

BY DEAN R. DIETRICH

Each lawyer must consider their own habits and practices and adjust to ensure that their mental health and job satisfaction is at its best level for moving forward in the profession.



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### WisLAP Can Help

WWW.WISBAR.ORG/WISLAP

The Wisconsin Lawyers Assistance Program (WisLAP) offers confidential support to lawyers, judges, law students, and other legal professionals as a benefit of State Bar membership. WisLAP staff can answer questions about mental health and substance use, provide guidance on well-being practices, and match members with attorneys trained in peer support.

**To contact WisLAP staff:**

Call (800) 543-2625 or email callwislap@wisbar.org.

**Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988.**

Call or text 988 if you or someone you know may be going through a crisis or contemplating suicide. For more information, visit the 988 website at https://988lifeline.org.

# Moving the Profession Forward – Protect Your Mental Health

Should lawyers take care of themselves or take care of clients? This is not an either/or question.

At a recent conference, I learned that a high percentage of new lawyers admit that they sometimes experience depression and approximately 25% of new lawyers contemplate leaving the profession. This is attributable to the stress of the profession combined with how we govern ourselves in the business of a law practice and the weight of student debt while facing challenges in finding suitable employment. These issues cannot be addressed and fixed overnight, but it must be acknowledged that they are affecting the future of the legal profession.

We need to recognize and address the effect of these stressors on all lawyers. The State Bar of Wisconsin, through the Wisconsin Lawyers Assistance Program (WisLAP), provides educational information and personal help for lawyers to address these and other issues.

I have asked the Young Lawyers Division to help identify the many things that affect their members as they embark on their legal careers. We will use this information to help focus our efforts to assist lawyers of all ages in addressing the stress of a legal practice.

The same stressors affect senior lawyers, so we need to provide information and solutions regardless of age or experience to help ensure a higher level of satisfaction in the practice of law.

Importantly, each lawyer must consider their own habits and practices and adjust to ensure that their mental health and job satisfaction is at its best level for moving forward in the profession. I know that I am not the best at making that self-assessment and realize that I need to take care of myself to the same degree that I take care of my clients. I am learning that it is okay to be concerned about my personal well-being while at the same time striving to meet the needs of my clients. Everyone needs to make that assessment because we do not want to be a profession that people spend less time deciding to leave than they spent deciding to participate in.

Remember: Lawyer wellness is important! **WL**



### Recognizing the importance of emotions.

Developing the ability to identify and manage our own emotions to support mental health, achieve goals, and inform decision-making. Seeking help for mental health when needed.