

LAWCARE - Health Support and Advice for Lawyers

INFORMATION TO FIRMS AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Stress - understanding, awareness and effective management

Given the lifestyle we lead today with the variety of competing demands on our time, our energy and our resources, stress has become an inevitable part of our lives. In the main, the stress that we encounter is a positive experience in that it stimulates us to 'rise to the challenge' of the various events and situations we face on a daily basis. We need the adrenalin rush in our system to ensure that we perform at our optimum level. Provided we manage our stress effectively, we will continue to welcome the new opportunities that life presents, enjoy the challenges that these hold and continue to grow and develop in both the personal and professional aspects of our lives.

However, too much stress, or an inability to manage it effectively, can lead to severe difficulties on a variety of levels. When we begin to perceive certain challenges as being too burdensome, or we begin to develop a belief that we do not have enough of the personal resources or skills to be able to embrace them, our stress levels begin to move out of balance.

If we fail to recognise this, or attempt to ignore it, then we are vulnerable to a whole catalogue of difficulties on an emotional, psychological and physical level. We may find that we are beginning to feel low in our mood for no apparent reason, or becoming irritable at those around us. We may find that we are having difficulty in sleeping, or experiencing excessive indigestion. Our concentration and energy levels may be constantly low and we may find difficulty in being enthusiastic about anything. We may be withdrawing from our friends and family. These are just some of the early symptoms of negative stress.

The more serious symptoms which come from prolonged negative stress include depression, anxiety, panic attacks, a tendency to consume more alcohol or even become dependent on it to 'cope', increased use of drugs (either prescription or illegal), problems within our relationships with our partner, friends, family and work colleagues and, ultimately, heart disease, strokes, coronary attacks and other life threatening conditions.

Stress needs to be understood and we need to develop an awareness of how we are affected by it and how we cope with it. Without understanding, awareness and effective management of stress, it could be the root cause of major difficulties in our lives and ultimately the cause of an early death.

LawCare - Our aims and services

To assist lawyers, the Law Society of England and Wales, the Law Society of Scotland and the Bar Council, have funded LawCare, a confidential advisory service to help lawyers, their staff and their immediate families to deal with the health issues and related emotional difficulties that can result from a stressful career as a lawyer.

- They may also be able to offer the support of a lawyer volunteer who has recovered from similar problems and has returned to play an active and effective role in the profession.

Our services to legal firms and organisations

In addition to working with individuals who are experiencing difficulties, LawCare offers specific services to legal firms and organisations, adopting a proactive approach to stress management.

These services include:

- One hour presentation on stress and the services of LawCare
- Half day/Full day seminar on Stress Management for partners and managers
- Half day/Full day seminar on Stress Awareness & Management for solicitors and staff

The above services are provided to firms and organisations free of charge, although as a charity we do ask that you provide the venue and any necessary equipment and cover our basic costs of travel and administration associated with the seminar/presentation. Attendance at these seminars will be considered relevant in CPD hours.

In Scotland, enquiries regarding these services should be addressed to: Trish McLellan, Co-ordinator (Scotland), PO Box 17301, Edinburgh EH12 1AD Tel: 0131 337 6678 Email: trish@lawcare.org.uk

Why has Lawcare been established?

Most professionals believe they should be able to handle their own problems, even when such problems are completely outside their professional training and experience. Lawyers, in particular, because they spend their time sorting out other people's problems, find it difficult to acknowledge that they, themselves, sometimes need help. However, they usually find it easier to take this step with another lawyer and so our Chief Executive and Co-ordinators all have experience or knowledge of the legal profession.

Ignoring problems and hoping that they will go away is no solution. The first step is to recognise the existence of the problem. The second step is to seek objective and informed advice in dealing with it.

This is where LawCare comes in. LawCare is here to help you to cope with the increasing number of stresses and related problems facing the profession today, any one of which can adversely affect your professional performance and family life.

Volunteers

Of crucial importance to the services LawCare offers is the network of volunteers, themselves lawyers, who, because of their personal experience in dealing with their own problem, or that of someone close to them, feel that they can offer a fellow lawyer additional support on a more personal level.

More volunteers are always needed and we would be pleased to hear from anyone prepared to help. The identities of volunteers are kept strictly confidential and no referrals occur without prior consultation.

Confidentiality

LawCare is a completely confidential service. Neither the Law Societies nor the Bar Council have any direct involvement in the provision of LawCare services. Their involvement has solely been in the establishment and funding of the service and no details relating to clients are passed to them beyond statistical information.

Contact Details

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You can also learn more about our services by visiting our website:
<http://www.lawcare.org.uk>