

*Maryland State Bar Association
Lawyer Assistance Program
Wellness Tip Sheet*

Stress and Compassion Fatigue in the Legal Profession

Why is the Legal Profession so Stressful?

- Multiple demands
- Lawyers are high achievers
- Lawyers often hide their emotions and show a tough exterior to maintain professional demeanor
- Conflict between personal beliefs and professional responsibility to their clients
- Compassion fatigue

Compassion fatigue, also referred to as secondary trauma, has been described as the cumulative physical, emotional and psychological effects of being continually exposed to traumatic events or stories when working in a helping capacity.

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue:

- Heightened stress levels
- Excessive tendency to blame others when things go wrong
- Mentally and physically tired
- Substance abuse used to mask feelings
- Irritability and pessimism
- Chronic physical ailments
- Apathy, sadness, no longer finds activities pleasurable
- Isolation from others
- Bottled up emotions
- Preoccupied
- Disturbed sleep
- Difficulty concentrating

Managing your stress and protecting yourself from Compassion Fatigue:

- Avoid Isolation
- Find balance – look at what is important in your life
- Seek support
- Get a mentor
- Understand personality types to help you work with people more effectively
- Find non addictive ways to reduce stress
- Develop friendships that are supportive
- Maintain your boundaries
- Maintain good health
 - Exercise
 - Eat right
 - Rest
 - Have fun

Ask for help when you need it.

Call the Lawyer Assistance Program for free, confidential assistance and speak to a counselor at

410-685-7878 x3041 or 800-492-1964 x3041

