A stylized sun graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a solid yellow circle representing the sun, with several short, thick yellow dashes above it representing rays. The sun is partially obscured by a large white semi-circle that frames the text on the right.

Survive and Thrive: Attorney Wellness and Secondary Trauma

Michelle Fontenot, JD, MEd



**TEXAS LAWYERS'
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
1-800-343-TLAP**

Ellie's Place is named in honor of Ellie, King County Prosecutor's office first courthouse dog. Ellie began her career in 2004 and was the very first courthouse dog in the country.

Until her death in 2015, Ellie provided comfort to child and adult crime victims and their families as they went through interviews, court hearings and trials.

Ellie's pioneering work opened the hearts and minds of victim services agencies and prosecutor's offices around the world to the idea of a courthouse dog.



How Are You
Managing You?



Stress

has been defined as

feeling responsible

for something

over which you have

no control!

Stress in the legal field starts early and it keeps on building!!

Major Problems for Attorneys:

Stress / Anxiety

Depression

Burnout / Secondary Trauma

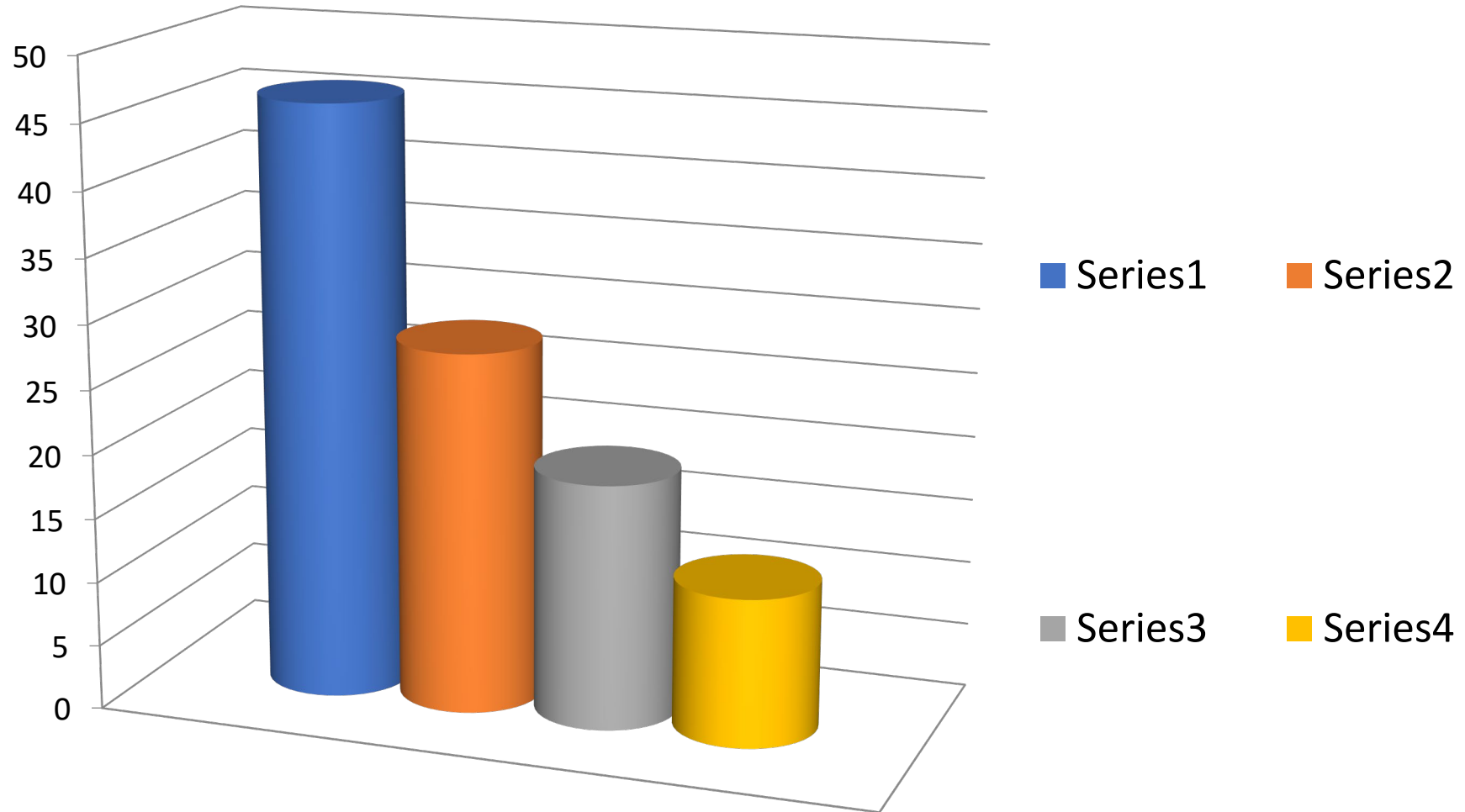
Alcohol / Substance Abuse

Cognitive Impairment

Suicide

Gambling and other process addictions

2015 ABA Study of Almost 13,000 Attorneys: Attorney Mental Health Issues




Lawyer Well-being

- 21% qualify as problem drinkers.
 - That's more than triple the rate for the general population (6%) and nearly double the rate for other highly educated professionals (12%).
- 32% of attorneys under 30 years of age qualify as problem drinkers.

“Problematic drinking” = hazardous, possible dependence

2015 ABA Survey of Almost 13,000 Attorneys





Barriers to Seeking Help Identified by ABA/Hazelden Research

- Not wanting others to find out they needed help.
- Concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality.

Survey of Law Student Well-Being

Survey Comparison	2021	2014
Needed help for emotional or mental health problems	68.7%	42%
Depression	33%	18%
Anxiety	40%	21%
Suicide	11%	6%
Self-harm	15.7%	9%
Trauma	80%	Not asked
Binge Drinking	44%	53%
Marijuana	38%	25%

Trauma Defined



Trauma results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being.

Experiences that may be traumatic include:

- Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Childhood neglect
- Living with a family member with mental health or substance use disorders
- Sudden, unexplained separation from a loved one
- Poverty
- Racism, discrimination, and oppression
- Violence in the community, war, or terrorism



Vicarious or Secondary Trauma –Traumatic Stress behaviors and emotions resulting from internalizing events experienced by another.



Compassion Fatigue – Fatigue, emotional distress, or apathy resulting from constant demands of caring for others. The weariness that comes from caring.



Burnout – Physical and emotional exhaustion that may include a negative self-concept and job attitudes, a loss of concern and feeling for others. High levels of compassion fatigue may lead to burnout.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR VICARIOUS TRAUMA?



- **EVERYONE!**

Recognize when
you are impacted
by vicarious
trauma



Risk Factors for Vicarious Trauma?

Prior traumatic experiences;

Social isolation, both on and off the job;

A tendency to avoid feelings, withdraw, or assign blame to others in stressful situations;

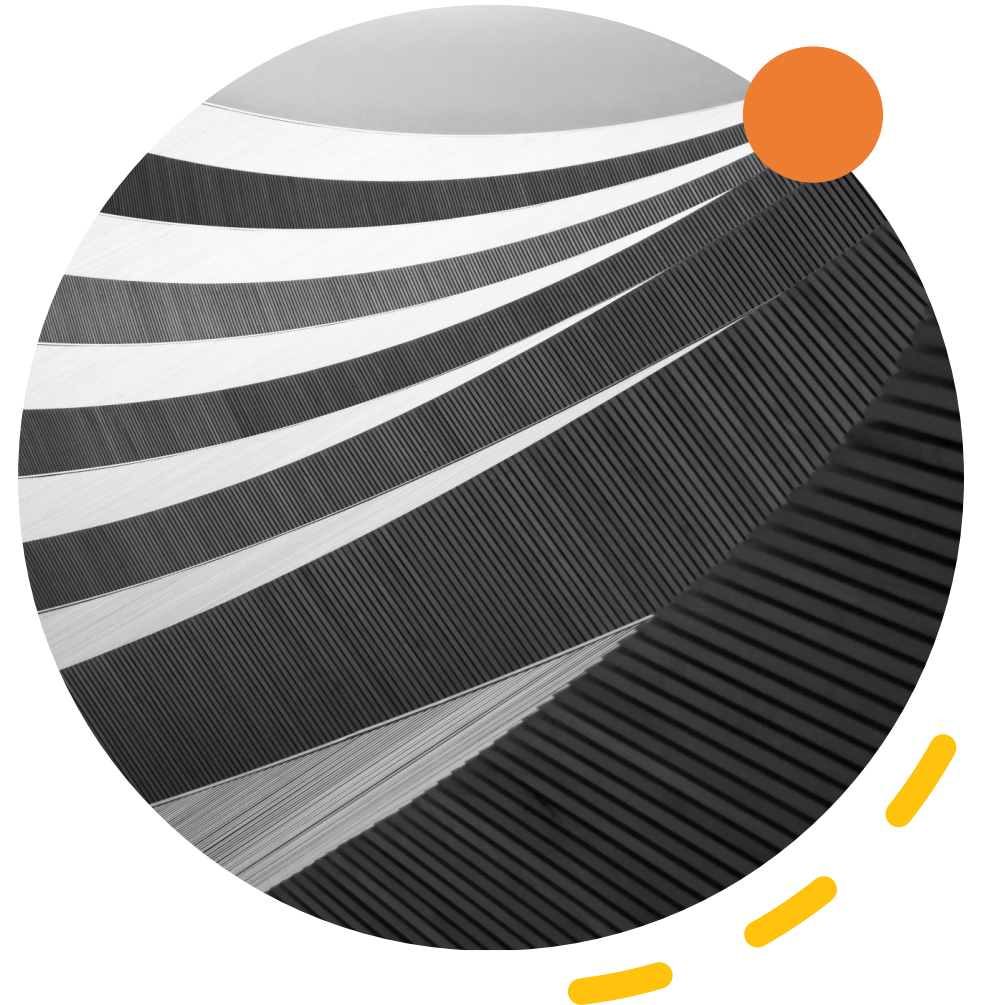
Difficulty expressing feelings;

Lack of preparation, orientation, training, and supervision in their jobs;

Being newer employees and less experienced at their jobs;

Constant and intense exposure to trauma with little or no variation in work tasks; and

Lack of an effective and supportive process for discussing traumatic content of the work.





Strategies for Vicarious Resilience

- Empowerment Model (Trauma-Informed Lawyering)
 - Understanding
 - Normalizing
 - Coping Skills
 - Resources
 - Collaboration
 - Aligning your values and goals with your work
 - Focus on Ethics
 - Don't be a victim of stigma

Principles of Trauma-Informed Lawyering



Safety



Trust



Collaboration



Choice



Empowerment



Culture



Why did you become a lawyer?

Values Exercise

Family

Intimate Relationship

Parenting

Friends Social Life

Work

Education

Fun

Spirituality

Community Life

Physical Self-Care

Environmental Concerns

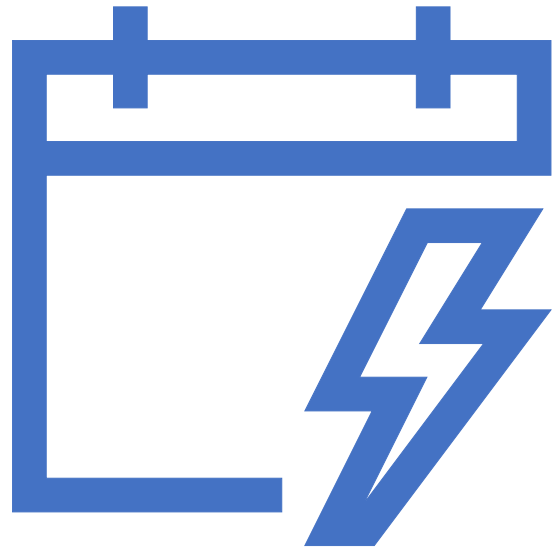
Creative Expression

Evidenced- Based Strategies to Improve Lawyer Well- being



Strategies for Self-Care





Schedule self-care time

- 4% of your life is 1 hour per day - make that the minimum for self-care.
- Use your calendar and other technology to remind you to unplug.
- By scheduling events that are away from screens, it can free you from technology.
- Try single tasking – rather than multitasking.

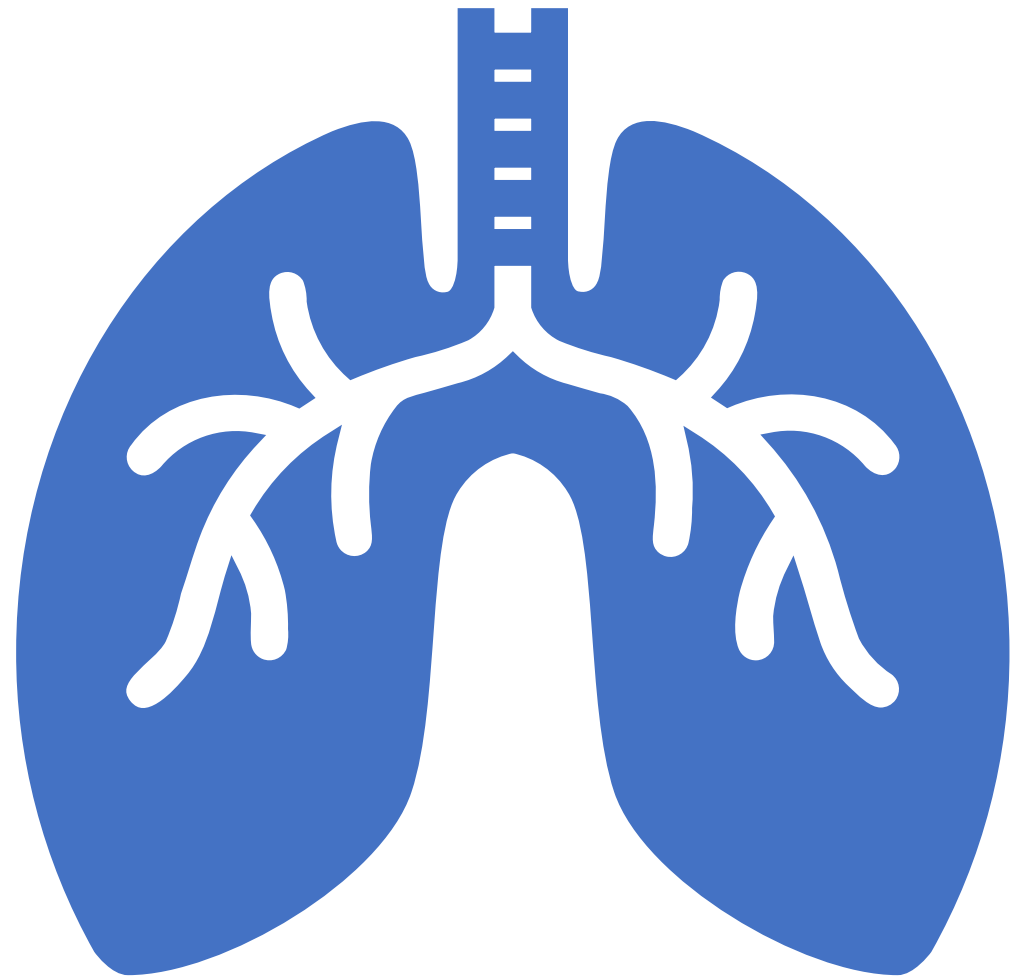
Self-care:
Physical



Sleep



BREATHE





Self-care: Emotional

- Spend time with people you enjoy;
- Stay in contact with people important to you;
- Find things that make you laugh;
- Identify comforting things and activities;
- Reread favorite books;
- Set boundaries;
- Love yourself.

The Mental Health Benefits of Pets



Self-care: Professional

- Find a mentor or be a mentor
- Connect with others
- Take breaks in your workday;
- Schedule work, not interruptions;
- Set limits, then keep them;
- Identify projects that are exciting or rewarding.



Time Management Matrix



Avoid Anxiety Producing Activities

01

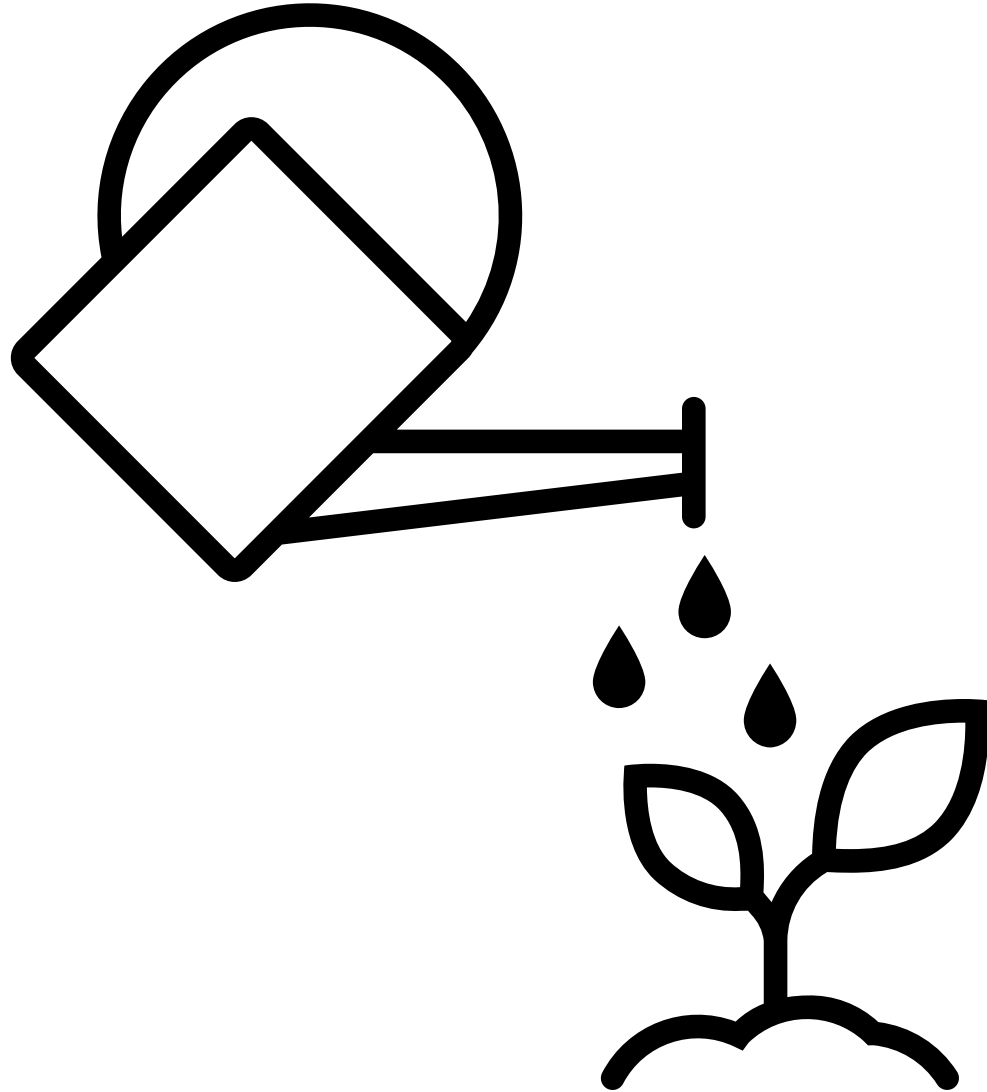
Wait to call mom,
law partner,
whomever until
morning.

02

Stop checking
Email right before
family dinner.

03

Restrict news
intake.

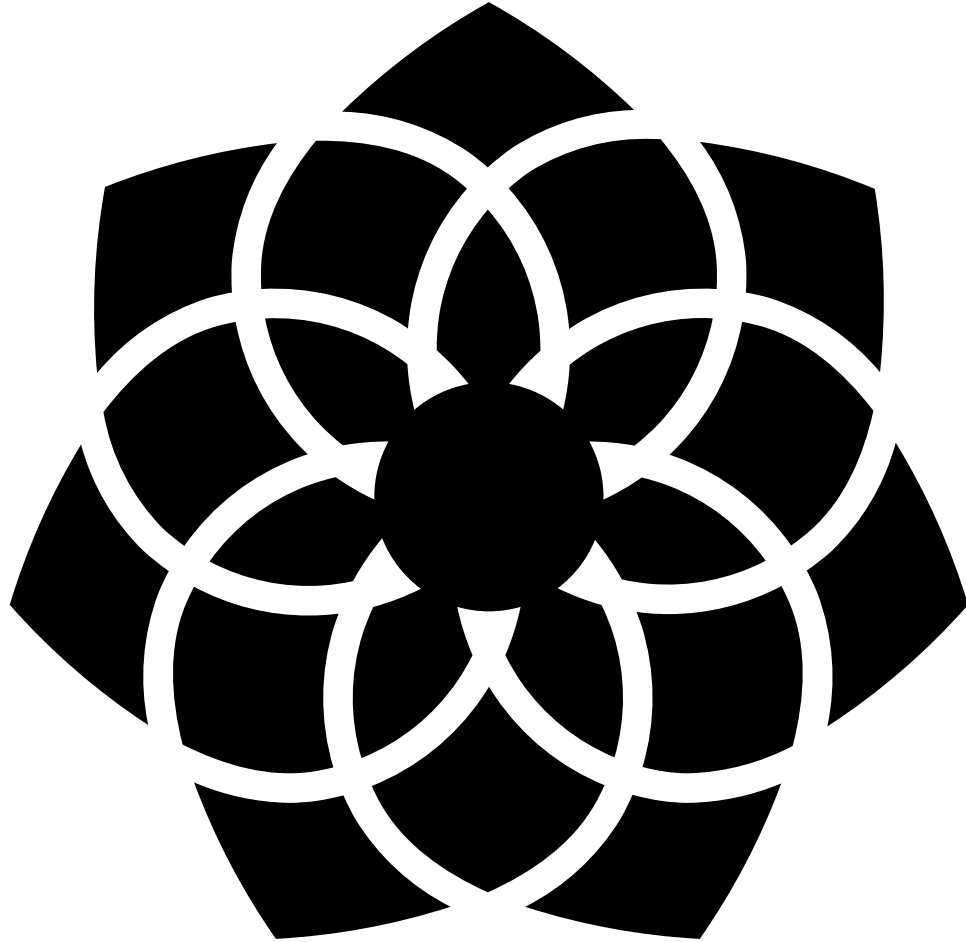


Self-care: Personal

- Take vacations;
- Practice self-care (massages, pedicures, etc.)
- Get preventative medical care;
- Dance, walk, swim, run, or any physical activity;
- Wear clothes you like or that make you feel good;
- Put down your cell phone.

Learn to
Relax



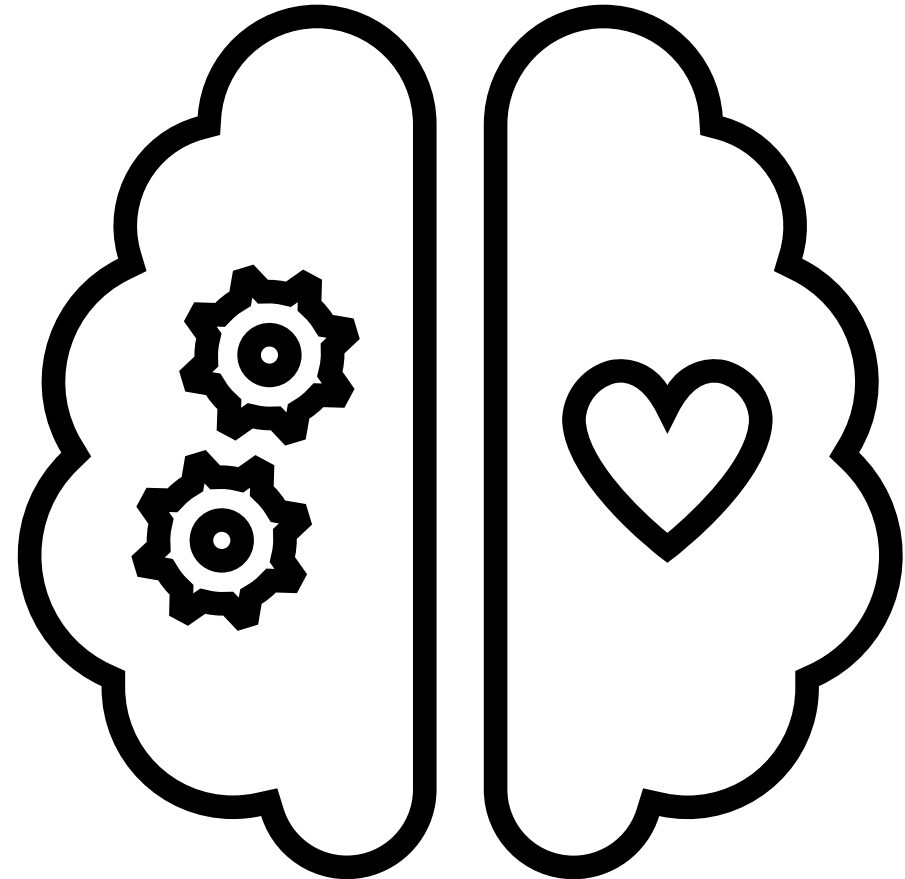


Self-care: Spiritual

-
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life;
 - Make time for reflection;
 - Spend time in nature;
 - Contribute to causes you believe in;
 - Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks;
 - Find a spiritual connection or community;
 - Help Others

Self-care: Psychological

- Decrease the stress in your life;
- Engage your intelligence and interests in new things;
- Be curious;
- Say no to extra responsibilities;
- Write in a journal (gratitude journaling);
- Ask for help;
- Make time for counseling;
- Practice receiving from others.





Ask for Help!

80% of people suffering from depression get remission within 6 sessions of talk therapy.

- The other 20% feel better.

Telemedicine has made counseling more accessible.

Seek help before you get depressed

If you know that you are prone to depression or anxiety, get counseling set up so that you have a safety net in place



Strategies to regain equilibrium are different for each person. Find what works for you!

TLAP Provides:

Confidential support 24/7 (call or text)

Referrals to licensed professionals

In the moment counseling

Local group support and resources

Sheeran Crowley Trust

One-to-one local peer support

Self-care information

CLE / Education on Wellness

Service opportunities



**TEXAS LAWYERS'
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
1-800-343-TLAP**



Connecting Lawyers and Law Students to Funds for Needed Care

- ***Sheeran-Crowley Memorial Trust***
- Up to \$3,000 for outpatient counseling and medication,
- Up to \$4,000 for intensive outpatient treatment and medication; and,
- Up to \$10,000 for inpatient treatment.



TEXAS LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

1-800-343-TLAP



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scan the QR code.

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