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## February 2019 Newsletter

Volume III | Issue II | New Hampshire Lawyers Assistance Program

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### *NH LCL Monthly Meeting*

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers is a monthly meeting on the  
**SECOND TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH**  
of NH lawyers, judges and law students who come together for free,  
confidential peer support for any issue that interferes with  
professional competence. Absolutely confidential.

March 12, 2019 6:00 p.m.

The Airport Diner, 2280 Brown Ave, Manchester

### *Inside This Issue*

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## WHY RELAPSE IS NOT FAILURE

One of the most enduring myths related to addiction is that the addicted person simply just needs to stop. If an addict cannot stop, then as the myth states, that person is weak, lacking in strong moral character and self-control. This attitude has endured for decades, despite the clear scientific evidence that this is simply **not** true.

## ADDICTION IS A DISEASE OF THE BRAIN

“Scientists have developed a detailed picture of how addiction disrupts pathways and processes that underlie desire, habit formation, pleasure, learning, emotional regulation, and cognition. Addiction causes hundreds of changes in the brain’s anatomy, chemistry and cell-to-cell signaling. By taking advantage of the brain’s marvelous plasticity, addiction remolds neurocircuits to assign supreme value to cocaine or heroin or gin, at the expense of other interests such as health, work, family, or life itself.” Fran Smith, “How Science is Unlocking the Secrets of Addiction,” *National Geographic*, September 2007.

## 70%-90% of substance abusers who attempt sobriety experience at least one relapse

It then comes as no surprise that those who suffer from addictions cannot simply “flip a switch” and stop. The addicted brain is rewired to seek what feeds the addiction. Everyday triggers: sounds, sights, smells, routines, dates on a calendar, even therapy itself can start a cascade of brain chemicals that seek out the source of the addiction. This isn’t a matter of willpower; it is a matter of allowing the brain to heal and rewire itself until it is again healthy. Neuroscientists reviewing MRI brain scans have discovered this process of brain rewiring can take up to 4 years of sustained sobriety. It simply makes medical sense that relapse is common.

## Common Relapse Triggers:

HALT Avoid becoming too hungry, angry, lonely or tired. Occupying your mind to meet basic human needs and then routine self-care are the first steps in retraining your brain to beat an addiction.

Social Pressure New people and places are crucial to kick destructive habits. Building sober social connections and support is a must.

Untreated Mental Illness Diagnosing and effectively treating depression, anxiety or any other mental health condition will help curb the urge to self-medicate with addictive substances.

Sleep Deprivation Exhaustion impairs the ability to control impulses and make healthy decisions. Treating insomnia decreases the risk of relapse.

“Addiction is very much like any chronic physical illness or disease. As with chemical addiction, patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, and hypertension frequently fail to comply with their ongoing treatments-relapsing, often with dire consequences.” David Sack, M.D., “Why Relapse Isn’t a Sign of Failure,” *Psychology Today*, October 19, 2012.

Who among us hasn’t stuck to that low salt diet or to the recommended exercise regimen the doctor prescribed? Who doesn’t know of the cardiac patient who refuses to stop eating french fries and cheeseburgers even though the next heart attack may be eminent? Relapse in substance misuse no different, but we often add a heavy dose of stigmatization to go along with the already difficult path to sobriety.

Relapse doesn’t absolve the abuser from taking responsibility for managing his or her own care. The responsibility lies in both understanding the disease and making the necessary lifestyle changes to change behaviors that compel an addiction. It’s never a matter of sheer will. It takes a multifaceted approach often consisting of medication, therapy, peer support, family support and a complete change in coping strategies.

Relapse doesn’t mean failure. It means that there is more healing to do. Don’t give up.

## PUBLIC FACES OF RELAPSE AND RECOVERY



**JAMIE LEE CURTIS** Golden Globe Winning Actress, New York Times Bestselling Children’s Book Author, Comedienne, Activist. Prescribed pain killers in 1989 after cosmetic surgery triggering an opioid addiction and alcohol misuse. Sober since 1999.

“I was ahead of the curve on the opioid epidemic. I had a one- year run, stealing, conniving. No one knew. No one. I’m breaking the cycle that has basically destroyed the lives of generations in my family. Getting sober remains by single greatest accomplishment...bigger than my husband, bigger than both of my children and bigger than any work, success or failure. Anything.” -*People*, November 2018.



**EMINEM (Michael Mathers).** Academy Award and Grammy Winning Rapper, Record Producer, Actor. Prescription Pill/Opioid Addiction, Methadone Overdose 2007. Sober since 2009.

“I knew that I had to change my life. Bucking addiction is a f\*ing tricky thing. I think I relapsed within...three weeks? And within a month it had ramped right back up to where I was before. That’s what really freaked me out. That’s when I knew: I either get help or I’m going to die.” – *Rolling Stone* 2011



**MATTHEW PERRY** Emmy Winning Actor, Comedian, Producer, Playwright. A skiing accident in 2013 led to a Vicodin prescription and a subsequent addiction to opioids. He credits helping others with addiction as a key part of his maintaining sobriety.

“I had a big problem with pills and alcohol, and I couldn’t stop. Eventually things got so bad that I couldn’t hide it, and then everybody knew.” -*People*, August 2013.

**\*Public relapse February 2019.** Hospitalized for gastrointestinal perforation. Tweeted “I got kicked out of therapy today,” 2/6/19. Twitter erupted with celebrities and fans alike with resounding alarm looking answers to his current state of health. He responded with a Tweet, “Easy guys, it was just one session. I’m back in therapy where I belong.” -*USA Today*, February 7, 2019.



**KEITH URBAN** Grammy Winning Country Music Artist, Music Producer, TV Music Coach. Cocaine addiction. First rehab, 1998. Last rehab to date, 2006.

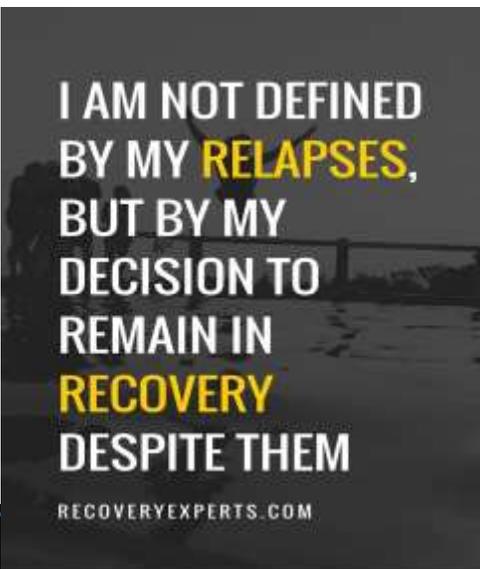
Upon his entrance to the Betty Ford Center for cocaine addiction in October 2006, he issued the following statement: “I deeply regret the hurt this has caused Nicole (his wife Nicole Kidman) and the ones who love and support me. One can never let one’s guard down on recovery, and I’m afraid that I have.” - Personal Statement to the Press, 2006



**ROBERT DOWNEY JR.** Multi Award-Winning Actor, Producer, Director, Activist and Forbes list of Hollywood’s highest paid actors. (Net worth approximately \$260 million). Very public battle with substance misuse, (Heroin, Crack Cocaine, Alcohol) relapse and resulting legal problems between 1986 and 2003 including court ordered rehabilitation and incarceration. First arrest in 2001. Sober since 2003. Pardoned by Governor Jerry Brown of California in 2015 of several drug offenses, DUI & carrying a concealed weapon.

“Job ONE is to get out of that cave. A lot of people do get out but don’t change. So, the thing is to get out and recognize the significance of that aggressive denial of your fate, come through the crucible forged into stronger metal.”- *Vanity Fair*, September 2014.

“I believe the most difficult situations will resolve themselves if you are persistent and don’t give up entirely. And that’s what I never did. I never gave up. - *Rolling Stone*, August 2008.



**SIR ELTON JOHN** Academy Award and Grammy Winning Musician and Songwriter, Producer, Activist, Philanthropist. Knighthood & Coat of Arms conferred by Queen Elizabeth II (1998). Icon. Cocaine addiction, Alcohol addiction from 1974-1990.

“I lost my own humanity in an excess of drugs, alcoholism and eating disorders. During my addictions in the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic surfaced, and the government took no notice of it. I lost so many friends to AIDS and I didn’t put myself on the line because of the addictions I was going through. The drugs turned me into a monster. I had the luck to meet Ryan White and his family. I wanted to help them, but they ended up helping me much more. Ryan was the spark that helped me recover from my addictions and start the AIDS foundation. Within 6 months I became sober, and clean, and have been for the last 27 years... Through my career and humanitarian work, I’ve seen how people can be pulled together. The human spirit is the most powerful thing in the world, and when it embraces kindness and does good things, wonderful things happen.”- Speech to Harvard University November 2017, upon accepting the Peter J. Gomes Humanitarian Award for his work fighting HIV and AIDS through the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

“I still dream, twice a week at least, that I’ve taken cocaine and I have it up my nose. And it’s very vivid and it’s very upsetting, but at least it is a wake-up call [to stay vigilant].”-NPR, 2012.

“It took 16 years of drug addiction and alcoholism to actually have the humility to say, ‘I need help.’ My pride was killing me. You think you don’t have a problem... I’d stop for a while and then...when I went back it got worse. If I’d only [said I needed help] sooner.”- Larry King, 2002.

## WHAT IS NHLAP?

We are a confidential, independent 501(c)(3) non-profit to assist NH lawyers, judges and law students with any issue that may impact or impair the ability to practice law. Many lawyers think we only help with substance misuse. Although that is a very important part of NHLAP, it is not the sole focus of our work. We help with anything that has become problematic. Just some examples are depression, anxiety and other mental health issues; grief; cognitive limitations resulting from aging; eating disorders; professional dissatisfaction and burn-out; work-life imbalance and time management strategies.

We are here to help before consequences of these issues become problematic, public or both. We are not part of the NH court system nor the NH Bar. Because we are solely funded by a per attorney mandatory assessment, we are akin to an additional lawyer insurance policy- we can help individuals or legal employers understand the risks in ignoring these very real issues and point to concrete solutions.

We are your resource. We are here to help make your legal practice something you enjoy, not something you endure.

**1-877-224-6060**



## QUICK TIP

### Invest in Good Counseling

Therapy is 32x more effective than cash.

Research by psychologist Chris Boyce compared data sets from thousands of reports on wellbeing. They looked at how wellbeing changed either due to therapy or a sudden increase in income (like a pay raise or winning the lottery).



He found that we get more happiness for our buck by paying for therapy.

It would take a \$40,000 raise/windfall to equal the wellbeing benefit from \$1,300 worth of therapy.

## THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

TERRI M. HARRINGTON, ESQ.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NHLAP



Why is it so hard for some people to let go of the idea that undergoing therapy or mental health counselling is for the weak or unstable? Why is the health of our emotions, our moods and our spirit left to “self-control” or chance? Why do many believe that seeking routine medical care is a virtue but seeking routine mental health care is self-indulgent?

Lawyers are a tough crowd when it comes to the message of mental health. Lawyers generally see themselves as tough, capable and in control. To admit that there is ever a moment when they may feel less than any of these things is often perceived not only a personal weakness, but a professional failing. The studies show that this cannot be further from the truth.

Maybe it is generational. Millennials appear to be more willing to deal with these issues honestly and openly. This gives me hope that wellness will be more than the current “hot topic,” but a way of life that will better our profession.

Seeing a counselor to manage depression or anxiety, going to self-help groups to stay focused and sober, meditating to become present to the moment is not the sign of someone who is weak. It is the hallmark of someone who is strong. Strong enough to admit they are human and need some help from time to time to remain resilient. A resilient lawyer is a healthy lawyer. And more importantly, a healthy human being.

## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT



**FREE CLE! All Rise: A Practical Guide to Lawyer Hope, Health and Wellness.** Presented by *Legal Fuel*, The Practice Resource Center of the Florida Bar. This is a free 90-minute CLE video from the Florida Special Committee on Mental Health & Wellness. A live panel discussion (previously recorded) with information on anxiety, depression and substance misuse and resources, a discussion on the destigmatization on mental health and an empowering, positive conversation about over-all attorney wellness.

[Free CLE Link](#)

**Podcast: *The Resilient Lawyer* by Jeena Cho.** This podcast shares ways in which the practice of mindfulness and meditation can make legal work more effective and more enjoyable. “Practical and actionable information you can use to be a better lawyer.”



Available free through Apple iTunes

