

Why are we talking about this?

A 2016 AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION Commission survey found 28% of lawyers suffer from mild to high levels of depression; 19% of lawyer reported mild to high anxiety; 23% of lawyers reported mild to high levels of stress. Other studies have found that lawyers are 3.6 times more likely to suffer from depression than non-lawyers, and lawyers rank 5th in the incidence of suicide by occupational group.

BURNOUT AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS made national news in 2019 after a Harvard paper found that burnout among the nation's top physicians and other care providers had become so pervasive that it called for implementation of specific directives—such as an appointment of an executive-level chief wellness officer at every major health care organization—due to the impact it was having on those receiving care.

THOSE IN PROSECUTOR'S OFFICES are specifically prone to secondary trauma stress and vicarious trauma due to the repeated exposure to the trauma of others, in addition to the stress that accompanies the practice of law. The symptoms of secondary trauma mimic those of PTSD.

How do you know if the work is impacting you?

Burnout: look for signs of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, feeling ineffective. Burnout is caused by chronic stress—which is a neurological and physiological shift in the body—not the stressors themselves (e.g., the number of items on your to do list). Fixing burnout requires addressing the stress itself and allowing the body to complete the stress response cycle. It's not about just being on top of things. Jenny Rough, *From moms to medical doctors, burnout is everywhere these days*, THE WASHINGTON POST, March 30, 2019.

Secondary Trauma and Vicarious Trauma: symptoms include internalization of accounts of victimization, hypervigilance, avoidance, sleep disturbances, and assumptions about the world and trust—ultimately, an altered world view. Look also for re-experiencing the event witnessed and numb affect. Andrew Levin and Scott Greisberg, *Vicarious Trauma in Attorneys*, 24 PACE L. REV. 245 (2003).

Additional Resources and Information

Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program:

COLAP staff works with attorneys to provide confidential support services.

☎ 303.986.3345

🌐 <http://coloradolap.org/>

Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program:

CAMP, designed by the Colorado Supreme Court, provides mentors, peer support, and professional development resources to new and transitioning lawyers throughout the state.

☎ 303.928.7750

✉ info@coloradomentoring.com

🌐 <https://coloradomentoring.org/>

The American Bar Association's Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers is found at <https://www.americanbar.org>

County Employee Assistance Program:

The County EAP is available to help staff and their families, partners with a counseling service, and can direct employees to resources in the community.

🌐 <https://inbc.boco.co.boulder.co.us/sites/hr/Pages/EmployeeAssistanceProgram.aspx>

Private Therapist Available for Staff:

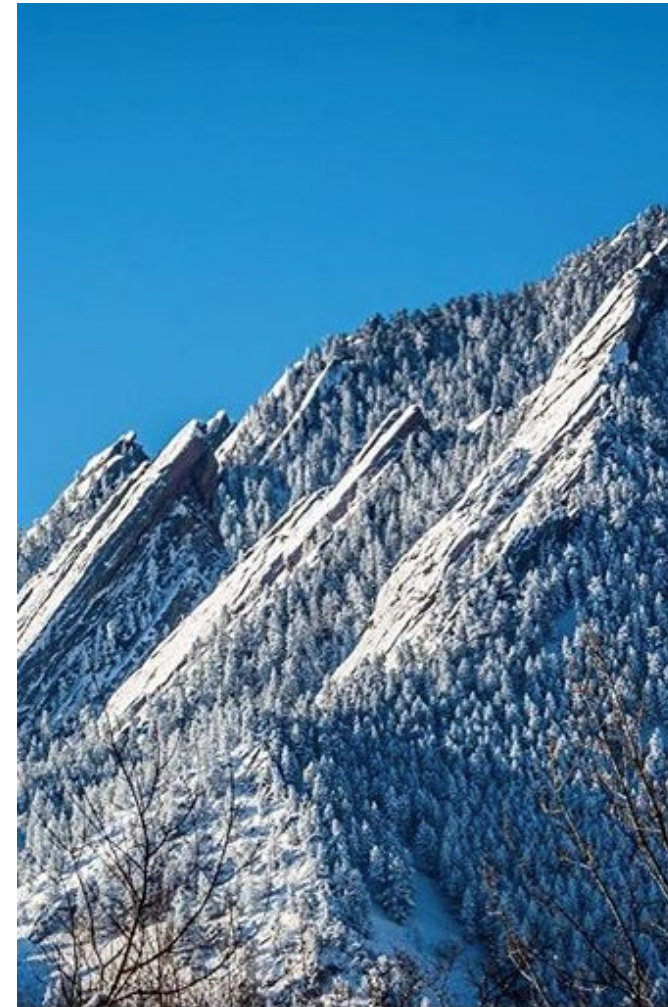
The office maintains an agreement with Marilyn Kruegel, a professional counselor knowledgeable about the nature of the work, for 8 sessions paid for by the office. Schedule directly with her.

☎ 303.530.5345

✉ marilyn.kruegel@gmail.com

Well-Being

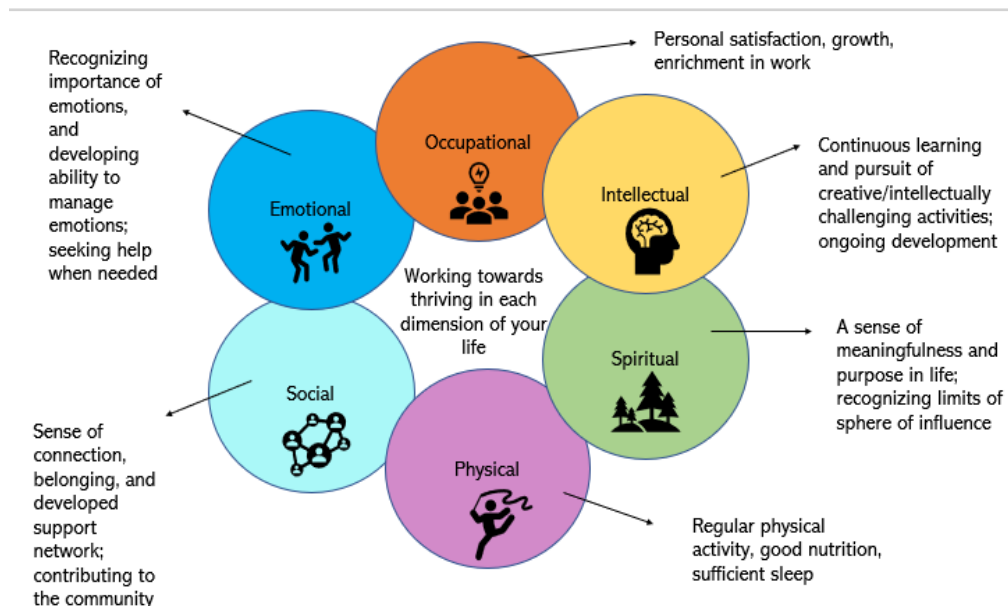
Express Toolkit



Quick Tips for Promoting Your Own Well-Being

- **Get Involved.** Research shows that being involved in diverse professional roles—such as teaching, supervising, or administration, in addition to direct practice—put individuals into contact with a larger community and fostered a sense of interconnection and renewed hope.
- **Practice Mindfulness.** Studies show that present-focused attention to minute, ongoing shifts in the mind, body, and surrounding world helped enhance patience, presence, and compassion. Practice mindfulness by focusing on breath, dissecting a feeling in your body, or taking 5 minutes to unplug and listen to the sounds in the world around you.
- **Practice Holistic Self-Care.** Recognize that self-care carries an ethical component. If you don't take care of yourself, you're at risk of harming others. Holistic Self-Care has been found to be essential in maintaining both personal and professional well-being.
- **Practice Strategically.** Develop a range of strategies to help maintain psychological and physical boundaries between work and personal life. Keep work-related books at work. Limit time spent debriefing with loved ones. Take time off to travel. Maintain clarity about the limits of your sphere of influence in your practice of law.
- **Recognize the Importance of Debriefing.** Studies show that those who debrief with coworkers and utilize peer support identify that as the most important factor in stress reduction, but make sure you are engaging in conscientious, low-impact debriefing.

What is Attorney Well-Being?



Holistic Self-Care and Quick Ways to Practice It Right Now

- **Physical:** In addition to striving to engage in healthy eating, regular sleep, and physical activity, take time to cultivate hobbies outside of the office. And as tough as it can be, utilize vacation time wherever possible.
- **Emotional:** Increased social support translates into decreased stress—which means spending time with family and friends. Simply connecting with other people can greatly reduce feelings of secondary trauma. Research also shows that reading for pleasure can benefit emotional well-being.
- **Psychological:** Practice mindfulness and take time for reflection on the world around you. In one study, researchers found that conscious breathing and placing attention on the moment caused participants to feel calmer.
- **Spiritual:** Time spent in nature has been found to significantly reduce secondary trauma stress—a correlation that is even being studied in combat veterans with PTSD.
- **Professional:** Talk with colleagues and supervisors regarding personal and professional events—researchers have posited that the opportunity to experience respect and equality in the work setting counteracts the effects of vicarious trauma.