

January 2020 Newsletter

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Volume IIII | Issue I | 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.

January 7. At 6 p.m.

February 11 at 6:00 p.m.

Airport Diner, 2280 Brown Ave, Manchester

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GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAL)

Most lawyers are under constant stress during working hours. Client demands, deadlines, judicial expectations, billable hour worry, relentless need for prevailing all equal a stressful and demanding career. These natural consequences of being a legal practitioner lead to moments of anxiety on a frequent basis. Did I miss that deadline? Did I sign that client? What are my billables this month? How do I juggle these expectations? These are normal situations which can cause temporary anxiety. The struggle for many can be identifying what is an acceptable level of anxiety and what is not.

It can be tough to tell the difference between the normal anxiety of being a practicing lawyer or judge and what requires more thoughtful insight. Anxiety that is a normal reaction to stress is usually fleeting and can be very helpful in motivating positive results. “Ha!” Says the busy lawyer or judge. “What day is not stressful?!” Constant and repeated stress is not healthy when there is no break from it. Unmanaged stress can typically lead to substance misuse, physical illness and even a mental breakdown. If your default position is anxiety and it is not fleeting that is simply not stress. Nor is that simply “anxiety.” It is likely an anxiety disorder. **People with consistent surges of stress hormones are at higher risk for developing GAD.**

What is Generalized Anxiety Disorder?

Persistent worry that is out of proportion to the probable negative impact is likely GAL. If worry is uncontrollable and irrational and it becomes debilitating, that is likely GAL. If there is a constant fixation on the outcome of events and preoccupation with the numerous possibilities and outcomes that interferes with day-to-day functioning, that is likely GAL.

40 million adults in the U.S. suffer
this type of anxiety disorder.



Types of Anxiety Disorders:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAL):
Excessive, Uncontrollable and Often Irrational Worry

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):
Uncontrollable to Repeat Certain Activities, Habits or Thoughts to a Degree that is Debilitating

Panic Disorder: Recurrent and Unexpected Panic Attacks Unrelated to a Logical Precipitating Event

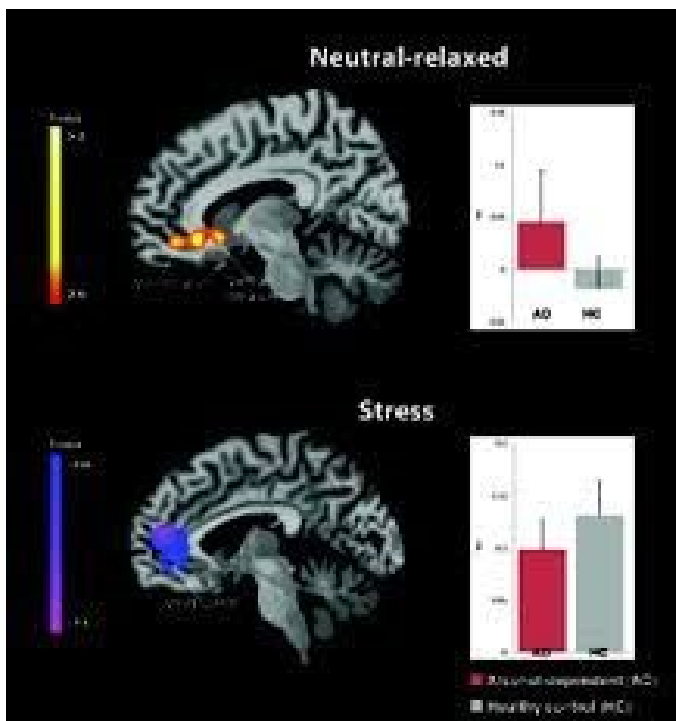
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):
Persistent Mental Stress Occurring as a Result of Physical Injury or Severe Psychological Shock

Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia):
Significant or Irrational Fear in Social Situations Which Curtails Social Involvement

Learning the signs of GAL can help to determine whether professional help is warranted. These are the signs that anxiety is more than a transient response to stress:

Restlessness and Difficulty Concentrating Constant preoccupation with future events which preclude concentration on the here and now to such a degree that productivity drops and interpersonal relationships are strained.

Problems with Decision-Making Difficulty or nervousness with choices of any kind which is noticeable to others and appears objectively out of proportion to the problem at hand.



Once the brain is under stress, it releases a surge of chemicals such as cortisol and norepinephrine. These give a natural boost in reflex time, perception and speed. They cause the heart to pump faster and more blood to circulate oxygen throughout the body. This is necessary when under a real threat, but prolonged stress and anxiety contributes to the structural degeneration of the hippocampus and impaired functioning of the prefrontal cortex. These effects are directly tied to depression and dementia.

Anxiety is different than stress. However, prolonged stress plays a direct role in anxiety. Emotional memories are stored in the central part of the amygdala, the structure in the brain that acts as a communication hub to process incoming sensory signals. This structure alerts the rest of the brain that a threat is present and triggers a fear response. Once the brain perceives a threat, it encodes that threat and stores it as memory along with the chemical response. Over time, threats that are simply perceived rather than are based in reality trigger this chemical response. This is anxiety rather than stress.

Worrying About Worry Being aware of one's anxious nature and then stressing about anxiety preemptively becomes a vicious and debilitating cycle.

Physical Manifestations of Mental Stress Headache, fatigue, muscle aches and tension, nausea, startled easily, trembling, twitching- these are all common physical symptoms of GAL. The inability to relax and always feeling “keyed up” or “on” are also symptomatic of GAL.

Sweating Profuse sweating without physical exertion is likely an alteration of the chemical balance in the body and symptomatic of GAL.

Shortness of Breath Struggling to breathe without physical exertion. Can often be mistaken for a heart attack.

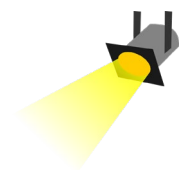
Insomnia Struggling to fall asleep because of racing thoughts or waking up with anticipatory anxiety when there is no precipitating event (such as a job interview, a presentation, trial work, etc.) 50% of people with GAL suffer from chronic insomnia.

Irrational Fears Specific phobias that are crippling or debilitating.

Chronic Indigestion Recurrent and regular stomach cramping, stomachache, bloat or constipation. Can lead to the development of chronic diarrhea or Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

The good news is that although anxiety can be debilitating, it is the easiest of the mental health disorders to treat. Treatment ranges from learned relaxation techniques (such as breathing response, meditation and exercise) to psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy and medication. Often, an effective treatment is some combination of these treatments.

Only a qualified medical or mental health provider can diagnose and treat anxiety. This information is meant to be a guide for discussing possible anxiety disorders with your doctor. There is power in understanding this issue and creating a meaningful action plan to treat it.



INTERESTED IN STARTING A PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION?

Join us at the NHLAP Office on Wednesday, January 15 at 5:00 p.m. Together we can start a conversation and provide real support.

2 ½ Beacon Street, Suite 163, Concord.

POD CAST



The Lawyer Stress Solution by Karen Loewintheil

This is the only podcast that teaches lawyers concrete, practical and specialized tools for dealing with the stress, anxiety and pressure of a legal career. Harvard Law School graduate and Certified Life Coach, Karen Loewintheil combines her legal experience and coaching wisdom to teach lawyers how to deal with the unique challenges of the legal profession. You'll be surprised how much you can enjoy practicing law when you know how to manage your "lawyer brain."

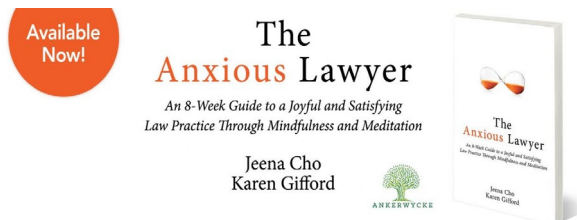
Available through Apple iTunes and

www.thelawyerstresssolution.com



RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

BOOK or AUDIBLE DOWNLOAD



The Anxious Lawyer: An 8 Week Guide to a Joyful and Satisfying Law Practice Through Mindfulness and Meditation by Jeena Cho and Karen Gilford. Ankerwycke (2016)

Written by a San Francisco bankruptcy attorney (Cho) and a former litigation attorney, executive coach and meditation teacher who is currently at a start-up company in California (Gilford).

“Perfect for that skeptical attorney who wants to dip a toe in the water. Cho and Gilford have produced a guide to meditation that leaves you ear to start right away.”- Will Meyerhofer, psychotherapist and former lawyer.

A BRIEF LOOK AT ANXIETY:

Hi. Sorry I haven't texted you back. I've been anxious and depressed. I haven't had time to catch my breath, you know how life gets. I am so drained I cannot can't even collect energy for the most basic tasks. Like texting you back or washing the dishes. The weather has been beautiful right? Yesterday I fought off a panic attack while driving and had to pull over because my vision was blurred. I just want to sleep all the time, but if I told you, you would just want to uncover a reason behind all this, and there is no tangible reason you would accept as valid. How are you ? I hope well. Let's get dinner soon.

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.

1-603-491-0282

QUICK TIP

7 Fast Hacks for Anxiety



1. Stand Up Straight

When we are anxious, we hunch over.

2. Play the 5-5-5 Game

Name 5 things you see.

Name 5 things you hear.

Move 5 parts of your body.

It takes you out of your head and into your physical space.

3. Breathe, Breathe, Breathe

Inhale for 5 seconds.

Exhale for 5 seconds.

Repeat.

4. Inhale Lavender Oil

Keep a bottle in your desk or in your computer bag.

5. Watch a Funny Video

It's hard to stay anxious while you are smiling.

6. Move. Anywhere.

Get up. Walk. Get a snack. Change your scenery.

7. Listen to Relaxing Music

Classical, Ambient, R&B, World- anything that is soothing to your ears.