Getting Lost in Our Own Lives

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Let's call a spade a spade. We must understand the true reality and nature of the system within which we operate.

Do we as a profession really practice what we preach?

We give it lip service until we hit a critical point personally.

Legal Profession and Self Care. See the reality for what it is, in order to better navigate it.
Good News! You're a Lawyer! ...The Bad News:
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Alcoholism
- Thoughts of Suicide

Longitudinal Law School Study – you check in but you don't check out.

One Research Study:
- Loss to connection of intrinsic values
- Increase in identification with extrinsic values
- Loss in perceived autonomy (18-25% range)

Happiness & Satisfaction Career Trajectory

Pre-Law Law School Associate Partner Leader in profession

Current State of the Legal Profession

Languishing Getting by Flourishing
Why?

- Being studied.
- Ideas include:
  - False Self Syndrome
  - Limbic brain resilience
  - Top two major contributors for Lawyers

False Self Syndrome

- We all (meaning all people on the planet) have it to some degree.
  - The disconnection with true self if for no other reason than to fit in our society and culture
  - Need to meet expectations, to succeed
- In its basic form – being “out of touch” with ourselves and overly identifying with the roles we play.
  - Disconnection from feelings and authentic internal experience

The Roles we Play - An Unspoken Agreement

- We all play roles, and they constantly change. The role of employee or entrepreneur differs from boss and manager or from parent, spouse or child.
- Peoples’ personas change, even if subtly, as they play their everyday roles; they change depending upon the interaction or scenario.
The Roles We Play

- Super Mom
- Stellar Employee
- Financial Provider
- Counselor
- Devoted Dad
- Taxi Driver
- Problem Solver
- Referee
- Hero
- Cruise Director
- Go-to Guy/Gal
- Volunteer
- The Advocate
- Loving Spouse
- The Intellectual
- Chairperson
- Committee member
- The Comedian
- Manager
- Manager

Adding to that...False Self Syndrome

- Legal profession adds new layers and dimensions
  - Zealous advocacy;
  - Always the helper;
  - Law busts boundaries;
  - Confidentiality;
  - Isolated-workload;
  - Tomorrow never comes;
  - Success.

Typical Attorney Workload
Competitive Nature of Stress

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Our Poor, Ignored Limbic Brain
Limbic Brain

• This is where emotional resilience resides.

• We must attend to it or ignore it at our peril.

Stress: Portrait of a Killer

This movie sheds wonderful insight into the propagation of illness in today's society via the inner workings of the human stress response.

Only 50 minutes long.
Available on Netflix.

So, what is a lawyer to do?

• Critical to maintain, renew or begin extracurricular activities that nurture the limbic brain
  – Focus is on heartfelt joy and connection to self, others, and community
    • This does NOT mean volunteering for a bar committee to add something to your résumé. That is OK, it just does not count for this purpose.
    • Not superficial connections. These are OK, they just do not count for this purpose.
    • The guiding features: it brings you no outer recognition or benefit other than joy to your heart.
  – Example of tomorrow never comes
So, what is a lawyer to do?

- Practice good boundaries from the onset
  - Believe it or not, it is easier to start now than to try to turn it off later
    - We teach people how to treat us
    - Many lawyers think they do not have a choice – we always have a choice
  - Do something at the end of the day to affirmatively transition out of work into home life
  - Turn off the crackberries
  - TAKE vacations; USE those vacation hours
  - Make good choices now that do not limit future options
  - i.e. buy a less expensive/smaller house
  - Take 3-day weekends when things are quiet
    - Realize many practice areas are feast or famine and work within that framework.

- Activities that help us gain and maintain a broader perspective (beyond our jobs, beyond our false selves):
  - Some kind of mindfulness practice
    - Yoga, meditation, martial arts, etc.
  - Spiritual readings within your faith tradition
    - If you don’t have a faith tradition, maybe explore it
  - A daily gratitude list
  - Regular exercise as part of a daily routine.
  - Finding ways to laugh and have real fun.

Some books on these topics...

- Mindfulness
  - AN EIGHT-WEEK PLAN FOR FINDING PEACE IN A FRANTIC WORLD
  - Mark Williams and Danny Penman
  - FOREWORD BY JOE KAPLAN

- 365 Thank You
  - THE VITAL ELEMENT OF EVERY PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP
  - Joeris H. Galen and Chris De Vries
Regular Exercise Routine

- This book is written by a lawyer and his doctor and explains the evolutionary biology of aging. Most of what we call aging in this country is decay...
- This book explains in rather simple terms why exercise is so critical to our optimal functioning.

Alas...you will forget...we all do.

Future Practice Advisory...

- Doesn’t imply weakness, just “human-ness”
- Is more about “dis-ease” than disease.
So slow, is it even moving?

Rather slow and insidious.... then increases.... then overwhelming....

Burning
Uncomfortable
Overwhelming

So what happens?

We crash.
LAP: Safe, Confidential & Free

- Services are FREE, paid for by your State Bar dues
- Completely confidential – Pursuant to Rule 1.6
  - Assist
  - Assess
  - Educate
  - Refer
  - Support

LAP: Safe, Confidential & Free

- Issues we help with include:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Career Counseling
  - Family Issues (including parent, spouse or child addiction - we can give you resources)
  - Alcoholism or Drug Addiction
  - Stress, Burnout, Compassion Fatigue
  - Trauma
  - Grief & Loss

Remember... mighty forces are at work

Not the least of which is ourselves and our drive for recognition, success, achievement and perfection...in many ways we each are the single biggest force we must each overcome.

We always have a choice.
But we always have a choice.
The Take Away

• Conscious choice vs. unconscious reaction
• Keep fun things happening in your life

In the event you wind up there...

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Thank you!