



How to Help: The Lawyer with Depression

It's difficult to know how to help the colleague that is struggling with what looks like depression. Depression is treatable and you can provide support in several ways. The LAP is here to help as well, give us a call. 518-487-5688.

Common symptoms of a depressive episode:

Depressed Mood: sad, despondent, feelings of worthlessness, irritability.

Loss of Interest: in most normal activities-work, hobbies, self-care.

Extreme tiredness: regular daily tasks are exhausting.

Lack of concentration: impacts memory and decision making.

Withdrawing: canceling plans, missing work, not responding to calls or texts.

Thoughts of death or suicide: no interest in living, discusses suicide plans, attempts suicide.

Physical ailments: headaches, body aches and pains, with no obvious physical cause.

These symptoms occur daily for most of the day for more than two weeks.

How you can help:

- Talk to the lawyer, expressing your concern and the behaviors you've observed. Be gentle and empathetic, validate their feelings.
- Explain that you are there for them, they are not alone, and that you can assist in supporting them as they get the help they need.
- Ask them what they need right now: someone to assist with their caseload, time off, help with arranging that time off, help with appointments or with other tasks, someone to just be with them.
- Reach out to their doctor or therapist and let them know what you are observing.
- If the lawyer expresses a plan to self-harm or harm others, call 911.
- **Have the lawyer call the LAP for assistance.** All calls are confidential and the LAP staff can help the lawyer connect with virtual support groups run by and for lawyers struggling with depression. LAP can also connect them with a peer support person, another lawyer who has struggled with depression in their career and can identify with what the lawyer is experiencing. Referrals to counselors and assistance with making appointments can be done too.

Do:

- Speak clearly and identify the issues.
- Show compassion and respect.
- Listen and be patient.
- Offer resources.
- Understand that depression is a medical condition and highly treatable.
- Be consistent and keep in regular contact with the lawyer.
- Call the LAP for more support.

Don't:

- Ignore the behaviors and think they will improve on their own.
- Tell the lawyer to "cheer up" or that things "aren't that bad."
- Diagnose.
- Don't push the lawyer to admit there's an issue. If they tell you they don't want to discuss, revisit the conversation at another time.

Resources for Lawyers

Lawyer Focused Resources

[Lawyers Depression Project](#)- online peer-led support group for legal professionals who suffer from depression, anxiety, bipolar, OCD, eating disorders, trauma, addiction and other mental health conditions. Confidential and free. Sign up on the website.

[Lawyers Depression Support Group](#)-online support group facilitated by a mental health professional for legal professionals struggling with a range of mental and emotional health challenges. Confidential and free. Meets Fridays 12:30-1:30 pm. Contact Anne Noble anoble@eriebar.org for Zoom link.

[Onondaga County Lawyers Depression Group](#)-in-person once a month meeting facilitated by a mental health professional for legal professionals struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma and other mental and emotional health struggles. Confidential and free. Contact [Jeff Unaitis](#) for meeting date and time, and location.

[Lawyers with Depression](#) website. Hosted by Dan Lukasik, a lawyer living and working with major depressive disorder, this comprehensive website provides information, guidance, and other resources for the lawyer struggling with depression.

Additional Resources

[NYS Crisis Text Line](#) Text Got5 to 741741

[NYS Office of Mental Health](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services](#) (SAMHSA)

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI)

[Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#) (ADAA)

Suicide and Crisis LIFELINE
Call or text 988



The graphic features a dark blue background with a red telephone handset on the right side. On the left, the text reads: "Lawyer Assistance Program" with a small logo above it. Below that, it says: "If you or someone you know is struggling with mental, emotional, or substance abuse issues call the Lawyer Assistance Program Hotline". The phone number "877-772-8835" is prominently displayed in white. At the bottom, there is a black box with the hashtag "#useyourfour" in white.

The LAP Hotline is available 24/7 for anyone needing support. NYSBA members are eligible for four free counseling sessions through a Hotline referral.

For information on how to manage a temporarily transition out of the practice of law, download [NYSBA's Planning Ahead Guide](#).

**Don't hesitate to contact the LAP
518.487.5688 or lap@nysba.org. Staff can
provide referrals, resources and connections to
individual and group peer support.**

[**www.nysba.org/lap**](http://www.nysba.org/lap)