

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is not something you can just “snap out of.” It’s caused by an imbalance of brain chemicals, along with other factors. Like any serious medical condition, **depression needs to be treated.**

Depression is an illness that involves the whole person. It includes the person’s body, mood and thinking. It affects eating and sleeping habits, feelings about self and thoughts about everything.

Often the inability to experience pleasure presents itself as the primary symptom of depression. The illness is all-consuming, completely enveloping a person’s life. The condition causes one to feel hopeless, helpless, sad or down during most of the day, almost every day. Depressed people experience feelings of guilt and unworthiness. Depression is not the result of weakness, moral defect or deficiency of character. Rather, it is a chronic disease, the nature of which can be organic, psychological or interpersonal.



WHO IS AT RISK?

- No one is completely immune.
- Women are twice as likely to be diagnosed and treated for depression.
- Men are less likely to acknowledge depression – it may be masked by alcohol or other abuse.

LAWYERS & DEPRESSION

- One in four lawyers suffers from elevated feelings of psychological distress, including feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, anxiety, social alienation, isolation, and depression.
- Out of 105 professions studied by Johns Hopkins University, lawyers top the list in the incidence of major depression, and depression is involved in more than half of all attempted suicides.
- Research suggests that those who suffer from intense perfectionism are at higher risk for suicide. They are driven by an intense need to avoid failure. Sound like any lawyers you know?

DEPRESSION IS TREATABLE

- Recognize that something is wrong.
- Have the wisdom to get educated about the disease process.
- Have the courage to seek help.

TREATMENT

A variety of medications and psychotherapies have proven effective in treating depression. A comprehensive evaluation done by a qualified professional is an important first step in determining the best treatment.

WHO CAN HELP?

Colleagues, family members and friends play an important role in recognizing the symptoms of depression and encouraging the person in need to get help.

If you or another lawyer, judge, law student or family member is experiencing symptoms of depression, contact:

The Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program

ALAP understands the demands because we understand lawyers.

For information on ALAP’s *free and confidential* services, call 334-834-7576

Lawyers have the highest suicide rate of any profession, six times the rate of the general population. Lawyers are twice as likely as the general population to develop problems with substance abuse and other addictive disorders. One-third of lawyers will suffer from depression – the #1 cause of suicide - and stress-related mental illness. And this behavior often begins in law school.

ALAP CAN HELP!

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DEPRESSION SELF-ASSESSMENT

Are you:

- Feeling sad, empty or despondent?
- Losing interest in enjoyable activities?
- Experiencing significant changes in weight or appetite?
- Sleeping more, resting less?
- Feeling overwhelmed by guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness?

ANXIETY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Have you:

- Had extended periods of constant and worrisome thoughts and tension?
- Been trapped in distressful, consuming thought patterns or compulsive behaviors?
- Had nightmares, flashbacks, feelings of depression or irritability, especially if they were precipitated by a traumatic event?
- Become distracted or easily startled?
- Had frequent, unexpected episodes of intense fear that strikes often and without warning?
- Had chest pains, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, or abdominal distress?



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Confidentiality: All calls to ALAP are completely confidential. The purpose of ALAP is to help lawyers.

STRESSED OUT?

- Are you experiencing sleep disturbances?
- Are you feeling fatigued, nervous, irritable or moody, or having trouble thinking clearly?
- Are you encountering conflict with co-workers or over-reacting to situations?
- Are you repeatedly thinking of suicide or death (seek help immediately if you answered yes to this question).

Answering yes to any of these questions puts you at risk.

You are not alone.

Let ALAP assist you, so you can assist your clients.

For information on ALAP's free and confidential services, call
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Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program



Understanding Depression



We understand some of the hardest battles are fought outside the court room.