

Feeling the pressure?

Each of us faces challenges in life. Sometimes we welcome those challenges, like marriage, the birth of a child, a promotion or a new job. And sometimes we don't, like divorce, job loss, a serious illness or the death of a loved one. It is no secret that a legal career brings with it many pressures and from time to time, a great deal of stress. Major events in our personal lives can also create pressures and stresses.

These pressures and stresses can become a serious concern if you don't have outlets to manage, control and resolve them. They can cause serious health issues (ranging from burnout to anxiety, substance abuse or depression) and be a contributing factor to malpractice claims and Law Society complaints. They can affect not just you, but your colleagues and loved ones as well.

Homewood Health™ provides the confidential Member Assistance Program (MAP) for Ontario lawyers, paralegals, judges, students at Ontario law schools and accredited paralegal colleges, licensing-process candidates, and their families, with financial, arm's-length support from the Law Society of Upper Canada and LAWPRO. The MAP, a trusted Canadian company with more than 33 years of experience providing support services can help you deal with stress and achieve your health and wellness goals. Confidentiality is guaranteed through an individual's right to privacy protection and enforced within the limits of the law. No personal identifying information whatsoever is disclosed to the Law Society of Upper Canada or LAWPRO.

Accessing MAP services

MAP services are multilingual and accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in a variety of

convenient ways and without needing a referral. You can access services:

- Online by visiting the protected Member Area of the MAP website
- Over the phone by calling MAP
- Face-to-face

MAP resources available to you

MAP offers three different ways for you to get help to respond to the challenges you are facing. There are online resources, counselling and coaching services.

The website is user-friendly and it is easy to setup a secure account. It provides everything from an orientation to a listing of the services, tools and other resources that are offered. There is an extensive online library of health and wellness articles as well as elder care and child care resource locators. There are e-courses to help you improve your skills (wellness, workplace effectiveness, etc.). Virtual e-counselling (simultaneous chat or secure message-based counselling) is available for a wide variety of topics.

There is also a multi-media health centre, where you can find information on everything from exercises for different breathing techniques, identifying areas of tension, health and wellness self-assessments, to videos and articles. The site has a "12 Weeks to Wellness" program – a weekly check-in on your health and fitness goals after assessing your health risk factors.

One of the most frequently accessed MAP resources is the counselling service. Experienced, credentialed therapists are available for in-person or online counselling and



Member Assistance Program

Your Member Assistance Program (MAP) is available 24/7

1-855-403-8922 (toll free)

TTY: 1-866-433-3305

International (call collect): 514-875-0720
myassistplan.com

they are trained to help you throughout the different stages of life.

The peer-to-peer support program is a confidential and uplifting program. Legal professionals who themselves have experienced struggles in the past, help others overcome obstacles – such as depression, alcohol abuse or stress. Those who volunteer in this program are compassionate people who can empathize with issues that lawyers face. The peer support program encourages participants to discuss their experiences.

In addition, live lunch-and-learn sessions, which usually include stress management workshops, have received positive feedback.

Next steps

Finding work-life balance is one of the more difficult tasks we all face, and one that we often put to the side. The Law Society's MAP program has numerous resources and services that can help you and your family meet the challenges of work and life. You are not alone and can reach out to MAP at any time: electronically, in person, or on the phone. Take the time to visit the MAP website or seek help if you or a loved one is struggling with stress or other challenges. ■

Doron Gold is Staff Clinician and Presenter at Homewood Human Solutions.