRANSITION PRESENTATION CALENDAR

A “Lawyers in Transition” guest speaker is featured in conjunction with the Finding Meaningful Work group (see above). Usually, the speaker shares their experience transitioning to a new job or career. You do not need to be a member of the 6-session group to attend the speaking engagement. Speakers will present via videoconference. For current information on upcoming Lawyers in Transition speakers and topics, please visit the OAAP website at www.oaap.org and click on Events.