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July 1, 2016  
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*Additional  
Information*

## *Paralegals Singing the Blues- Managing Stress and Anxiety*

It is no secret that attorneys are prone to job burn-out, depression, anxiety and substance abuse issues. A January 20, 2014 [CNN article](#) reports that lawyers rank fourth in proportion of suicides by profession. [Up to twice as many lawyers](#) abuse drugs as compared to the general population.

The statistics are alarming. So much so that [many bar associations](#) offer programs and resources to provide support for attorneys.

*Lawyers are the most frequently depressed occupational group in the U.S.*

While I frequently hear about efforts to address mental health issues in attorneys, I do not hear about such efforts to assist their staff.

**This got me thinking, “What about us?”**

I am in no way minimizing the stress that attorneys are under or the demands of their profession. However, it stands to reason that the folks who work in the background, who often take the brunt of the esquire’s highs and lows may need a little help themselves. Not only that, but we are frequently type-A personalities as well – we demand perfection of ourselves and those around us. When perfection is not achieved, we feel it.

*Chronic stress can trigger the onset of clinical depression.*

### **What is a paralegal to do?**

- Let it be – I know this is much easier said than done. But how is waking up at three in the morning because you had a nightmare about a typo in an email you sent out going to fix anything? How is fretting about that typo for the next three hours going to help? It’s not! What it will do is make you tired and distracted and more prone to further errors.

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- Check in with yourself – Be mindful of your emotions, your triggers, your physical health. If you are stressed about something at home or have a headache, you are not at the top of your game. Admit this to yourself. Address it head-on:

Step 1: Admit to yourself that you are not at your best today.

Step 2: Recognize the situations and tasks at which you are likely to error.

Step 3: Come up with a plan.

- Proof read a document one extra time
- Make it a point to take extra good notes in a meeting

Step 4: Institute your plan.

- Get help – There is no shame in asking for help. While legal support staff may not have the dedicated resources that attorneys do, there is support available.

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)  
[Alcoholics Anonymous](#)  
[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

Fellow legal support gurus, we must take care of ourselves and each other. If you see a colleague struggling, whether with a project or with life, reach out. Maybe all it will take is a friendly smile or a cup of coffee to turn her day around. If her struggles are deeper than that, you could offer her help in making the call to EAP or be a shoulder for her to cry on.

Stay safe and happy!

*By Tanya Patterson*

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE??  
Have you already written an article?  
Submit your ideas to  
Tanya Patterson, NFPA Editorial Coordinator  
[editorial@paralegals.org](mailto:editorial@paralegals.org)

