

# Self-assessment: DO I NEED help?

Lawyers are used to helping others with their problems. This can lead to viewing others – not ourselves – as the people with the problems. But lawyers are actually more likely than the population average to experience addiction or suffer from mental illness.

Many worry that there is a potent stigma attached to being a lawyer who “needs help.” But before dismissing the possibility that you could use a little support, consider that wellness (mental or physical) is not a yes/no state, it’s a continuum. Nearly everybody can improve his or her quality of life. No lawyer would think twice about seeking professional advice for a sore shoulder or knee: many non-physical issues can be of the same scale and equally susceptible to help if addressed early.

The following exercise<sup>1</sup> can help you, on an informal basis, identify some threats to your wellbeing. To complete it, place a checkmark next to the options that apply to you in each column below. A check in a “red zone” suggests that you would benefit from the assistance of a counselor, family doctor, or mental health specialist.

Checkmarks in the “yellow zone” represent areas of your life in which you may be at risk. If these problems persist or worsen, they could lead to a mental health crisis, job loss, relationship problems, and malpractice claims, among other consequences.

While this self-assessment can help you begin the process, there are many other resources available that provide for more detailed self-analysis. As a first step toward improving your quality of life, why not review the free resources offered by the lawyer Member Assistance Program (MAP) to explore new ways to tackle the challenges in your life? See the links on the next page for more help, or make an appointment to talk with your family doctor. ■

<sup>1</sup> This exercise is in no way meant to replace professional analysis and advice. Readers should consult their own accredited health advisor(s) before taking any action based on the results of this exercise.

	GREEN ZONE	YELLOW ZONE	RED ZONE
<p><b>At work I'm...</b> (check all that apply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Engaged</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Challenged</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Valued</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Productive</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Bored</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Uninspired</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Stuck</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Unliked/without allies</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Overwhelmed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Overlooked</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Underperforming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Feared</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Bullied</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Subject to discrimination</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Sexually harassed</li> </ul>
<p><b>In my personal life I'm...</b> (check all that apply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Supported</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Present</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Loved</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Valued</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Relaxed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Overwhelmed</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Burdened by eldercare demands</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Challenged by children with special needs or behaviour problems</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Lonely</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Not available to my family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Isolated</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Depressed or anxious</li> <li><input type="radio"/> In serious debt</li> <li><input type="radio"/> In poor health</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Subject to physical or emotional abuse</li> </ul>
<p><b>I cope with negative feelings by...</b> (check all that apply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Confiding in friends or family</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Exercising</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Walking outdoors</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Meditating</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Spending time with family pets</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Reading or enjoying hobbies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Blaming or criticizing others</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Losing sleep or sleeping too much</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Over-exercising</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Under-or-overeating</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Spending time in the office to avoid home</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Spending money that I regret later</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Getting lost in the internet or "trolling"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Engaging in violence toward family members or others</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Drinking excessively or using drugs (including overusing prescription drugs)</li> <li><input type="radio"/> "Freezing up" and not being able to finish anything</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Cutting or other self-harm</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Taking excessive risks</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Lying about the status of my work</li> </ul>

## Useful resources:

Homewood Health stress self-assessment:  
[homewoodhealth.com](http://homewoodhealth.com)

The Mental Health and Wellness in the Legal Profession online course from the Canadian Bar Association, the Mood Disorder Society of Canada and Bell Let's Talk offers powerful video testimonials from lawyers and law students as well as group reflections which make the program rich and interactive. Find it at [cba.org/wellness](http://cba.org/wellness) and learn about causes, symptoms and treatment options.

Mental health self-assessment from Psychology Today:  
[psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com](http://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com)

Ementalhealth.ca (by the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO)) has screening tests for adult substance abuse:  
[ementalhealth.ca](http://ementalhealth.ca)

Sunnybrook hospital over-exercising questionnaire:  
[health.sunnybrook.ca](http://health.sunnybrook.ca)

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