



WSSFC 2025

Quality of Life/Ethics Track – Session 6

Navigating Major Life Challenges

Presenters:

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About the Presenters...

Brad D'Orazio is founder of Marriage & Family Solutions, LLC an outpatient mental health clinic with offices in Fitchburg and Onalaska Wisconsin. Brad is a licensed marriage and family therapist and a lawyer. When not practicing therapy or law, Brad enjoys spending time with his family and coaching high school baseball.

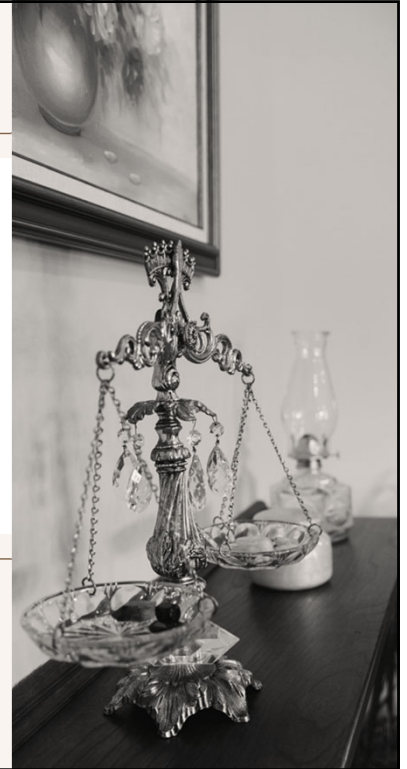
Rachel Schromen is Founder and Managing Attorney of Schromen Law, LLC, - an estate planning and elder law firm located in St. Paul, MN. Schromen Law has been voted Minnesota's Best Estate Law Firm in Minnesota by readers of the Star Tribune annually from 2021 – 2024, and in 2024 Schromen Law was named Minnesota's Best Law Firm. Apart from her law practice, Rachel is a trained end-of-life doula, hospice volunteer and enjoys exploring the Twin Cities with her dogs Murray and Margo!

NAVIGATING MAJOR LIFE CHANGES

Sustaining Your Well-Being and Your Practice

Rachel T. Schromen, Esq. | Schromen Law, LLC

Brad D'Orazio | Marriage and Family Solutions



1

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR LAWYERS

- Law is high stress, perfectionistic, and client-driven
- Major life changes don't wait until your caseload clears
- The risk: burnout, mistakes (malpractice), fractured relationships, leaving the profession.
- The opportunity: growth, resilience, more authentic practice



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2



COMMON LIFE CHANGES THAT IMPACT LAWYERS

- Marriage, divorce, parenting, illness, caregiving, retirement, death of a loved one.
- “Positive” changes (new child, new job, move) can also be destabilizing
- Even expected changes carry emotional and professional ripple effects

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3

UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT

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- **How is this change impacting me?**
- Am I anxious? Depressed? Excited? Happy?
- **Primary vs. Secondary Emotions** (Ekman / Plutchik Model)
- **The 3-Step Process**
 - What am I feeling?
 - Whom should I communicate it to?
 - What do I need?

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5

Lawyer Realities During Transition

Ethical & Professional
Obligations Don't
Pause

Client Pressure +
Personal Upheaval =
Overwhelm

Strong/Capable
Vs
Need Support

Example: Dad Dying

Example: Divorce and
Trust Client

Example: Trauma
Therapy Group

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6



MANAGING STRESS AND PROTECTING WELL-BEING

- Stressors: billable hours; deadlines; client emergencies & urgencies
- Practical Tools
- Boundaries with Clients
- Workload Triage (essential – delay – delegate)
- Normalize pausing or scaling back when needed

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7

BUILDING CERTAINTY AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

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Anxiety often comes from
uncertainty....create
structure

Work Examples

- Practice Management Systems
- Trust Colleague/Team Step In
- Clear Communication with Clients

Personal Supports

- Therapy, Coaching, Peer Groups
- Family & Friends

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9

DEPRESSION & LOW MOTIVATION

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Depression can show up as withdrawal,
exhaustion, decreased focus

Steps

- Talk to someone
- Add daily structure
- Movement and/or rest
- How to ask for accommodations
- How to communicate with
clients/team during low periods

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11

ADJUSTING CAREER GOALS DURING CHANGE

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Life transitions may shift professional identity

Reflecting: Is the old path still aligned?

- Options
- Step back temporarily
- Redefine practice area/focus
- Pursue leadership, mentorship or nontraditional legal roles
- Share personal experience of how you navigated major life change

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13

PRESERVING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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- Honest but professional communications
- Setting realistic expectations: this builds trust, not weakness
- Leaning into professional networks for support

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15

TOOLS & TAKEAWAYS

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Normalize Asking:
What do I feel?
What do I need?
Who can help me?

Set temporary boundaries

Adjust workload strategically

Invest in support systems

Re-evaluate long-term goals

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17

CLOSING

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- Lawyers are human first.
- Life transitions can deepen our capacity for empathy and authenticity
- You can sustain a meaningful legal career AND move through change well

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19

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

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20

THANK YOU

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