

Morgan Haenchen in ABA Magazine: Prioritizing Yourself and Your Practice by Prioritizing Your Health

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PRACTICES Litigation, Energy Litigation

This article was co-written by Haynes Boone Associate Morgan Haenchen and Germer PLLC Associate Samantha Torres.

Lawyer Assistance Programs provide confidential services and support to judges, lawyers and law students who are facing substance use disorders or mental health issues. If you or someone you know is in need of assistance, contact your state or local LAP.

Sit up straight and release your shoulders from your ears. Unclench your jaw and remove your tongue from the roof of your mouth. Wiggle your fingers and toes. Now take a deep breath—fill up your belly in through your nose and slowly exhale out through your mouth. Do you feel better?

That feeling is a release of stress; an emotion lawyers experience as if it is part of the job description. All of us feel it: your supervisors, your managing partners, your paralegals. New lawyers, fresh to their practice and to the legal profession's demands and delicacies, eager to learn and to prove themselves, to start their career off on the right path, certainly feel stress too. Now, right out the gate, you have been slapped with some severe unpredictability, removed from your mentors, routines, and loved ones, and expected to adapt. We are stressed just thinking about it.

Without addressing this stress, our mental health and cognitive abilities (i.e., our capability to reason, problem solve, plan, and think abstractly) can suffer. In many cases, unaddressed stress can lead to depression. It is almost standard in our practice: *TIME Magazine* reports that, in 2019, members of our profession suffered from depression at quadruple the rate of the general population. According to recent studies, more than 60 percent of attorneys report suffering from the disease at some point in their careers. Yet, up to two-thirds of all depression cases are undiagnosed and remain untreated. Allowing a stigma or lack of information to discourage you from taking care of yourself will hinder your health and your career. We can agree you are worth the investment but acknowledge it can be challenging to know where to start. Here's what research recommends.

Excerpted from the American Bar Association's publication *After the Bar*. To read the full article, click [here](#).