

## Facilitated Mental Health Groups for Lawyers

FLA understands that depression and other mood disorders may require specialized therapy and group facilitation. FLA works with therapists throughout Florida to provide low cost facilitated therapy groups for law students, lawyers and judges challenged by depression and other mood disorders. Please call **FLA at 800-282-8981** for information about these groups.

***There is help available.  
You are not alone.***

### Confidentiality Statement

All inquiries are strictly confidential and are responded to by the Director or trained Staff Member contacted. The identity of any lawyer, judge or family member who requests assistance through the program for themselves or others is kept strictly confidential.

**Support is provided for:  
Lawyers ~ Judges  
Law Students**



## Providing Assistance & Resources for the Following

**ADD - ADHD  
alcoholism  
compulsive gambling  
depression  
drug addiction  
eating disorders  
marital/family problems  
old age/senility  
sexual compulsivity  
stress/burnout**



*Florida Lawyers Assistance takes the firm position that substance abuse, compulsive behavior, and psychological problems are treatable illnesses rather than moral issues.*

*Our experience has shown that the only stigma attached to these illnesses is an individual's failure to seek help. FLA believes it is the responsibility of the legal community to help our colleagues who may not recognize their need for assistance.*

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*Problems are not a sign of failure but an opportunity for growth.*



***Florida  
Lawyers  
Assistance***

***CONFIDENTIAL  
SUPPORT & MENTAL  
HEALTH ASSISTANCE***

***FOR THE  
LEGAL COMMUNITY***

**(800)282-8981  
www.flu-lap.org**

## Depression in the Legal Profession

In a study of more than 100 occupations, lawyers had the highest rate of depression. In fact, lawyers are almost four times more likely to experience depression than the general population. Aside from depression, one in four lawyers also experience feelings of inadequacy and inferiority in personal relationships, as well as anxiety or social alienation, at much higher rates than the population at large.

### Common Symptoms of Depression

- Persistent sad, anxious, “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, including sex
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia, early morning waking, or oversleeping)
- Eating disturbances (either loss or gain of appetite and weight)
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being “slowed down”
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Restlessness or irritability
- Self medication
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Physical symptoms (such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain) that do not respond to treatment

### Recognizing a Colleague’s Problem

Lawyers who work in a law firm or organization have an advantage. Depressed lawyers are not hard to recognize if other lawyers pay more attention to “interpersonal concerns.” Even in the absence of such sensitivity, certain behaviors can signal depression. These include decreased productivity, absenteeism, morale problems, uncharacteristic lack of cooperation, complaints about always being tired, disruptive behavior, and substance abuse. Additionally, talk of suicide should be taken seriously. Depression can kill and, tragically, suicide is its instrumentality.

Early treatment equates with less time lost at work and increased productivity. It also is a way to circumvent poor judgment that can lead to professional misconduct. Encourage the colleague to get help.

## Distinctive Lawyer Personality Traits

Empirical research suggests that lawyers have personality characteristics that distinguish them from the general population. Some aspects of the lawyer personality can exacerbate depression and hinder acknowledgment that there may be a problem. For example, research on personality traits of lawyers reveals they have a lower interest in emotional concerns and interpersonal matters; a disproportionate preference for “thinking” as opposed to “feeling”; a greater than normal incidence of psychological distress, including depression; and substance abuse problems.

Lawyers are trained to be rational and objective. This training, combined with the devaluation of emotional concerns and feelings, can become obstacles to seeking help. Due to their unique personality traits, lawyers may not recognize their own problem until the disciplinary committee comes knocking on the door. Lawyers also have more “masculine” traits, including being argumentative, competitive, aggressive, and dominant, any one of which can contribute to social isolation. Socially isolated lawyers may not have the peer or family support to help them become aware that they may be suffering from depression. Moreover, due to these masculine traits, lawyers may perceive their need for help as a character weakness, deny the problem, and sink deeper into depression’s depths.

**Depression is all too pervasive in the legal profession. Although the individual attorney may be prone to developing depression, recent research reveals that attorneys as a group have personality characteristics that distinguish them from the general population and make them more vulnerable. Depression among lawyers can have serious professional consequences and can impact not only the lawyer, but the firm or organization as well. Therefore, it is important to identify depression and to get help quickly when its symptoms arise.**

## Stress-Burnout

When lawyers discuss stress, they talk of constant pressure, office problems, dealing with difficult clients, exhaustion and loss of control while preparing and trying cases, and billable hours. By seeking professional help and support, many are able to achieve more balanced and comfortable lives.

For many attorneys, burnout comes fast in a law firm. There are billable hours, adversarial clients, competition among colleagues, business development, partnership track, etc., etc.

Many attorneys fail to recognize the signs leading to burnout until someone points out their inaccessibility, irritability or lack of team effort. Or it may be a physical response in the form of constant headaches or frequent chest or stomach pains. Even then they are likely to give these signs other labels until it’s too late: a job is lost, a relationship is in trouble or a heart attack happens.

**Be good to yourself. Get plenty of rest, good nutrition, exercise, and seek the support of friends, family, and the FLA professionals.**

### Seeking Help

For many, seeking the services of a professional counselor is a lot like going to the dentist—bad or worse. Much of our resistance to going to a therapist is based on misunderstandings. If these were cleared up, a much larger portion of our society would get some basic counseling help ... and be healthier for it.

#### Barriers

**Denial - Social Stigma - Fear  
Religious Stigma - Cost - Bad Experiences**

***Seek professional help.  
No barrier is so large or insurmountable that you should be denied a healthier, happier future... call FLA***