General Attorney Wellness
By: Tyler L. Coe

Disclaimer
• The information contained in this presentation is not
  – Legal advice;
  – Health advice;
  – Mental health advice; or
  – Advice of any kind that would constitute an attorney-client relationship.
• The information contained in this presentation is for discussion purposes only.
• Should you have specific questions, contact an attorney and/or health professional.

About Me
• Dog dad to Lyla (pictured right)
• Member Attorney with Whitfield & Eddy Law, P.L.C.
• Practice in the following areas:
  – Divorce law
  – Family law
  – Mental health law
  • Advise mental health professionals
  • Litigation concerning mental health records and testimony
Overview of Presentation

- Part One: Mental Health and Mental Illness
- Part Two: Helping Yourself
- Part Three: Work-Life Balance
- Part Four: Questions/Comments

Part One: Mental Health and Mental Illness

CDC Primer: Mental Health

- Definition: includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being; affects how we think, feel, and act; helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices
**CDC Primer: Mental Illness**

- **Definition**: conditions that impact a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, or behavior; can be chronic or occasional; affect a person’s ability to relate to others and function each day
- **Examples**: depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia

**CDC Statistics as of 2018**

- More than 50% of Americans diagnosed with a mental illness or mental disorder at some point in life
- Each year, 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness
- At some point in life, 1 in 5 children will experience a seriously debilitating mental illness
- 1 in 25 Americans lives with a serious mental illness such as major depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia

**Watch for Burn-Out**

- World Health Organization defines burn-out as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.
  - Characterized by three dimensions:
    - Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
    - Increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and
    - Reduced professional efficacy.
- Note: Burn-out is in the International Classification of Diseases, but is not classified as a medical condition.
Part Two: Helping Yourself

Anxiety and Stress: Coping Strategies

- Anxiety and Depression Association of America – “Tips to Manage Anxiety and Stress”
- Time-Out: Give yourself time to move away from conflict
- Sleep: Get enough
- Do your best: We are humans, which means perfection is not possible
- Humor: A good laugh goes a long way
- Positive Attitude: Even during the darkest times, think of positives

Do you truly care about yourself and your health?

- Truly: Do you care about yourself and your mental health?
  - Regular checkups (primary care physician)?
  - Dental checkups?
  - Regular mental health check-ins (therapist/psychologist)?
  - Time set aside for ourselves (only you – no one else!)
    - Hobbies
    - Reading
    - Walking
    - Being alone

www.whitfieldlaw.com
How to Thrive: Meaningful Work

- Anne Brafford – “A Big Idea for Thriving Lawyers: Meaningful Work”
- Biggest driver of work engagement = meaningful work
- What is meaningful work?
  - Work that is significant to us
  - Work that facilitates personal growth
  - How we treat others
  - How others treat us

How to Make Work Meaningful

- Anne Brafford – “A Full Life”
- Prioritize positivity: Plan your day to work toward a smooth workflow that allows you to find meaning
- Experiment: Practice law in a way that is authentic to you
- Value high-quality relationships: Make sure others know they matter and make sure they recognize that you matter
- Continuously learn: Take opportunities to learn more about your area of law
- Appreciate your positive impact: Know that you help others

Part Three: Work-Life Balance
Guard Your Time

• Paragon Legal states you CAN guard your time!
• How?!
  – Time Blocking: Divide your day in blocks of time for specifics tasks;
  – Reduce Multitasking: silence phones, computers, e-mail notifications, et cetera. Instead, focus on one task;
  – Timer: Use a timer to keep yourself focused and reward yourself with a break. Pomodoro app is wonderful;
  – Say NO: You cannot do everything for everyone everytime.

Out of the Courtroom

• Lawyerist provides four ways to achieve work-life balance:
  – Off: Do not work from home. Do not check e-mail from home. Do not do anything at home you consider work;
  – Self: Eat well, exercise, relax, have fun;
  – Accountability buddy: Find a friend and be sure to keep yourself accountability while helping someone else;
  – Commitments: Do not over commit. While you wear robes, you do not wear superhero capes!

REALITY CHECK

• Personal goals?
  – List three
    • What will it take to accomplish each goal?
      – How will you do it?
• Professional goals?
  – List three
    • What will it take to accomplish each goal?
      – How will you do it?
• SELFcare goals:
  – List three
    • What will it take to accomplish each goal?
      – How will you do it?
All this wellness talk . . .

- Lawyer wellness is NOT:
  - Drinking kale smoothies
  - Practicing yoga in lieu of trial work
  - Swearing off alcohol or sweets forever

- Lawyer wellness IS:
  - Knowing your limits
  - Better managing stress
  - Promotes habits of consistent self-care

Source: Sam Rosenthal, “Lawyer Wellness and Mental Health: Changing the Conversation”

Look at Yourself and Around Yourself

- The Iowa Lawyer – September 2021
  - Wellness Issue
  - Content:
    - President’s letter regarding child mental health
    - Mental health professional observations
    - Healing
    - Women in recovery
    - Lawyers in crisis
    - Depression
    - Grief and mourning
    - Resilience
    - Self-care

This is a MUST read: https://www.iowabar.org/page/IowaLawyer

Resources

- Iowa Lawyers Assistance Program
  - http://www.iowalap.org/
- Institute for Well-Being in Law
  - https://lawyerwellbeing.net/
- ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs
  - https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/lawyer_wellness/
- Mental Health Professionals
Part Four
Questions/Comments

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