“I Don’t Belong”

Imposter Syndrome in the Legal Profession

Presented by:
Brian S. Quinn, Esq., Education and Outreach Coordinator
Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pa, Inc.

I Don’t Belong – Imposter Syndrome in the Legal Profession

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Brian S. Quinn, Esquire is a licensed attorney in Pennsylvania who currently serves as the Education and Outreach Coordinator for Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania, Inc., a Lawyers Assistance Program established in 1988 for the purpose of helping lawyers, judges and law students recover from alcoholism, drug addiction and mental health disorders.

Mr. Quinn obtained his undergraduate degree in 1970, his law degree in 1973 and a certificate in Drug and Alcohol counselling in 2012, from Villanova University. Prior to his work with Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, he was a private practitioner for over 40 years and has also worked in the field of alcohol and drug counseling in suburban Philadelphia.

Mr. Quinn is a past member of the Board of Directors of Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania and served as a peer volunteer prior to accepting his current role as the organization's Educator in 2017. He has written and presented on lawyer wellness topics to law firms, Bar Associations and legal education providers for state, national and international groups as well.

What Is A LAP ?

Our mission:

To provide a caring peer assistance program to save the lives and restore the health and professional competence of lawyers and judges, members of their families, and law students who are at risk as a result of alcohol and drug use, gambling, depression or other serious mental illness. We carry out this mission through a combination of confidential helpline services, volunteer support and education.

- Free information and literature
- Free evaluation by a healthcare professional
- Free assistance with interventions
- Peer support
- Lawyer/Judge/Law Student-only support group meetings
- LCL staff support
- **FULLY OPERATIONAL** during COVID-19

Our services are **free**, **confidential**, **non-judgmental** and **non-obligatory**.

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers of Pennsylvania

CONFIDENTIAL Helpline

1-888-999-1941

24 hrs./day, 7 days/week,

365 days/year

www.lclpa.org

We Protect Your Identity and Information

LAP do **not*** report or disclose any identifying information to the Supreme Court, the Judicial Conduct Board, the Disciplinary Board, the Board of Law Examiners or any other agency of the Supreme Court; nor do we report or disclose any identifying information to a State Bar Association, local Bar Associations or any judicial or law related organization. We do not report any identifying information to anyone without your prior consent.

You may remain anonymous and still receive our services.

***CHECK YOUR STATE'S RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

CONSULT THE ETHICAL RULES IN YOUR STATE

ALL LAWYERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ARE **NOT** THE SAME !!

- Although many Lawyers Assistance Programs *may* follow the same practices as LCL of PA, it is **always** advisable to consult the Rules of Professional Conduct and the Judicial Code of your jurisdiction in order to ascertain the rules governing the duty to report misconduct imposed on both lawyers and judges, **especially if there may be a connection to the misconduct and impairment as a result of alcohol, substance use or mental health issues.**

Guidance From the Courts

Most* Rules of Professional Conduct address that concern by providing an exception to the duty to report: The Rules may not require disclosure of information otherwise protected or information gained by a lawyer or judge while participating in an approved lawyers assistance program. **See ABA Model Rule 8.3(c)**

Many Courts believes that **"… providing for an exception … encourages lawyers and judges to seek treatment through such a program. Conversely, without such an exception, lawyers and judges may hesitate to seek assistance from these programs, which may then result in additional harm to their professional careers and additional injury to the welfare of clients and to the public." (emphasis added)**

*** CHECK THE RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT IN YOUR STATE**

ABA / Hazelden- Betty Ford Study

(Published February, 2016 *Journal of Addiction Medicine*)

Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale

- Depression – **28%** *of all attorneys*
- Stress – **23%** *of all attorneys*
- Anxiety – **19%** *of all attorneys*
- Higher rates among < 30 yrs. old



What Is Imposter Syndrome ?

Impostor phenomenon occurs among high achievers who are unable to internalize and accept their success. They often attribute their accomplishments to luck rather than to ability, and fear that others will eventually unmask them as a fraud - despite having adequate external evidence of accomplishments, people with imposter syndrome remained convinced that they don't deserve the success they have.



(Clance and Imes, 1978; Harvey, 1981; Bravata et al., 2019),

What Is Imposter Syndrome ?

Those with imposter syndrome are often well accomplished; they may hold high office or have numerous academic degrees.

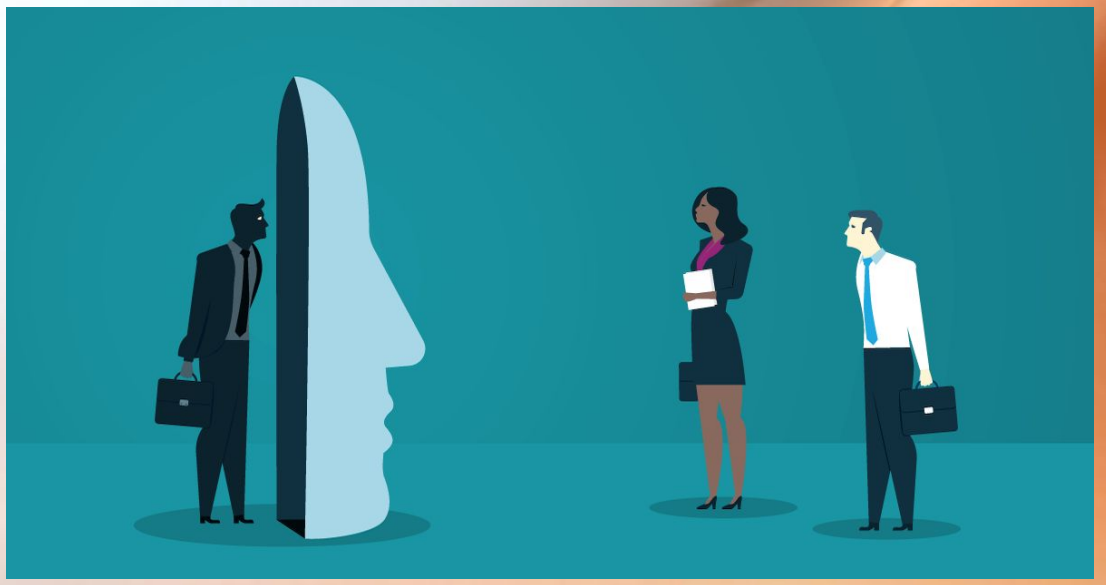






How Common is Imposter Syndrome ?

Around 25 to 30 percent of high achievers may suffer from imposter syndrome. And around 70 percent of adults may experience imposterism at least once in their lifetime.



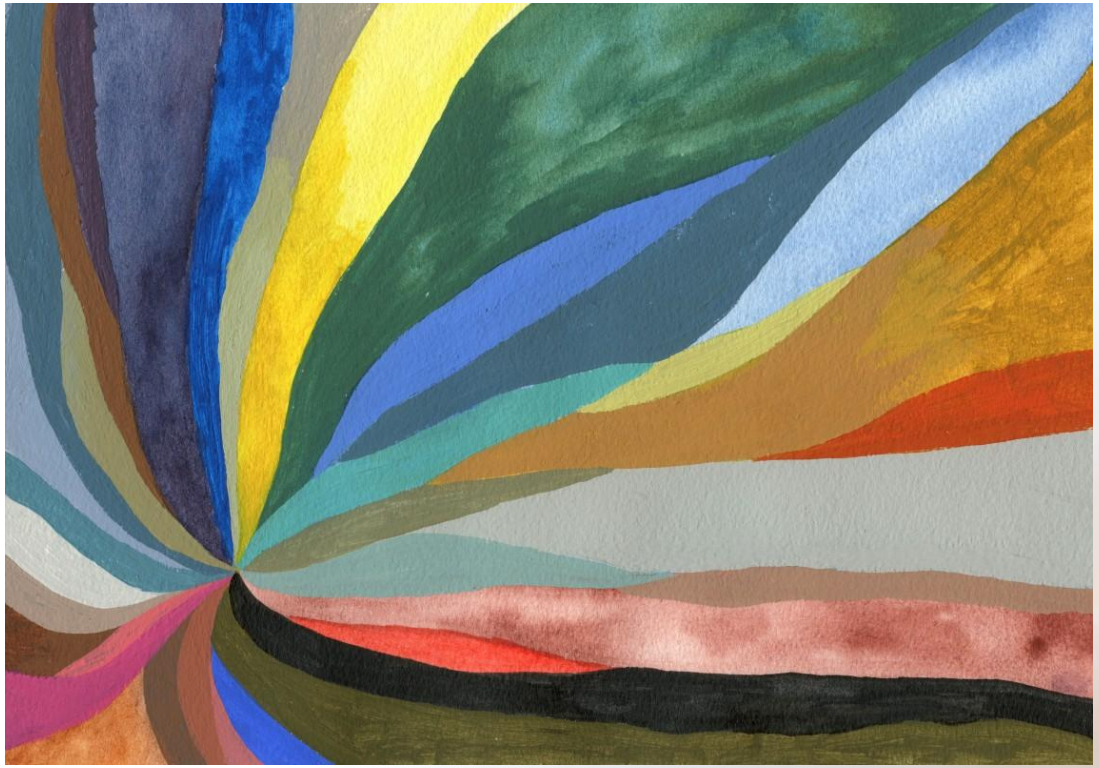
What Causes Imposter Syndrome ?



Personality traits – some believe imposter syndrome is driven by certain personality traits, such as perfectionism, self –efficacy and neuroticism.

Others believe it is our very culture that reinforces what is not a “syndrome” as much as a *phenomenon*.

What Causes Imposter Syndrome ?



- Race
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Religion

Do You Recognize Yourself ?

The Perfectionist
The Superwoman/man
The Natural Genius
The Soloist
The Expert







Perfectionism



Perfectionism



Perfectionism and imposter syndrome often go hand in hand.

Success is rarely satisfying because you always believe you could've done even better.

Perfectionism

Perfectionists set excessively high goals for themselves, and when they fail to reach a goal, they experience major self-doubt and worry about measuring up.



Adaptive Perfectionism

Perfectionism that is healthy and normal and relates to an intense effort that is put forth to achieve a certain goal. Adaptively perfectionistic individuals set high, but realistic standards, and don't resort to harsh self-criticism when these standards are not reached.



Maladaptive Perfectionism



In contrast, *maladaptive* perfectionism can be characterized by perfectionism that gets in the way of leading a successful and happy life. A need to be in control of every aspect of one's life and environment.

Is Your Perfectionism Out of Control ?

- A history of always wanting to please others
- Criticizing others' behavior
- Procrastinating on important tasks
- All or nothing thinking
- Always needing to be in control of emotions
- Closing yourself off to others
- Taking everything personally
- Becoming defensive when criticized
- Feeling guilty and ashamed for perceived failures

Superwoman/man

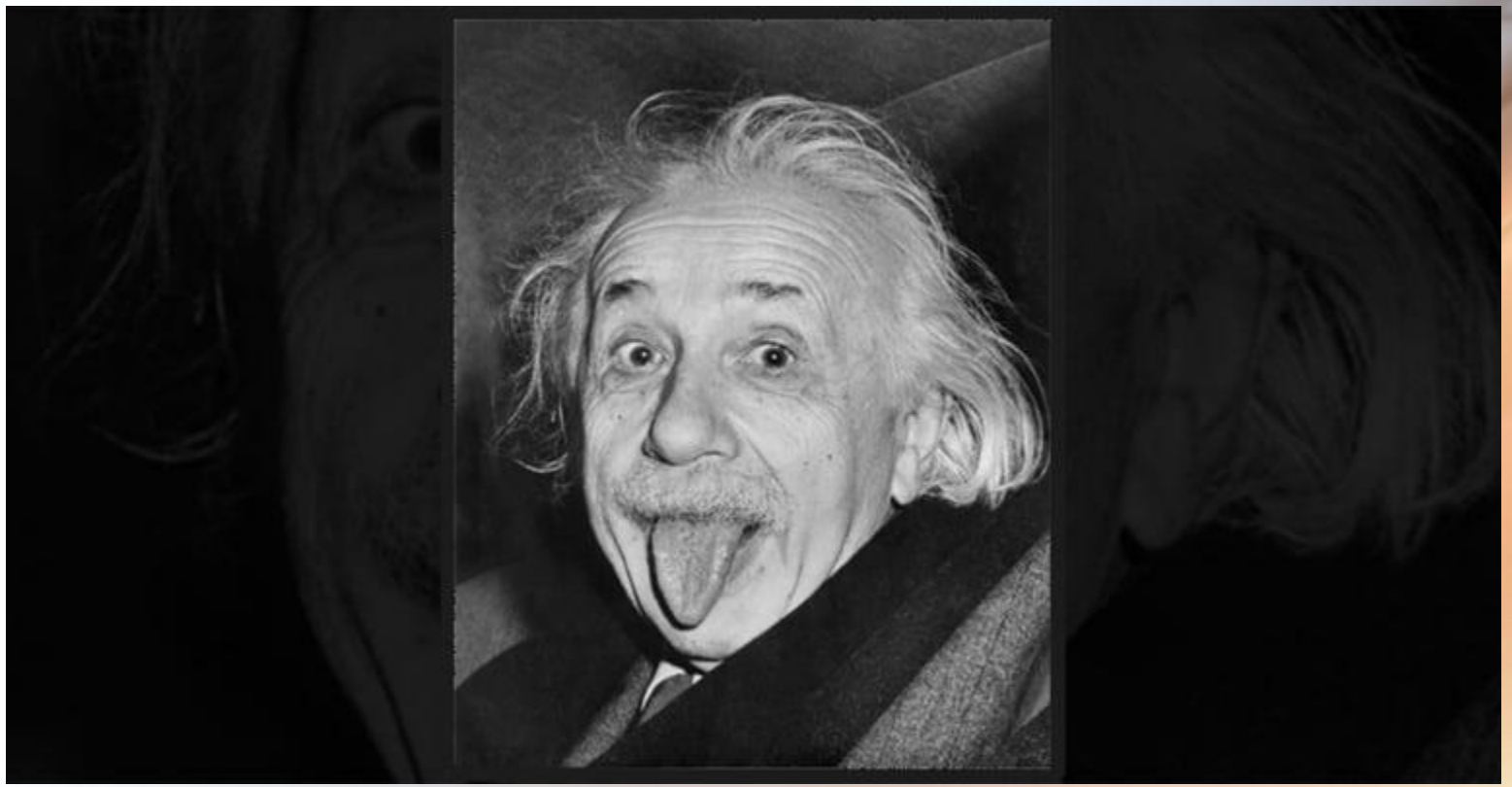




Superwoman/man

- Convinced you're a phony and everyone else is the "real deal" ?
- Push yourself to work harder to "measure up"?
- Are you the last to leave the office even after your work is completed ?
- Do you get stressed when not busy with work ?
- Have hobbies and passions been sacrificed to work ?

The Natural Genius



The Natural Genius

- The natural “genius” judges themselves by the ease and speed at which they accomplish a task.
- Were you a “straight A” student who excelled without much effort ?
- Do you reject the idea of a mentor ?
- Do you feel ashamed when faced with a setback ?

The Soloist



The Soloist

- Asking for help= phoniness
- Refuse assistance
- “I don’t need anyone’s help.”



The Expert



Trauma-Centered Imposter Syndrome

For individuals experiencing trauma-centered imposter syndrome, there are two main differences compared with the more general type. General imposter syndrome is typically related to one aspect of your life i.e.,work.



Trauma centered imposter syndrome tends to impact *all areas* of your life, leaving you feeling inadequate *all the time*.

Stress or Distress ?

- Some stress is healthy. Positive stressors can energize and motivate lawyers to be productive and creative problem solvers.
- A totally stress-free life is not only unrealistic, it can actually be a harmful form of denial.
- We need to eliminate *distress*. Distress is harmful both physically and psychologically.



Stress or Distress ?

- Gradual, incremental increases in responsibilities, duties, pressures and demands at home and work combined with long workdays and weeks is risky.
- We stay busy and "stuff" our feelings.
- Even relaxing can cause us to feel distress.
- We become unaware that we have lost balance in our lives.



BURNOUT



WHAT IS BURNOUT ?

- Constant anxiety
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Changes in personality
- Irritability
- Pessimism
- Obsessive thoughts
- Feelings of inadequacy and dread



WHAT IS BURNOUT ?



- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue
- Disengagement
- Depression
- Sense of helplessness
- Lost or diminished motivation
- Heart palpitations.

EFFECTS OF BURNOUT

- Less efficient
- Waste more time
- Self destructive tendencies
- Work quantity and quality declines
- Negative attitude towards those around you
- The feeling no one cares
- Unrelieved, may harden into a fixed element of your outlook
- Left unattended, can contribute to challenges to ethical duties, particularly communication and diligence

Why Lawyers ?



- Conflict driven and adversarial profession
- Emotional detachment
- Win-lose, often rigid thinking (black and white thinking)
- Perfectionism
- Excessive self-reliance

These traits are great for a successful career but not so great for mental health.

In other words…



Our personalities and our Profession put us at high risk.

So…..what are we going to do ?



Set Realistic Goals

Focus on things you <u>CAN</u> control

Lawyers already have control issues. As long as we're focusing on questions with unknowable answers and circumstances outside of our personal control, this strategy will get us nowhere other than **drained, anxious and overwhelmed !**



Give Yourself a Chance for Success !

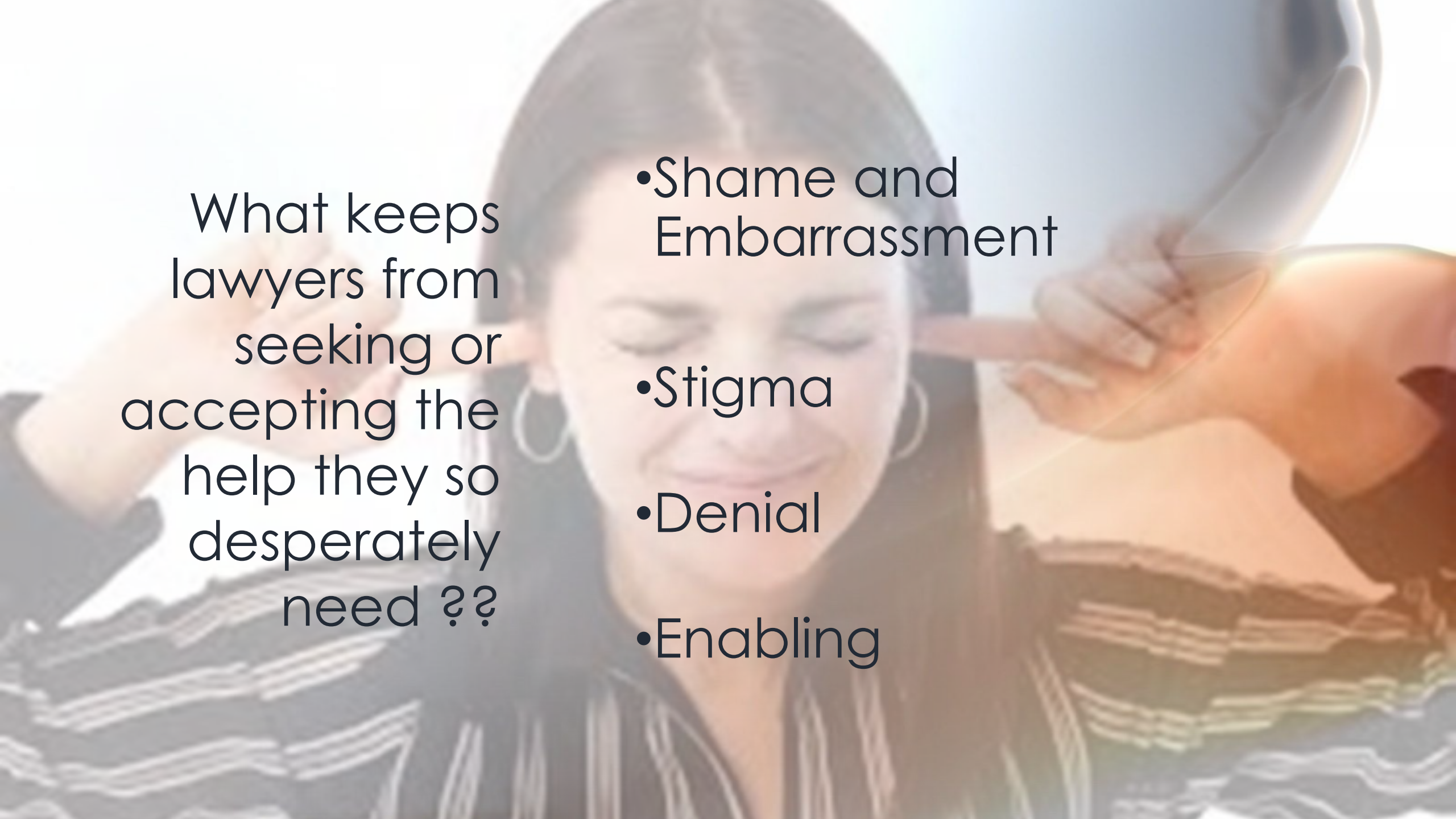
1. Don't isolate – break the silence
2. Separate feelings from fact
3. Accentuate the positive
4. Develop a healthy response to mistakes
5. Give yourself break- reward yourself !
6. Remember three letters – YET
7. "Surf the urge" to react
8. Build a strong support system
9. Look around
10. Fake it 'til you make it



REMEMBER…..



True imposters don’t suffer from imposter syndrome !!



What keeps lawyers from seeking or accepting the help they so desperately need ??

- Shame and Embarrassment
- Stigma
- Denial
- Enabling

Dealing with *Denial*

- The most potent barrier
- Psychological defense mechanism
- Rationalize and minimize behavior
- Honestly believe they are under control
- I'm not one of "them" mentality





THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

- Lawyers are trained to deal with and solve problems. Thus, it is most difficult for the attorney to seek help since by doing so he feels he is admitting failure.

- Complicating this problem further is the tendency of the attorney's or judge's peers to indulge in a conspiracy of silence (enabling) and lighten the normal stresses of our profession.

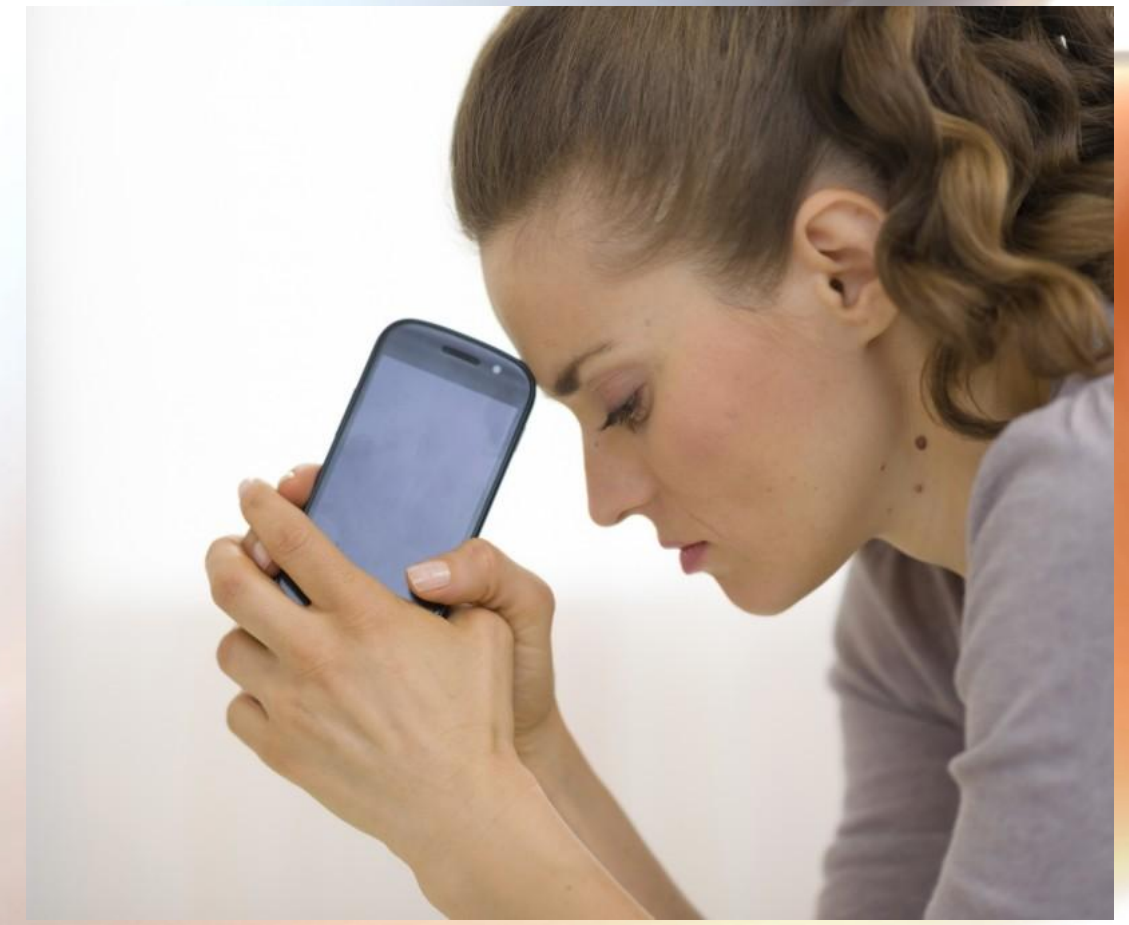
What can YOU do ??



Although it is difficult, remember that your end goal is to help motivate the impaired lawyer or judge to seek professional help they so desperately need.

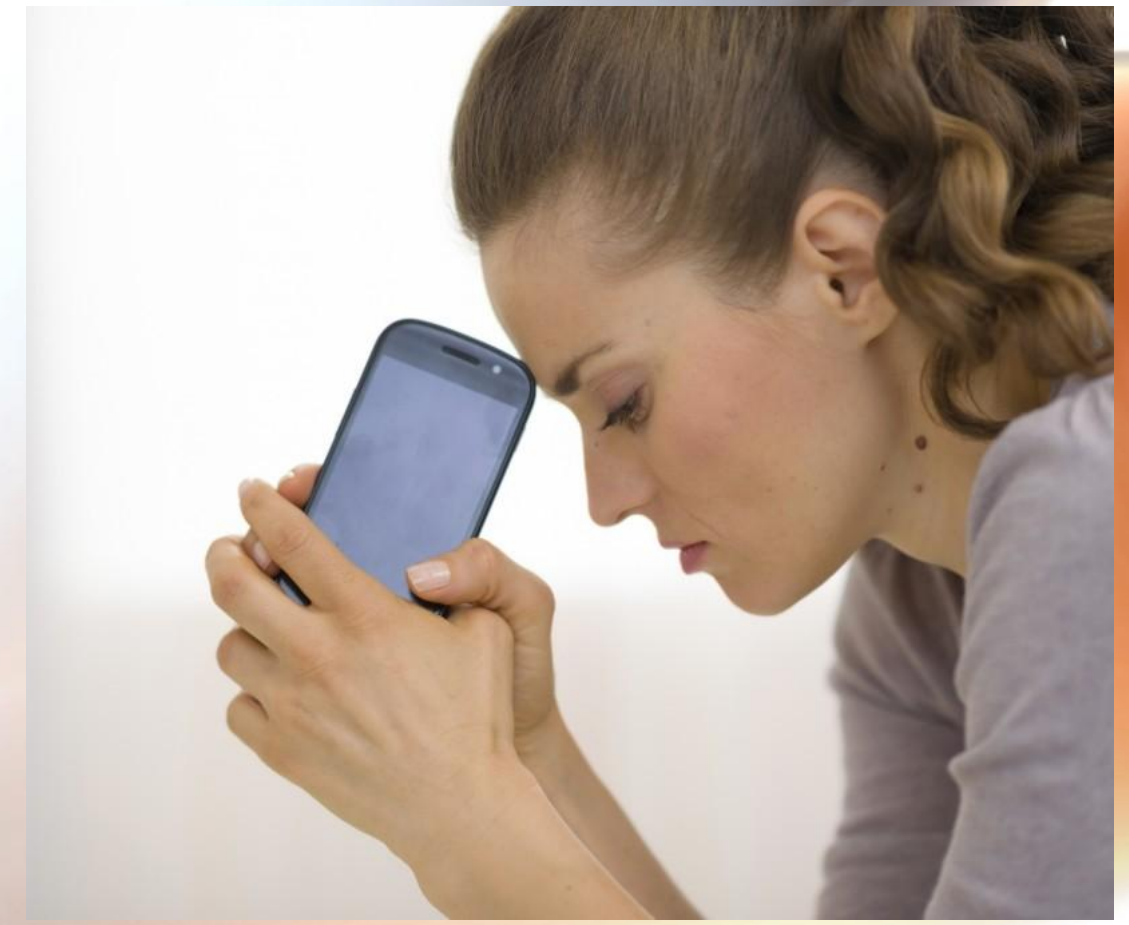
To Call LAP…or Not to Call

- I'm ok. I can work this out for myself.
- I want help but I don't want anyone to know.
- I already tried to get help and it didn't work.
- I don't have the money to pay for treatment.
- What will people say about me if I ask for help ?
- It's no use – nobody will understand – I give up !



To Call LAP…or Not to Call

- Is this really any of my business?
- I want to help but I don't want to get involved.
- Will I harm his/her or the firm's reputation?
- Must I report him or her to Discipline?
- I already tried to help and it didn't work.
- Let's wait and see. Maybe it will get better.
- I really don't have time for someone else's problems.



Never give up Hope.

Help is available



Brian's Big Five



- Express Gratitude for what you have
- Create 1 hour a day to think and relax
- Do one thing you love to do every day
- Set clear and realistic goals
- Let go of Fear

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Imposter Syndrome in the Legal Profession

Thank you all for attending today’s Continuing Legal Education program.

If you have any questions that were not answered or would like to contact me for any reason, please call or email me at the following:

Brian S. Quinn, Esq., Education and Outreach Coordinator

LAWYERS CONCERNED FOR LAWYERS of PA, INC.

(717) 460-3385 **brian@lclpa.org**

LCL will provide you with FREE LITERATURE

Education and understanding are the keys to both personal recovery and providing effective assistance to others. LCL maintains a library of books, pamphlets, and e-literature covering over 200 mental health and substance use related topics. We make these resources available to you at no charge. Available topics include:

• 12 Step Recovery Guides • Addiction Science • Alcohol Use Disorders • Anxiety • Bipolar Disorder • Chemical Dependency • Codependency • Co-Occurring Disorders • Depression • Eating Disorders • Family Recovery • Gambling • Grief & Loss • Interventions • Obsessive Compulsive Disorder • Pain Management • Prescription Drug Misuse • Process/Behavioral Addictions • Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) • Sexual or Love Addiction • Stress • Substance Use Disorders

Didn't See What You Are Interested In? Send us an email at admin@lclpa.org We will do our best to locate literature on the mental health and/or substance use topics of your choosing.

How to Join the National Well-Being MOVEMENT

"WELL-BEING TOOLKIT FOR LAWYERS AND LEGAL EMPLOYERS"

Created By Anne M. Brafford For Use By The American Bar Association

https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/lawyer_assistance/ls_colap_well-being_toolkit_for_lawyers_legal_employers.authcheckdam.pdf

"Well-Being Toolkit Nutshell: 80 Tips For Lawyer Thriving"

https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/lawyer_assistance/ls_colap_Well-Being_Toolkit_Flier_Nutshell.authcheckdam.pdf

National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being Recommendations

"The Path to Lawyer Well-Being:
Practical Recommendations For Positive Change"

http://lawyerwellbeing.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Lawyer-Wellbeing-Report.pdf