

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY BRYAN K. SCOTT, ESQ., PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF NEVADA

## ATTORNEY WELLNESS

I recently attended the American Bar Association's (ABA) National Conference of Bar Presidents' (NCBP) Annual Meeting. Of special interest was a session on the recently released results of a landmark study on substance abuse, depression and anxiety among lawyers. The study, conducted by the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation and the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs, reviewed anonymous surveys completed by 12,825 lawyers of various ages, areas of practice, genders, ethnicities, places of residence and years of practice. The study concluded:

**Attorneys experience problematic drinking that is hazardous, harmful, or otherwise consistent with alcohol use disorders, at a higher rate than other professional populations. Mental health distress is also significant. The data underscores the need for greater resources for lawyer assistance programs and also the expansion of available attorney-specific prevention and treatment interventions.**

The study can be found on the state bar's website at <https://www.nvbar.org/member-services-3895/nlap/resources/>

As lawyers, we are constantly called upon not only to act as lawyers, legal counselors and advisors to our clients, but also as mediators, amateur psychologists and general problem solvers to our friends, family and strangers in their times of crisis, both real and perceived. If your guidance proves to be correct, you are lauded as a hero; if it ends up being wrong, you are cast as incompetent. Our clients' freedom, reputations, fortunes or their very lives may be affected by our decisions and actions. As lawyers we are routinely thrust into complex, highly adversarial situations (usually not of our own making) with other adversarial people and told to "fix it now." This constant pressure and demand upon our minds, time and energy takes a toll on all of us at some point, and how we deal with it varies.

Because of the restrictions imposed by the attorney/client privilege, we're often forced to internalize erosive emotions and issues, and often don't have a method through

which to fully unburden ourselves. While some seem to have the ability to take it all in stride, several attorneys I know are completely burned out and depressed. Others have left the profession entirely in search of a less stressful way to make a living. I know attorneys (some friends and others acquaintances) who have simply stopped caring. That lack of care has led to costly mistakes, absenteeism, failure to communicate with clients, and detachment from their own lives and families. Sadly, others have drunk themselves into oblivion or even attempted or committed suicide. Addressing these problems is crucial if we are to fulfill our commitments to the public. Attorney wellness is something I feel strongly about and very much want to invest time exploring this year as bar president. I'm hoping others will as well.

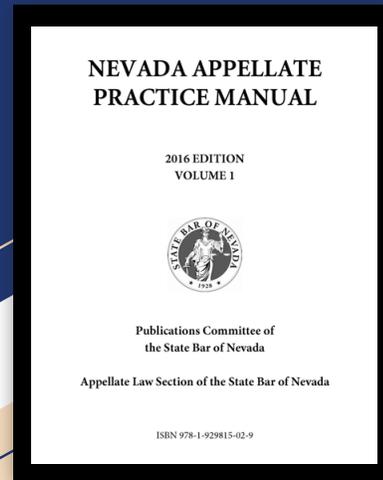
The State Bar of Nevada has two programs designed to assist lawyers in times of crisis: Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL) and the Nevada Lawyers Assistance Program (NLAP). LCL was established by dedicated Nevada attorneys who were themselves in substance recovery. They helped their fellow attorneys stay sober through Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, one-on-one support and referrals to treatment providers. LCL is completely confidential and operates independently of the bar on a voluntary basis. For more information, visit <https://www.nvbar.org/member-services-3895/nlap/lcl/> or call (866) 828-0022.

NLAP was created in 2013, to formalize the clinical services available to attorneys suffering from, not only substance abuse and addiction, but also mental health conditions and depression—issues that can impair professional competence. This confidential program is headed by an addiction-medicine physician whose office is separate from the bar. Lawyers may seek assistance from NLAP (voluntarily), or the bar's Office of Bar Counsel may refer them for assessment, referral for treatment, and ongoing monitoring and support (mandatory). For more information, visit <https://www.nvbar.org/member-services-3895/nlap/> or call (866) 828-0022.

If you, or any lawyer in Nevada, are in need of confidential assistance for problems with alcohol, drugs, depression, stress or gambling, help is readily available through these programs. Please don't suffer in silence. It is important that lawyers stop denying their need for help. Reaching out does not make one appear weak. Rather, it takes great courage, and is truly a demonstration of strength and inspiration to those people most important to you.



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[www.nvbar.org/clecatalog](http://www.nvbar.org/clecatalog).

## Seven Tips to Less Stress for Attorneys

Lawyering can be a tremendously rewarding career, but also a frustrating and stressful one at times. A 2014 article by Lateral Link suggested “7 Stress Management Tips for Busy Biglaw Attorneys” that I thought were promising and plan to start implementing myself. Here are some highlights:

**Exercise** – If you don’t have time for a full workout before or after work every day, at least take a 15-minute walk outside.

**Sleep** – Less sleep often leads to more careless mistakes, and in the long run, they could cost you a promotion or partnership.

**Transition your day** – Take some time for some brief meditation or breathing exercises.

**Keep work at work** – If you have to work long hours, do it at the office.

**Talk** – If you’re stressed about something at work, talk about it to someone you trust. Be sure that no confidences and/or attorney/client issues are breached.

**Balanced consumption** – Take things in moderation and fuel up with healthy food choices.

**Music** – Some studies indicate that music increases endorphin production and slows the heart rate.

### Here are a few additions of my own:

**Vacation** – Spend time with family and friends in new environments far from computers and the law.

**Less social media** – The onslaught of causes and negative issues social media delivers to us 24/7 through our phones, tablets and computers is overwhelming and adds to the stress.

**Find a creative outlet** – I love practicing law, but some of my most serene moments have been spent away from work. I have friends who like to make pottery, race cars, garden and volunteer.

**Learn to say “No.”** You can’t do it all. Prioritize the things that are most important to you. **NL**