

Massachusetts
Lawyer
Assistance
Program

briefings

from the director's desk. . .

A TIME TO REFLECT AND PREPARE

Summer is a time for reflection, evaluation and preparation. At LCL, the staff has been reflecting on the year passed, evaluating what is currently in place and preparing for the year ahead. Although the commute is easier, the phones quieter and the weather beckoning us outdoors, there is great deal going on at 59 Temple Place.

Staff is working hard to develop programs of interest to our members. Our library is becoming an exciting resource for members interested in addiction, stress management, career concerns, and much more. In the coming year we will not only increase our reading inventory, but add audio and video tapes to the mix.

A number of facilitated support groups have been publicized in the past year, but until recently not enough people had expressed interest in participating. However, on Friday, July 28th at 1:00 p.m., LCL's Jeff Fortgang, Ph.D. began a group for lawyers over 45 who are facing the need for change or struggling to adapt to the decline of their practices. This group will provide a safe and supportive environment in which to explore these issues and focus on resolution. Hopefully this is just the beginning and more groups will be activated in the months ahead. Currently, facilitated short term support groups are offered for sole practitioners, unemployed

lawyers, those facing retirement, early recovery and a group for women lawyers. We are ready to start any of these groups as soon as there is enough interest. Let us know if any of these groups appeals to you.

A Long Range Planning Committee is in place and its first meeting was held on Wednesday, July 26th. As in 1993, the Committee has been charged with reviewing LCL activities and recommending short and long term goals to be achieved over the next 10 years. The primary focus will be to re-define what we mean by membership, how best to involve non-recovering clients and the bar at large in the organization, and what programs are compatible with LCL's mandate as a lawyer assistance program focusing on profession wide wellness.

As has been said many times before in this space, we are here to provide you, our members, and the profession in general with whatever support and education we can. We encourage you to use our services and we hope that in the coming year you will take full advantage of this resource.

summer 2000

LCL

Lawyers
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Lawyers

LCL ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN LATE SEPTEMBER

In the past two years our Annual Meeting has been an open Board of Directors' Meeting. This year we will continue that tradition. The Annual Meeting will take place on Thursday, September 28, 2000 at 3:30 p.m. at 59 Temple Place on the 11th Floor. Refreshments will be served and all members are encouraged to attend. For those of you who have yet to visit our new space, this would be an ideal opportunity to do so.

GUIDES FOR CHANGE

No matter how far away many of us are from the academic cycles that signal a time for change, the crisp air of fall that will soon arrive always seems to hint of new possibilities. If you are thinking of making a new beginning of some sort in your law practice or career, here are some titles that many have found inspiring, encouraging and helpful.

> **Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes, by William Bridges**

A lecturer, executive development consultant and transition management specialist discusses "the difficult process of letting go of an old situation, suffering the confusing nowhere of in-betweenness, and launching forth again in a new situation" as a natural process of self-renewal.

> **Transforming Practices: Finding Joy and Satisfaction in the Legal Life, by Steven Keeva**

The senior editor of the "ABA Journal/The Lawyer's Magazine and award winning feature writer profiles lawyers who, by developing a greater awareness of and respect for their inner lives, have changed the way they practice law to achieve a more gratifying, enjoyable and successful professional life.

> **What Can You Do With a Law Degree: A lawyers guide to career alternatives inside, outside and around the law, by Deborah Arron**

A 10-year civil litigator and bar association leader provides a resource and career guide to help lawyers evaluate their interest in, and readiness for, a career change and suggests how to prepare for such a move.

> **Stress Management for Lawyers: How to increase personal and professional satisfaction in the law, by Amiram Elwork**

The Director of the Law-Psychology (J.D./Psy.D.) Graduate Training Program at Widener University outlines the reasons the law is one of the most stressful professions and presents self-help methods that he considers particularly appropriate for lawyers, even the busiest of lawyers.

LCL's Lending Library has many books covering a range of subjects and issues in which our members, clients and others have expressed an interest. If you are interested in a particular subject, let us know. We'll research and offer some recommended titles! Or, if you have read a book you think would be of interest to our readers, give us a call and we will add it to our inventory.

LCL's lending library has many books that many have found inspiring, encouraging and helpful.

ROLE VS. SELF REALITY

...the facade of professionalism, especially in the practice of law, can begin to create an identity that does not square with reality.

“I’m tired of being the Answer Man,” the lawyer said with a weary edge. At 50, he had become somewhat of a public figure in his town. He enjoyed the limelight and willingly accommodated the local TV news that often solicited his authoritative opinions. Handsome, charming and funny, he was a good act. But when he wanted to say what he really thought and felt, he turned to alcohol, and his image and family life were now suffering.

She could pass for a lot younger than her 35 years, presenting a very pleasing but joyless appearance. For the last 3 years, her billable hours had been the talk of the law firm. She “lived to work.” No camaraderie. No collegiality. No fun. No time. “Well, yes”, she said matter-of-factly. “I wonder about my drinking a little. I used to spend more time with friends. Now, I go home and open a bottle of wine. I’m surprised sometimes to find myself trying to pour another glass from an empty bottle. And now that I think about it, I’m shopping more than I really need or want to.”

“I love the challenge, stimulation and thrill of courtroom action. When I’m arguing a case, I’m alive. I perform. Afterwards, though, I feel lost - until I get together with my friends at our favorite bar. But since losing my license on that DUI, my long commutes have made me think. And I’m asking myself, why am I, at age 37, still living at home with my mother?”

These “composites” are examples of how the façade of professionalism, especially in the practice of the law, can begin to create an identity that does not square with reality. An outward appearance of competence and confidence may mask a shaky personal or inner life.

Why especially in the practice of law ? Benjamin Sells, in his book, *The Soul of the Law*, refers to the Impostor Syndrome:

The roots of the impostor syndrome begin in law school where lawyers are taught it is better to bluff than to admit ignorance. It is fueled by an expectation that lawyers should be willing and able to advocate any position, no matter how outlandish, if it is in the “client’s interest”.

Lawyers function in a culture that wants, even longs for, definitive answers to complex issues. The profession, grounded in logic, reason and objectivity, aspires to deliver answers unflawed by emotion and ambiguity. Sells discusses the internal toll the syndrome takes on the lawyer who must repeatedly advocate a position or outcome contrary to his or her personal belief system and moral values. Feelings of inadequacy, dishonesty, hypocrisy and distrust emerge and evolve into cynicism. What is true and real can become blurred, and an authentic presentation of one’s self becomes difficult. Sells continues,

Needless to say, this wreaks havoc on the lawyer’s relationships. [because] as with other professional attitudes, the lawyer’s daily bouts with the impostor syndrome don’t get turned off with the office lights.

Relationships, the good ones, are what keep us honest and healthy. Good relationships are made possible, in part, by mutual caring and authentic presentation of oneself on multiple levels. The impostor syndrome obviously interferes with this essential element of honesty.

Through an over-identification with a professional role that bestows gratifying and seductive financial and ego reinforcements, the denial, or neglect, or distrust of one's own authentic experience inevitably creates isolation and imbalance. Sooner or later the lawyer caught in this snare will begin to hurt. Coping mechanisms, such as alcohol or other drugs, gambling, excessive work, adrenaline rushes, will fail. The mounting mental, emotional, physical or spiritual pain offers a choice: to remain constantly "in role," or to find a way to return to the genuine but less-than-ideal reality of who one is with all one's feelings, problems, and limitations.

The road back is not always easy, but the rewards are great. This is an ongoing journey of self-discovery, self-recovery - a journey out of isolation and into reconnection to self and others.

Unlike the law, real life is messy and ambiguous, but, on balance, it's a pretty good adventure. Similarly, the real person behind the professional image, like everyone else, is subject to the "human condition." Although no one is suggesting that attorneys can simply drop their professional roles, they can discover or revive a dimension of themselves that makes for a richer, more authentic and fulfilling life.

How to meet this challenge? We all need time to reflect and to face and deal with what's inside, and many resources exist that support such an effort. The 12 Steps are widely applicable and provide wise guidance, structure and mutual support. LCL's support groups also offer a setting in which lawyers may shed their professional shells and allow themselves to be more "real." Some forms of psychotherapy, too, emphasize genuineness and looking inside, and LCL is glad to arrange appropriate referrals. A professional group called Lawyers with a Holistic Perspective devotes itself to reducing the split between the lawyer's work and his/her human/spiritual side.

Call us for more information on any of these. Or share with us your own suggestions.

The road back is an ongoing journey of self-discovery, self recovery - ...out of isolation and into reconnection with self and others.

A GOOD READ:

The Soul of the Law: Understanding Lawyers and The Law, by Benjamin Sells.

Here is a brief description found on the jacket of the book:

"We are living in a time when the soul is being drained from the very social institutions that are supposed to be preserving life and values. One of these institutions is the law."

"The problem in our legal system, our negative attitudes toward lawyers, and the skyrocketing number of lawsuits are symptomatic of a deeper malaise in our society. Using the law to mirror the rest of society, Sells addresses issues that face people in all walks of life - workaholism, materialism, stress, fear of failure, and ethical dilemmas - and explores the loss of meaning, not only in the law, but in business, politics, and our everyday lives. As he points out what's gone wrong and why, he also offers ways to bring fundamental ideals and passion back into our work and balance into our lives."

HOW TO USE LCL'S LIBRARY

LCL's library currently has 136 books on a variety of topics including alcohol, cocaine, family, women, depression, stress, other addictive behaviors, codependency etc. The library also has various periodicals, articles of interest, bar journals, etc. and our lending policies are simple.

- Books may be borrowed by any member or participant who has a Registration Card on file with receptionist. Confidential card includes name, address and phone.
- Borrower agrees to return book(s) by the due date indicated on the checkout card.
- Borrower agrees to pay replacement cost of lost books.

We encourage you to make use of this ever growing resource.

LCL SUPPORT GROUP MEETING CALENDAR

MONDAY

For current LCL support group meeting schedule, please click on the Calendar icon on our web site.

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

briefings

This newsletter is published quarterly by Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, Inc. for its members and constituents.

We welcome your comments and questions. Please feel free to write me:

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