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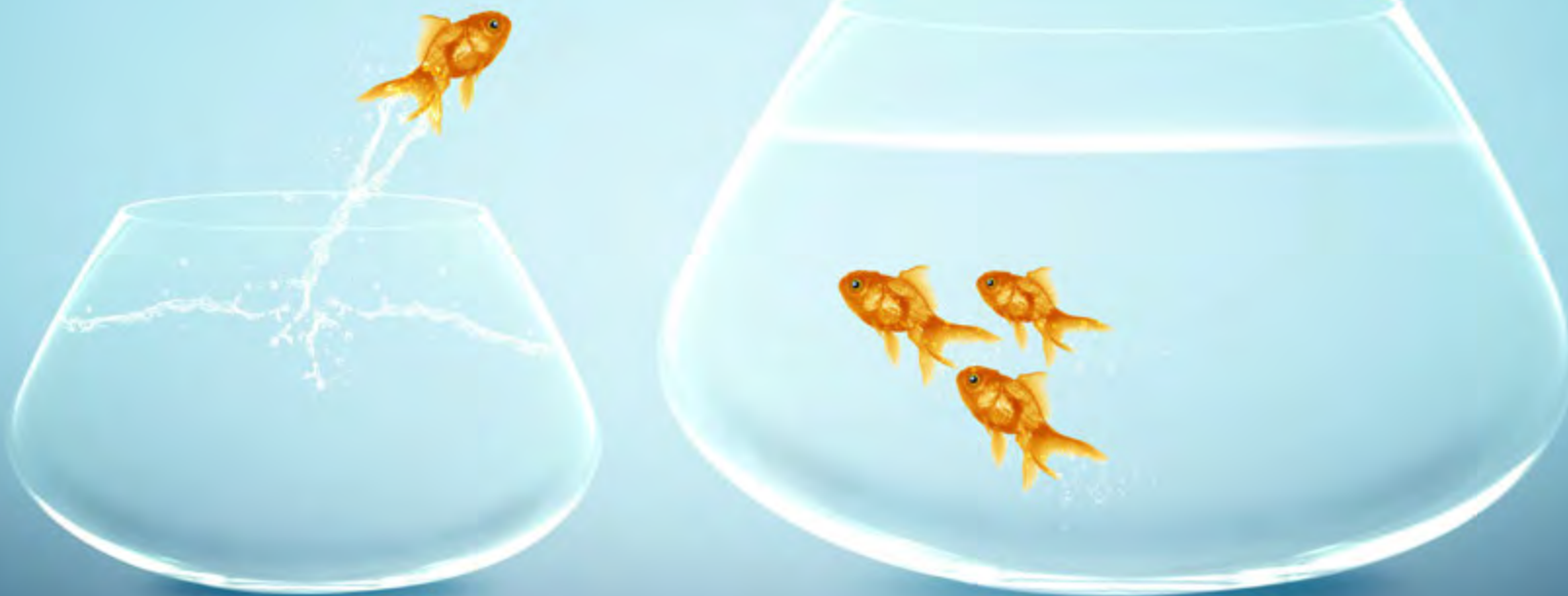
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# What I Learned When Everything Stopped Working

By EMILY A. GIANQUINTO

Welcome to the wellness issue of our magazine and to a column I have had a very hard time drafting, because it's very personal to me and honestly, it's scary to see in print. Here goes nothing.

I have been seeing a therapist for about two years. I started seeing her because I struggled with distractibility, lack of focus, and an absolute inability to get anywhere on time or to manage my time. I've always been a procrastinator, proud to be able to work well under pressure and to meet tight deadlines, but I was pushing that to the extreme. It wasn't unusual for me to pull all-nighters to complete projects. Those sleep-deprived nights weren't necessary. They were the product of my occasional inability to start certain projects until the absolute last minute. At times, I would scroll through social media apps or watch hours of TV reruns instead of working on whatever I needed to complete. I wasn't missing court deadlines—but I was at times putting unnecessary pressure on my colleagues who were collaborating with me, or cutting down on clients' opportunity to review briefs before they got filed. I felt it was only a matter of time before I actually did miss a deadline.

In the last couple of months, I've come to understand something about myself that explains a lot about the struggles that led me to therapy. I was recently diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). I started to suspect I had it when my eldest son was diagnosed months ago.<sup>1</sup> ADHD is strongly linked to genetics—studies indicate it has a her-

*Emily A. Gianquinto is the CBA's 102nd president. Attorney Gianquinto is special counsel at McCarter & English LLP, where she counsels employers on day-to-day employment matters and represents them before federal and state courts, administrative agencies, and mediation and arbitration panels. Her experience includes litigating all manner of business disputes.*



itability rate of at least 74 percent<sup>2</sup>—so he had to get it from somewhere.

For my son, the diagnosis was almost a no-brainer. He is a very smart kid, but incredibly fidgety and inattentive. He can't stay still when in a conversation; he needs to be leaning his chair back, constantly adjusting his position in his chair, or playing with a pen or a fork or a piece of paper. He goes upstairs to put on his shoes and 20 minutes later, is buried in a book, shoes still missing, oblivious to the fact that the rest of the family has been waiting on him. He's asked to put away his coat and somehow forgets what he was supposed to do while holding the coat in his hand. He does his homework and then completely forgets to turn it in. Regularly. And none of this phases him. There's no sense of urgency or fear of failure.

On the one hand, I'm glad that he isn't always stressed out or getting down on himself about these behaviors, since they aren't really in his control. On the other hand—I just cannot relate to his approach to this chaos at all. When I was a kid, for-

getting to turn in homework would have given me an anxiety attack. I would have beat myself up about it for weeks. I was a total goody two shoes, obsessed with excelling in school. I was the kid teachers were delighted to have in class. I did all my work on time. I did the extra credit work. I was organized to a fault. I was so obsessed with reading that I would walk down the halls of my elementary school with my face in a book.

It turns out that all of those behaviors—things I was generally praised for as a kid—are examples of the way ADHD expresses itself in girls and women. ADHD just looks different for us. As a result, it's significantly underdiagnosed in girls, resulting in a lot of middle-aged women (like me) being diagnosed late in life.<sup>3</sup>

Part of that starts with the name itself. ADHD is associated with hyperactive, impulsive boys, the kids who can't sit still in class, who fidget or jump out of their seats, who are disruptive and can't pay attention. They get diagnosed and treated early. Girls and women tend to exhibit dif-

ferent, internalized symptoms, like racing thoughts, decision paralysis, low self-esteem, and hyperfocus on certain tasks. Instead of visibly or audibly fidgeting, we doodle on our papers or twirl our hair. We're more likely to have been initially diagnosed with anxiety or depression due to our emotional dysregulation. So, while

***"So why share all of this now—or even at all? Because wellness in the legal profession cannot just be about programming or panels or discussion about the tools available to help us, in confidence or otherwise. It has to include honest conversations. Conversations about how we are really doing, what we are struggling with, and what support looks like in real life."***

all of these behaviors are due to the same executive functioning deficiencies, the differences in manifestation lead to the gendered differences in diagnosis.<sup>4</sup>

A lot of the literature exploring the impact of gender norms on the ways ADHD is ultimately experienced by girls and women discusses the impact of coping by masking our performance issues and engaging in other behavior, all designed to basically compensate for and hide the chaos that is happening in our heads. We become perfectionists. We over-schedule ourselves to stay busy. We are the type A overachievers.

We look like we have it all together from the outside, but on the inside, we're a mess. And eventually, we burn out.

Looking back, the first signs of cracks in my "competent girl" façade—which I now know was a coping mechanism masking a lot more going on under the surface—came in high school. There were a few larger assignments I definitely procrastinated on and finished the night before, which wasn't my usual MO. But I pulled it off. In fact, I did so well at the last-minute writing assignments that I decided to get a degree in journalism. Knock out an article every day? No problem, I told myself; I

thrive under pressure. I write better when I'm crunched for time.

It was in college, when my time was my own and my class schedule was all over the place, that a lot of my time management skills just seemed to fly out of the

window. I was staying up late writing papers and cramming for exams. Every single time. I started drinking terrible, single-serve coffee (brewed as if it was tea!) at all hours. I pulled all-nighters a few times, which was especially brutal since I was a rower and typically needed to be awake no later than 5 a.m. to get to morning practice on time. But I still mostly pulled it off.

#### **ADHD isn't always what you think.**

It can look like high-achieving, perfectionist, people-pleasing women holding it all together until perimenopause. Then? The overwhelm hits hard.

*@adhdmenopausetherapist* - This all sounds so familiar.

These "bad habits," as I came to think of them, continued to ebb and flow through law school and becoming a lawyer. Procrastination that defied logic, distraction at the worst possible moments, and impulsive decisions, like jumping into and outfitting myself for an expensive new hobby that I drop six months later. (I moved last year, and in my attic were boxes and boxes filled with the artifacts of past hobbies/interests including knitting,

book binding, card/stationery design, triathlons, road races, boxing, crocheting.) I now recognize more patterns that weren't at all obvious to me at the time. When I was regularly working out, I was much better at time management and balance. I slept better. I drank less. I ate less. I was overall healthier. When physical activity slipped, the other progress unraveled. I stayed up way too late, often also drinking and snacking. I wasted time scrolling social media or binge-watching TV shows.

In a profession that prizes precision, preparation, and judgment, those tendencies can feel like personal failings rather than symptoms. And so, like many lawyers, I did what we are trained to do: I pushed through.

And then, COVID hit. Everything got a *lot* worse. Sleep patterns were completely disrupted. I was working well into the night on a regular basis because during the day, I was trying to deal with making sure two kids (including a preschooler) got their schoolwork done and kept to some semblance of a schedule. I was sleeping less, drinking more, and eating a lot of takeout food. As things started to normalize coming out of the shutdown, I didn't. At least, not entirely, and I continued to struggle in all facets of my life.

None of my usual coping skills were working. I couldn't checklist my way out of feeling overwhelmed. I couldn't just buckle down over a weekend to catch up on my growing to-do list. I was drowning. I never felt like I had enough time to get everything done, but I also never said no to things, and I regularly wasted time on things that weren't important. Instead of sitting down to prep for the depo I was taking in two days, or to draft a letter I wanted to get out that same afternoon, I'd find myself working on something with a deadline in a month or non-billable work that wasn't urgent. I'd put off simple tasks, like responding to an email or returning a phone call, or paying a bill in favor of much more complicated work, like writing a brief that wasn't due for two weeks, or reviewing the CBA constitution and bylaws for areas that needed updating. (True story; perils of being a CBA officer.)

It wasn't sustainable.

The timing wasn't a coincidence; I was likely entering perimenopause around this time. Until recently, perimenopause wasn't talked about much, if at all. I'm here to tell you that it's a real slap in the face. Hormonal changes cause, in addition to all kinds of not-fun-at-all physical changes, worsening executive functioning, and increased forgetfulness and brain fog. Mood swings and irritability increase. It's all likely caused by declining/fluctuating levels of estrogen and progesterone, which help regulate dopamine.<sup>5</sup> ADHD brains are already dopamine deficient, so if you add in perimenopause, it's a perfect storm of overwhelm. Perimenopause basically acted like Kryptonite for all of those coping skills I had developed during my life.

I didn't know any of this at the time.

I finally made changes when I was at a regular annual doctor's appointment and answered the depression and anxiety screening questions honestly enough that my doctor spent quite a while talking with me about how I was feeling. At one point during that conversation, I burst into tears.

That appointment prompted me to make some real changes and to take my health more seriously. I started going to a medical weight loss practice. About six months after that, I started therapy.

Those first steps were huge. I had to force myself to take them. I was especially skeptical about the weight loss clinic, because frankly, I have struggled with my weight for my entire life, even as a D1 athlete in college, working out two and sometimes three times a day. My weight has yo-yoed up and down, and I'd spent many years trying various diets and exercise routines and fads. I only had success when I devoted a lot of time to really intense workouts, like when I paid personal trainers and got into triathlons and later CrossFit. So hearing from a nutritionist about how I should track my macros and adjust my diet to focus on protein intake didn't give me a lot of hope. Tracking food is the worst.

I did it anyway. And after a few months, I was seeing progress. But as had always

happened before, I stalled out. Plateaued. In the past, that's where I would give up. But this time—this time, my doctor prescribed me a GLP-1. It wasn't magic. I didn't suddenly and dramatically start dropping pounds. The drug just helped me continue to lose weight slowly. An average of about one pound a week for months. It added up, and the consistent loss kept me motivated to stick to the diet and exercise changes I was making. Since starting at the clinic, I've lost nearly 100 pounds. It turns out that overeating and binge eating—things I've struggled with since I was a kid—are also related to ADHD.<sup>6</sup> They're impulsive behaviors, exacerbated by stress. They're also related to the interruptions of dopamine pathways seen in people with ADHD, and likely to heightened reward responses related to food.<sup>7</sup>

If you were in the "Gifted and Talented" program at your school in the 90s,

How's your ADHD, High Functioning Anxiety, and Perfectionist Based Procrastination going?

@ADHD\_Unmasked - I saw this meme on social media about a year ago. It hit me hard because yes, I was in a TAG program in the 90s (and the 80s) and yes, I have all of those things.

Sleep has been another challenge. I've always been a night owl, and I honestly feel more productive in the evening than I do early in the day. It turns out that people with ADHD often experience this same reversal of energy.<sup>8</sup> But unmanaged ADHD and poor sleep can reinforce each other in unproductive ways. For me, it makes focusing even harder. I'm quicker to anger. I'm reactive rather than proactive in my decision making. And I snack more when I'm tired. Guess what else messes with sleep? Perimenopause.

Then there's alcohol intake. We all know the statistics aren't good. In 2016, a major study funded by the American Bar Association and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation found that more than one in five lawyers—20.6 percent—screened positive for problematic alcohol use.<sup>9</sup> For me, alcohol became something I had to

look at honestly. I've gone through periods in my life, like during and after COVID, where I knew I was drinking too much and too often. Over the last few years, I've made a deliberate decision to cut back significantly on my alcohol intake. I haven't eliminated it completely, and I still at times have too much, but I'm much more intentional about my intake. I'm careful to make sure that I'm not drinking as a coping mechanism. That distinction matters, particularly given what we know about the intersection of ADHD and substance use. Individuals with ADHD are at increased risk for substance use disorders, underscoring the importance of awareness and early intervention.<sup>10</sup>

So why share all of this now—or even at all?

Because wellness in the legal profession cannot just be about programming or panels or discussion about the tools available to help us, in confidence or otherwise. It has to include honest conversations. Conversations about how we are *really* doing, what we are struggling with, and what support looks like in real life.

For me, that has meant seeking clarity through therapy and then diagnosis, making incremental changes in how I approach alcohol, trying to prioritize better sleep, and continuing the work of improving my physical health. It also means actively working all the time to quiet that every-present, ever-critical voice in my head reminding me of all the ways I'm not measuring up to my own standards. It's really hard to give myself a measure of grace, but I'm getting better at it.

I also hope that telling my story will encourage others to tell theirs. Removing the stigma from talking about challenges with mental health, substance abuse, and physical health can only happen if we talk about it. And we shouldn't only talk about it in a wellness issue of our bar association magazine. We are all uniquely positioned to lead on this topic. We understand the pressures of our profession, but we also have the ability to reshape its norms by encouraging openness, supporting colleagues who talk about their struggles, and recognizing that wellness is foundational to competence, not separate from it.

*Continued on page 32 →*

# News & Events

## Nancy Kennedy Receives 2026 Ladder Award

The CBA Women in the Law Section and the CBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS) Women in the Law Committee presented the 2026 Ladder Award to Attorney Nancy Kennedy at this year's Pathways to Leadership for Women Lawyers event on March 5 at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville. The Ladder Award was created by the YLS Women in the Law Committee in 2007 to honor a woman attorney who has "left the ladder down" for women to follow in her footsteps and values the importance of leadership development, mentoring, and supporting junior lawyers in their journeys to success.

Women in the Law Section Chair Michelle M. Napoli began this year's event with welcome remarks and an introduction for the evening's keynote speaker, Judge Anne C. Dranginis (Ret.), who was the first recipient of the Ladder Award in 2007. Judge Dranginis spoke about her career, emphasizing the unique challenges women face in the legal profession. "I remember how difficult it was to try to adopt a female paradigm in a profession which historically has been predominantly male," stated Judge Dranginis. She closed her remarks by encouraging women to continue to support one another in the fight for equity, noting, "Women throughout history have banded together and supported one another and we have the ability to do the same."

After the evening's keynote speech, Young Lawyers Section Women in the Law Committee Co-Chairs Claire Pariano and Audrey E. Trace introduced and presented the Ladder Award to Attorney Kennedy. "Nancy Kennedy's career reflects not only professional excellence in the field of intellectual property law, but also a deep



(From L to R) YLS Women in the Law Committee Co-Chair Claire Pariano, 2026 Ladder Award Recipient Nancy Kennedy, and YLS Women in the Law Committee Co-Chair Audrey E. Trace

and sustained commitment to mentoring and supporting the next generation of attorneys, particularly women entering the profession," noted Attorney Trace.

After accepting her award, Attorney Kennedy provided remarks, speaking about her personal journey. She discussed how she entered UConn School of Law in her thirties after spending a decade as an outdoor guide teaching rock climbing, kayaking, and camping. She explained how she stayed involved with the university after graduating and entering practice, eventually attaining an adjunct professor role through which she continues to teach and mentor law students today. "I think of mentorship as sort of a catchall. We get coffee together or we talk about advice and planning on what we should do," stated Attorney Kennedy. "But really, being a mentor also calls upon you to be kind of a sponsor or a gatekeeper. A mentor can give you advice, but a gatekeeper gives you a docket, something to do. A mentor can talk to you, but a sponsor talks about you, even when you're not in the room."



(From L to R) CBA YLS Chair Paige M. Vaillancourt, CBA President Emily A. Gianquinto, Keynote Speaker Judge Anne C. Dranginis (Ret.), 2026 Ladder Award Recipient Nancy Kennedy, YLS Women in the Law Committee Co-Chairs Audrey E. Trace and Claire Pariano, and Women In the Law Section Chair Michelle M. Napoli

Thank you to everyone who supported and attended this year's event. Learn more about the Ladder Award and past recipients at <https://www.ctbar.org/members/sections-and-committees/sections/young-lawyers-section/ladder-award>. ■

## CBA Young Lawyers Section Hosts 2026 Diversity Dinner

**Over 150 guests gathered** at the Pond House Café in West Hartford on February 10 for the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) Young Lawyers Section's (YLS) 2026 Diversity Dinner. The event's primary presentations included a keynote address from Representative Matt Ritter, who currently serves as the speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives and a panel discussion which included Dru Levasseur, principal at Dru Levasseur Consulting LLC; Moy N. Ogilvie, partner at McCarter & English; Elicia Pegues Spearman, CEO of Girl Scouts of Connecticut and former general counsel for Quinnipiac University; and Prerna Rao, principal at Omnia Law. The panel was moderated by Attorney Moses Beckett, the director of the housing unit at State-wide Legal Services of Connecticut.

The evening began with welcome remarks from YLS Diversity Director Hugh T. Sokolski, Jr. "Your presence here reflects something important," noted Sokolski as he addressed the attendees.



(From L to R) YLS Treasurer Jermaine A. Brookshire, Jr.; YLS Chair-elect Sara Bonaiuto; YLS Chair Paige M. Vailancourt; CBA President Emily A. Gianquinto; CBA Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Vianca T. Mallick; YLS Secretary Olivia Benson; and CBA Executive Director Lina Lee



(From L to R) Moderator Moses Beckett and Panelists Dru Levasseur, Elicia Pegues Spearman, Moy N. Ogilvie, and Prerna Rao

"That diversity, equity, and inclusion are not abstract ideals, but shared commitments that bring us together in community." After his introduction, Attorney Sokolski introduced Symone Trout, who spoke as a representative of the event's Presenting Sponsor, Jackson Lewis. In her remarks, Attorney Trout focused on various reasons why it is important to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession. "Valuing diversity not only helps us advise our clients thoughtfully, but also understand our clients more fully, because they too come from a broad range of backgrounds," stated Attorney Trout.

During the dinner's keynote speech, State Representative Ritter spoke about the current issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within Connecticut. He explained how as recently as the 1960s, racial discrimination in housing occurred throughout the state through practices such as redlining and pointed



Keynote Presenter Connecticut Representative Matt Ritter

out the need to recognize this history and address ongoing inequities still occurring. Ritter continued by noting more recent examples of the expansion of equity within the state, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage, and emphasizing the importance of having a variety of diverse perspectives represented in the state legislature. Towards the end of his remarks, Ritter encouraged committing consistent

effort to the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion. "If every person with means and abilities took an hour a week or four hours a month to think about how they were going to help one person or one issue, how much better would we be as a city or as a country?," noted Ritter.

Following the event's keynote speech, moderator Moses Beckett introduced the

panel discussion portion of the evening. The panelists consisted of prestigious Connecticut legal professionals from a range of diverse identities and backgrounds. They each spoke about their lived experiences and the unique challenges they faced in their careers. When asked what piece of guidance she wished someone had shared with her earlier in her career, Perna Rao responded, "Get Involved. There's so many practice areas as far as associations but also in your local community, whether it's a political town committee, nonprofit, rotary club, whatever it might be. At minimum it's a referral source and will expand your client base. At most you can have a better life, find something out about yourself, and become a better lawyer."

Following the panel discussion, CBA President Emily Gianquinto addressed the audience, providing brief closing remarks for the event, thanking the Young Lawyers Section for organizing the dinner and those in attendance for engaging in such important discussions regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## CBA Welcomes New Director of Membership Strategies

The Connecticut Bar Association is pleased to announce the addition of Heather Holt as its Director of Membership Strategies. In this role, Heather is responsible for leading a strategic approach to engagement, retention, and the end-to-end member experience.

Heather brings more than 20 years of experience working with not-for-profit, membership-based organizations, including senior leadership roles at a global not-for-profit media assurance provider. She founded and led the Member Success division and developed a continuing education program, driving stronger engagement, reactivating lapsed members, and expanding participation. Her work reflects a strong focus on data integrity,

operational consistency, and building trusted relationships through meaningful connection.

Heather earned her BA from Villanova University and holds a certificate in Customer Experience Strategy from Columbia Business School Executive Education.

"I am excited to join the CBA and look forward to getting to know our members and learning from their experiences. I believe the strength of membership is reflected in every interaction, and I am committed to understanding what matters most to our members and helping create a thoughtful, meaningful experience that provides lasting value."



## Governor Lamont Announces Superior Court Judicial Nominations, Including Five CBA Members

On March 10, Governor Ned Lamont announced several nominations to fill vacancies in the Connecticut Superior Court Bench. Five of Governor Lamont's 14 nominations are current CBA members:

**Campbell D. Barrett** is a partner at Pullman and Comley, where he serves as co-chair of the Family Law and Appellate practice groups. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial lawyers. In addition, he serves on the Connecticut Bar Examining Committee, the Connecticut Child Support Guideline Commission, and the CBA Limited Scope Representation Committee. He is a member of the CBA's Appellate Advocacy and Family Law Sections.

**Theodore M. Doolittle** most recently served as a U.S. immigration judge in Hartford from 2023 to 2025. Previously, he was the healthcare advocate for the State of Connecticut, heading a state agency that provides free legal services to families fighting health insurance claim denials. He has served in a variety of public and private sector roles, including as a senior anti-fraud official within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, assistant attorney general with the Connecticut Office of the Attorney General, and trial attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice. He serves as a member of the CBA Government and Public Sector Committee and Immigration Law Committee.

**Patrick M. Fahey** is a partner at Shipman and Goodwin LLP, where he has practiced in the areas of complex litigation, appellate, and intellectual property litigation for nearly 30 years. Most recently he chaired that firm's business litigation practice. He serves on the CBA Appellate Advocacy Section's Executive Committee and is also a member of the

Federal Practice, Intellectual Property, and Litigation Sections.

**Leah Pollard** is presently an attorney with Connecticut Legal Services. She previously served for 17 years as the probate judge for the Northeast Probate Court and as the administrative judge for the Northeast Regional Children's Probate Court. Prior to that, she was in private practice in Pomfret. She is a member of the CBA Elder Law Section.

**Patrick T. Ring** is currently an assistant attorney general in the Connecticut

Office of the Attorney General, serving in the Financial and Revenue Services section. He has been in that position for over sixteen years, representing the state and several state agencies in court, with a focus on banking, securities, insurance, taxation, and consumer financial protection.

Governor Lamont also nominated attorneys Jeffrey R. Beckham, Sean Kehoe, Felice N. Gray-Kemp, Nisa Khan, Seán McGuinness, Philip Miller, John Shaban, Rosemarie Weber, and Justine Whalen to the Connecticut Superior Court.

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## IN MEMORIAM



**Edward (Ted) Lawler Johnson, Jr.** (1936-2026) was born in Hartford and later graduated from Ports-mouth Priory

(Abbey) School in 1954, before spending two years in the army stationed in Germany and earning a B.A. from Williams College in 1961. Early in his professional life, he worked at the Hartford National Bank, after which he entered a long career as the Executive Director of the Connecticut Bar Association, before retiring in 1998.



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## PEERS AND CHEERS

**Brody and Associates LLC** of Westport is excited to announce the recent hiring of Associate Attorney Catherine Y. Bailey.

**Harris Beach Murtha** is pleased to announce that attorneys **Marni Weiner Arlia, Alessandra Ash, Michael A. Discenza, Meghan A. Hayden, Vincent R. Merola, and Jeffery J. Sheng** have been elected new partners of the firm, effective Jan. 1, 2026. These accomplished lawyers assist in representing regional, national and international clients, and practice in many of the firm's focus areas.

**Louden McGrath Bryan & Bissonnette**, formerly Loudon Katz McGrath & Bryan LLC, is proud to announce its name change along with the addition of Kathryn L. Bissonnette as Partner and Timothy S. Cieslak as an Associate. The announcement also marks the retirement of longtime partner Robert B. Katz after more than four decades of dedicated family law practice.

**Parrett Porto** is pleased to announce that **Robert N. Saraco, Jr.** has become a principal of the firm and will continue to focus his practice on domestic relations and criminal matters. **Kay Wilson** has joined the firm as a Senior Litigation Attorney and practices in the areas of employment law, civil rights, intellectual property infringements, commercial disputes, and complex litigation. **Michael R. McPherson** is welcomed as a member of Parrett Porto's healthcare, appellate, and litigation practice groups. He will continue to focus his practice on a broad range of issues, including appeals, healthcare law, medical malpractice, civil litigation, compliance and regulatory matters, and patient healthcare issues. **Katherine**

**A. Dornelas** joins the firm as an attorney who will continue to focus her practice on family, probate, and juvenile matters. **Shane P. Burns** joins the firm as an attorney who will focus on personal injury, workers' compensation, litigating business disputes, and zoning matters.

**Rutkin Oldham Contratto**, formerly Rutkin Oldham & Griffin LLC, is pleased to announce its new name. The firm's partners include **Sarah Stark Oldham, Justin M. Contratto, and India A. Butler**. Attorney Oldham represents clients in the negotiation and litigation of sophisticated, complex and high-asset family law matters. Attorney Contratto is an experienced family law practitioner and trial attorney. His matrimonial practice focuses on the representation of high-net-worth individuals, professionals, executives, and owners of closed corporations. Prior to joining the firm, Attorney Butler gained experience working in a fast-paced litigation firm representing health care providers in the defense of medical malpractice matters. During that time, she handled all aspects of pre-trial litigation, including case development, legal research, fact investigation and motion support. India was largely responsible for discovery oversight, including compliance management and review.

**Verrill Dana LLP** is pleased to announce that the firm has continued to expand its Connecticut presence with the opening of its new, larger Greenwich office located at 66 Field Point Road. The firm has also appointed **Calvin Woo** as Partner in Charge of its Connecticut offices in Westport and Greenwich, where he will lead the firm's continued strategic growth within the state.

# Practice Book Amendments for 2026

By FREDERIC S. URY AND PORTIA BAUDISCH

On June 12, 2025, the judges of the Superior Court adopted amendments to the Connecticut Practice Book which became effective on January 1, 2026. The following article is a summary of some of these changes.

**(New) Lawyers' Principles of Professionalism:** On October 19, 2020, the Connecticut Bar Association's House of Delegates adopted Lawyers' Principles of Professionalism. They were adapted and provided the basis for the adoption of the Lawyers' Principles of Professionalism which were adopted by the Judges of the Superior Court. They emphasize the obligation of lawyers to model respect and civility in their interactions with each other and with the public. The Principles are not intended to be the basis for the imposition of any civil, criminal or professional liability, professional discipline or sanctions. They are intended to be aspirational guidelines for civility and decorum and include a discussion of civility, courtesy, honesty, truth-

fulness, and competency, responsibility to work effectively and cooperatively with those with whom they interact, mentoring less experienced attorneys, and the responsibility to honor the profession.

## AMENDMENTS TO THE GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE SUPERIOR COURT RULES

**Section 2-27A – Minimum Continuing Legal Education** The change to this section expands the rule to permit up to six hours per year of minimum continuing legal education credit for pro bono legal services in accordance with specific requirements set forth in the rule. The credit shall be based on one hour of credit for each three hours of pro bono legal services up to six hours.

**Section 2-3 - Grievance Counsel for Panels and Investigators; Section 2-34 - State-wide Bar Counsel; Section 2-34 – Disciplinary Counsel** The changes to these

sections are consistent with the current duties and responsibilities undertaken by the Chief Court Administrator pursuant to Public Act No-24-108 that consolidated under the Chief Court Administrator the responsibility for many personnel and administrative matters that historically were acted on by the Executive Committee or the judges of the Superior Court.

**Section 2-77 – Review of Status of Fund** This change increased the amount paid from the client security fund in any calendar year to the chief court administrator for the provision of crisis intervention and referral assistance to attorneys from 15.9% to 25% of the amount received by the fund from payments of the client security fund fee in the prior calendar year.

**Section 3-16 – Requirements and Limitations** This section concerning legal interns removes the requirement that students attending out of state law schools have to comply with the special



requirements of Section 3-21.

**Section 3-21 – Out-of-State Interns** The repeal of this section ends the special requirements applicable to students attending out-of-state law schools.

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CIVIL RULES

**Section 10-14 – Proof of Service** This change adds language to the Practice Book’s example language certificates of service. The added language, underlined in the following quote, requires only consent for electronic delivery from “all counsel exempt from e-filing and self-represented parties of record . . .” This change reflects the fact that any attorney who is not exempt from e-filing is required to accept electronic delivery, regardless of consent. Therefore, consent to electronic delivery is only applicable to self-represented parties and, per the additional language, counsel exempt from e-filing.

**Section 10-35 – Request to Revise** This change adds a new basis for a request to revise. The new amended subsection (4) provides that parties may file a request to revise to obtain “an attachment to an adverse party’s complaint or other pleading any express agreement alleged as a ground of action or defense, notwithstanding the provisions of Section 10-29 . . .” The commentary provided for this amendment provides that the reason for a Request to Revise filed under this new subsection (4) would be for the purposes of filing a motion to strike. Section 4-7 still controls to the extent there is any personal identifying information in the agreement sought to be attached. If a litigant opposes the requested revision because they claim such agreement contains confidential information, the litigant could move to file under seal, or to otherwise redact the agreement, under Section 11-20A. The only other change to this Section 10-35 is that the previous subsection (4) is now a new subsection (5).

**Section 13-26 – Depositions; In General** The only change to this Section is to reflect that the new Practice Book Section 13-28A, as opposed to the former Section 13-28, addresses deposition subpoenas. This is in response to the adoption of the Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act, codified at Connecticut General Statutes Section 52-655, *et seq.*, which has become the new Section 13-28, as discussed further below.

**Section 13-28 – Persons before Whom Deposition May Be Taken for Use in Proceedings in this State** Section 13-28 has been restructured in response to Connecticut’s adoption of the Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act. Section 13-28 is now organized into only three subsections, each addressing before whom depositions for in-state actions may be taken. Notably, subsection (b) distinguishes between states that have adopted the Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act and those that have not, providing different

deposition procedures for each. Subsection (c) addresses depositions taken outside of the United States for use in an action in this state. As noted above, the subpoena-related provisions that were previously in Section 13-28 were moved to a newly created Section 13-28A.

#### **(NEW) Section 13-28A – Deposition**

**Subpoenas** This new Section 13-28A was created in response to the Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act. Former subsections (b) through (g) of Section 13-28 were moved to this new Section to address deposition subpoenas, some of which have been slightly modified. The most significant changes found in the new Section 13-28A are the new subsections. Subsection (b) is a new provision addressing subpoenas to be issued in this state for actions pending in other states that have adopted the Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act. Subsection (e) is also new and instructs litigants on where motions responsive to a subpoena should be filed, depending on where the underlying action is pending. Subsection (g) is new and states that parties may move for a protective order pursuant to Section 13-5.

Subsection (i) is a modified version of former Section 13-28(f) and now provides the court with options in addition to issuing a *capias* when a person fails to comply with a deposition subpoena.

**Sec. 13-29 – Place of Deposition** Section 13-29 has also been revised due to Connecticut's adoption of the Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act. Subsection (d) now addresses only the place of deposition for nonparty deponents who are residents of Connecticut. This subsection applies to both in-state and out-of-state actions. New subsection (e) addresses the place of deposition for nonparty deponents who are not residents of Connecticut, including provisions for subpoenas issued under the Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act or through a commission if the state has not adopted the Act.

#### **Sec. 13-31 – Use of Depositions in Court Proceedings**

Section 13-31 has also been amended due to the newly adopted Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act. Subsection (a) now applies only to the use of depositions in in-state proceedings. Subsection (b), which is a slightly modified version of the former Section 13-28(g)(1), applies to depositions taken in this state for use in out-of-state proceedings.

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE FAMILY RULES**

#### **Sec. 25-62 – Appointment of Guardian Ad Litem**

Section 25-62(b)(3) newly allows a mental health professional who is licensed by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, in good standing, in an area other than: (i) clinical social work; (ii)

marriage and family therapy; (iii) professional counseling; (iv) psychology; or (v) psychiatry, to be appointed by the court as a guardian ad litem in family matters. The mental health professional must have been approved as eligible by the Standing Committee on Guardians Ad Litem and Attorneys for the Minor Child in Family Matters. Such approval is requested by submitting an application to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall provide a written decision to the applicant after deciding by majority vote. The decision is final, and the applicant may not request reconsideration or further review once the standing committee has issued its decision.

### **AMENDMENT TO FORMS**

**Form 201, Form 202, Form 203, Form 204, Form 205, Form 206, Form 207, Form 208, Form 209, Form 210, Form 211, Form 212, Form 213, Form 214, Form 215, Form 216, Form 217, Form 218, Form 219, Form 220, Form 221, Form 222, Form 223** Each of these forms is amended only in the Certification of Service to reflect the changes to the proof of service language in Section 10-14(a), discussed above. ■

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*Frederic S. Ury is a partner with Pullman & Comley, LLC. Portia Baudisch is an associate attorney with Pullman & Comley, LLC*



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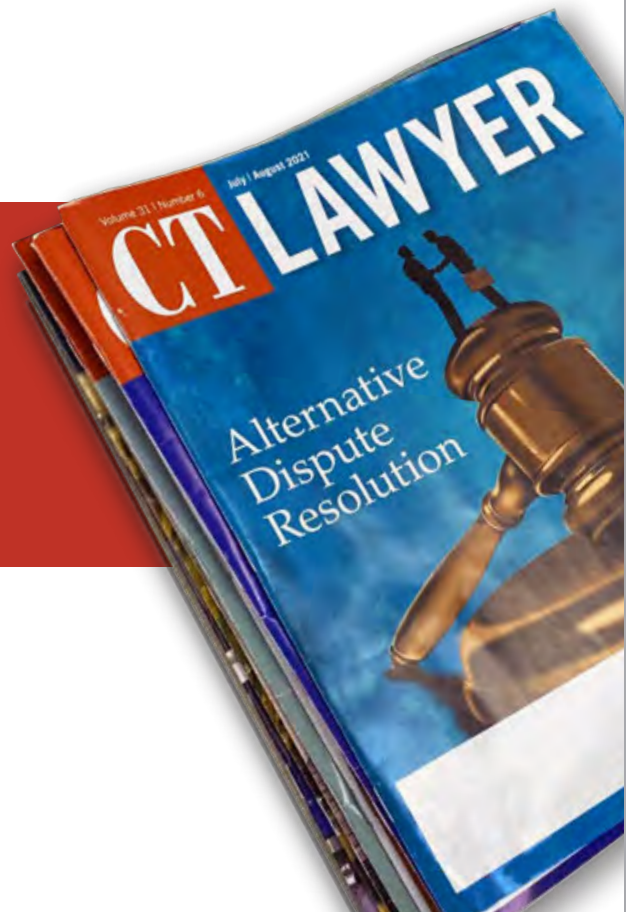
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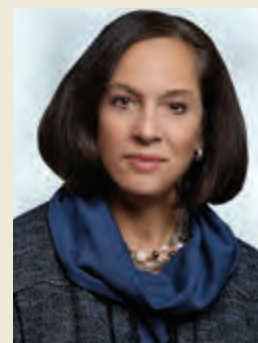


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Supreme Court

# Wellness for Wealth

By CARL R. FICKS, JR.

For many Connecticut attorneys, the phrase “lawyer wellness” lands with a thud. It can sound overly therapeutic, soft, or even indulgent, conjuring images of yoga mats, mindfulness apps, spin classes or a well-meaning HR initiative that has little to do with trial strategy, due diligence, client development or meeting a 2,000-hour billable target. To some, it may feel peripheral to the “real work,” perhaps even a lowering of standards, a hushed suggestion that the demands of the profession should be eased, that resilience is optional, or that work expectations must be diluted to accommodate generational fragility. More seasoned lawyers may bristle at what feels like entitlement: “We all endured it. Why shouldn’t they?”

After more than 30 years of private practice in Connecticut, I understand those reactions. The profession trains lawyers to equate excellence with endurance, including long hours, relentless deadlines, never-ending commitments and ever-rising billable targets. These were not merely job requirements; they were badges of honor. I wore them proudly.

Within 10 days of taking the bar exam in 1988, I dove headfirst into my new career at a small, general practice firm. I worked endless hours, accepted every assignment and believed, with certainty, that I could outwork and outthrust anyone at the firm. I was the first to arrive and the last to leave. I vaguely recall being told how much vacation time I had, but I was not listening, as I had no intention of taking it. Two years into my tenure, a casual conversation with our receptionist revealed that new attorneys were entitled to three weeks off annually. Until that moment, I had not taken a single day.

I was protecting my reputation, building my book, billing hours, and generating income. That approach is untenable because it ignores the most valuable asset in the room. That asset is you. And it should be fiercely protected.

Newly minted lawyers are inundated with offers and pitches designed to protect their anticipated wealth—estate planning, life insurance, disability coverage, annuities, and mutual funds. All are structured to safeguard financial assets from future creditors.

But there is precious little discussion, if any, about protecting the physical and mental assets responsible for generating that wealth in the first place. The creditors are not only financial. They include anxiety, exhaustion, depression, burnout, and cognitive decline. And they are collecting.

*Bloomberg Law’s 2024 Attorney Workload and Hours Survey*, completed in January 2025 and released in April 2025, paints a sobering picture. More than one-third of responding attorneys (36%) reported that their well-being worsened in 2024. Fifty-six percent experienced anxiety; 54% reported disrupted sleep; 39% noted diminished energy or concentration; 38% reported worsened mood; and 22% reported depression. Between 69% and 88% attributed these issues to work.<sup>1</sup>

The *Bloomberg* survey also revealed that there is little refuge. On average, attorneys reported taking just nine days off in 2024 to relax and recharge. Seventy-three percent worked on at least half of their days off. Unsurprisingly, only 3% reported doing nothing work-related during their time away.<sup>2</sup>

Law is a service profession. Consider your “wheel of service,” with spokes likely to include your clients, your colleagues, your partners (both professional and personal), your community (i.e. philanthropic organizations, church groups etc.), and your family (which may very well include elder care). If you are not functioning at full capacity—cognitively, emotionally, physically—the entire wheel destabilizes.

The profession often speaks of being “fit to practice.” Traditionally, that phrase refers to admission or disciplinary standards. But fitness is not a one-time certification; it is an ongoing condition. Other high-stakes professions recognize this. Pilots are grounded when fatigued; surgeons monitor dexterity and alertness, and commercial truck drivers are subject to hours-of-service limits. In each case, diminished capacity is treated as a risk factor, not a personality flaw.

The stakes in the legal profession are just as high: personal liberty, protection of civil rights, financial security, recompense for grievous injuries, business viability, and public trust in the judicial system. Our own Rules of Professional Conduct make this explicit. Rule 1.1(a) states, in pertinent part, that a “lawyer shall not intentionally, recklessly, with gross negligence, or repeatedly fail to perform legal services with competence.”<sup>3</sup> Rule 1.1(b) defines competence as applying the “mental, emotional, and physical ability reasonably necessary” to perform legal services.<sup>4</sup> Wellness is not a luxury add-on to competence; it is embedded within it.

So, what does protecting the asset actually look like? It begins with fundamentals that are neither glamorous nor complicated. It is axiomatic that “[p]hysical activity can



help you think, learn, problem-solve and enjoy an emotional balance. It can improve memory and reduce anxiety or depression...[it] can also improve signs of brain health [and] reduce your risk of cognitive decline and dementia.”<sup>5</sup>

The most recent *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd Edition*, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in 2018 recommend at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity per week.<sup>6</sup> For many lawyers, 2.5 hours feels impossible. Time has become a personal prison.

But in the legal profession, what gets scheduled gets done. Lawyers schedule client calls, depositions, and strategy sessions with precision. Why not schedule exercise with the same intentionality? If mornings work best, claim them before the day makes its demands. Protect the time as you would a court appearance or a deal deadline. The hours exist. The question is whether you will prioritize them as non-negotiable professional maintenance.

Sleep is equally non-negotiable. In the federal guidelines referenced above, “sleep” is mentioned 41 times.<sup>7</sup> Lawyers are compensated for cognitive endurance—parsing dense language, reviewing voluminous records, identifying risk, synthesizing complex facts, analyzing precedent. Chronic sleep deprivation impairs concentration and working memory at levels comparable to alcohol intoxication. Seventeen hours awake approximates a blood alcohol content of 0.05%.<sup>8</sup> In Connecticut, operating under the influence has a 0.08%

threshold.<sup>9</sup> The margin is thinner than the profession might care to admit.

Sleep hygiene is neither mystical nor exotic. A recent article in Harvard Health Publishing noted what “[s]leep hygiene encompasses: making your sleeping environment comfortable and conducive to uninterrupted sleep; keeping a consistent sleep schedule of seven to nine hours per night for most adults; following a bedtime routine that helps you fall asleep; establishing daytime habits that optimize restful sleep at night; and tailoring these practices for your own best results.”<sup>10</sup> For a profession dependent on judgment and precision, good sleep hygiene is not indulgence; it is risk management infrastructure.

Exercise and sleep—simple, unglamorous, yet profoundly powerful. They are not about aesthetics. They are about preserving cognitive clarity, emotional steadiness, and physical resilience. You cannot sustainably generate wealth if the assets are depleted.

After more than three decades of practice and lessons I’ve learned as an endurance athlete, I have come to believe this: protecting the asset is not a weakness. It is a stewardship. It is leadership. It is professionalism. The profession does not need to lower its standards. It needs to widen its definition of excellence to include the disciplined maintenance of the lawyer behind the work. And today’s younger lawyer behind the work faces pernicious challenges, including crippling student loan debt and the encroachment of artificial intelligence.

Your clients deserve a competent lawyer. Your partners deserve a reliable colleague. Your firm deserves sustainable leadership.

Our judicial system deserves lawyers at full capacity. Your family deserves a whole human being. And you deserve a long, healthy career marked not only by financial accumulation, but by vitality and purpose.

Be curious about what protecting your most valuable asset might look like this year. Schedule the workout. Guard your sleep. Take the vacation day. And if you’re struggling with alcohol or drug use, depression, stress or anxiety, please reach out to a wonderful resource in your own backyard: *Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers Connecticut, Inc.*, the “lawyer assistance program providing crisis intervention and referral services to the Connecticut legal community.”<sup>11</sup>

We insure our person and property. We diversify our portfolios. It is time we protect the wealth that makes all other wealth possible. ■

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*Carl R. Ficks, Jr.*, is a Connecticut attorney who practiced for over 30 years before founding *No Surrender, LLC* ([www.carlficks.com](http://www.carlficks.com)), a leadership consulting firm with an emphasis on attorney health and wellness.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/insights/business-of-law/attorney-workload-and-hours-survey/>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Rules of P Professional Conduct 1.1(a).

<sup>4</sup> Rules of Professional Conduct 1.1(b).

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity/features/boost-brain-health.html>

<sup>6</sup> [https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical\\_Activity\\_Guidelines\\_2nd\\_edition.pdf](https://odphp.health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/work-hour-training-for-nurses/longhours/mod3/08.html>

<sup>9</sup> Conn. Gen. Stat. § 14-227a.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/sleep-hygiene-simple-practices-for-better-rest>

<sup>11</sup> <https://lclct.org/>

# Obedience

By RYAN MCGUIGAN

**A**s I sit here writing this, it is February 9, 2026. Today is my second birthday. Today, I am eighteen years sober.

Eighteen years ago, I woke up in a rehabilitation facility in Florida to two very large men standing over my bed in Bermuda shorts and flip-flops. Travis was from Ohio. Burke was from Gulf Shores, Alabama.

They called themselves the “welcome wagon.”

I did not feel welcome. I felt like crap.

At thirty-six years old, recently divorced, separated from my daughters, and drinking with increasing precision and desperation, I believed my life was finished.

I had been warned that rehab was a career killer. I was told I wasn’t an alcoholic—just stressed. I was told to cut back. Take a break. Go easy on the sauce. But don’t stop. Never stop. If you stop, people won’t trust you.

This was the advice I received from my own family.

My father told me, “Whatever you do, don’t go to AA. It’s full of assholes.”

Blessedly, my big sister wouldn’t have it.

She found me passed out under a bed with a bottle in my hand. She told me plainly: get help, or she would make sure my ex-wife never let my daughters see me again.

With an overdrawn credit card, I made an appointment in Florida. I got on a plane.

The nurse at the front door asked me why I was there.

“I just want to get better,” I said.

I meant it.

At that moment, I believed my life was over.

It wasn’t.

It was stripped.

It was empty.

But I was alive.

## The Climate I Grew Up In

Addiction in my family was not an event.

It was climate.

There was a tyrant in our home. Emotional weather shifted with him. When he was calm, the house exhaled. When he wasn’t, we hid.

I thought every kid dreaded their father coming home. I thought it was normal.

Children do not diagnose dysfunction.

They adapt to it.

I drank.

My younger sister drank and eventually used drugs.

My older sister fell in love with sugar.

We were children. We absorbed what the house demanded and reached for whatever dopamine quieted the cortisol.

Alcohol was not rebellion.

It was belonging.

My first drink was a beer I shared with my father at thirteen after a basketball win. I was a man now—that was the message.

Alcohol was not just relief.

It was a family friend.

Over the years, I buried a grandfather, my father, my mother, a sister, an uncle, and cousins because of alcoholism and addiction.

And still, I told myself I was different.

Addiction rarely begins with chaos.

It begins with comfort.

## Collapse in Plain Sight

By my mid-thirties, I had been a prosecutor and joined a large firm in Hartford. I was married. I was a father.

From the outside, everything worked.

Inside, I was deteriorating.

When my ex-wife reached her limit and moved back to New York with our children, something shifted.

Not grief.

Permission.

Permission to drink harder. Permission to stop pretending. Permission to quietly self-destruct.

I was not actively suicidal.

I was passively committed to drinking myself to death.

## Detox and the Word I Hated

Alcohol detox is not cinematic.

Opiate withdrawal is visible misery. Alcohol withdrawal can be lethal—seizures, delirium, hallucinations. But the most dangerous part is clarity.

When the fog lifts, you see the damage.

You see the marriage.

You see your children.  
You see the years you anesthetized.  
That clarity—and the shame it brings—  
drives many back to the bottle.  
During my first week in rehab, I met Father Skip Flynn.  
I told him I needed forgiveness.  
He opened the trunk of his Toyota Camry  
and pulled out two stoles.  
“Green or blue?”  
I chose green.  
After confession, he asked if I believed  
God had forgiven me.  
“No.”  
“Have you ever?”  
Again, no.  
“Then believe that I believe.”  
I did not believe.  
But somebody believed in me.  
That was enough.

### **Almost One Year**

When I left rehab after twenty-eight days,  
I was not confident.  
The confident ones returned.  
I was terrified.

For nearly a year, I followed directions.  
Meetings daily.  
No major life changes.  
Do your steps. Get clean. Get honest.  
Make amends.  
Pray constantly.  
Just shy of my one-year anniversary, I attended a Hartford Bar Association event.  
I still scanned rooms, wondering who knew about my rehab stay. Wondering if my father had been right—that sobriety would ruin me professionally.  
A judge I had known for years walked directly toward me.  
“Two colleagues said you know a lot about rehab.”  
In that instant, I thought this was the reckoning.  
The judge told me that his daughter returned from spring break, and they had found dozens of wax bags in her luggage.  
She claimed she was holding it for a friend.  
I told the judge that when I was 15, I used the same excuse when Mom found Lucky Strikes in my bedroom.  
I was lying. So was she.  
“Where is she?” I asked.

“At home. Alone. She’s safe”  
What I knew about opiate addiction, I learned in rehab. I knew she was not safe, nor would she be alone for long.  
“Give me the address. I’ll go.”  
I had no business conducting an intervention.  
So I called Father Skip.  
“You have no business conducting an intervention.”  
“I know.”  
“But you called. So that’s good. Follow these instructions.”  
The next morning, we flew to West Palm Beach.  
At the rehab facility, a staff member glanced at my intake date.  
“Tomorrow is your one-year anniversary.”  
I had forgotten.  
They asked me to give a speech.  
I didn’t know what to say. I get paid to talk, but I had no words.  
I called Father Skip.  
“One word,” he said.  
“Obedience.”  
The young woman I brought to rehab



could not find it.

She relapsed.

Eventually, she died of an overdose.

Years later, my little sister followed the same script.

She was thirty-nine. A physician assistant. She had lived with rheumatoid arthritis since childhood. Pain was constant.

Alcohol softened it.

Opiates erased it.

She was not reckless.

She was suffering.

Everything I learned about addiction—and I could not save her. My baby sister.

My older sister, a teacher, chose a different anesthesia. She is now battling cancer like a lion.

All of my mother's children earned advanced degrees.

We built careers.

We built reputations.

We did not build self-awareness.

Addiction does not discriminate by intelligence.

It exploits what we refuse to examine.

This work does not guarantee survival.

But it offers a chance.

## The Profession

In 2016, the ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation reported that approximately 21 percent of licensed, employed attorneys screened positive for problematic drinking. Among attorneys under thirty, the rate approached 32 percent.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 28 percent reported symptoms of depression.<sup>2</sup>

Lawyers absorb trauma professionally. Chronic stress elevates cortisol. Alcohol delivers dopamine. The relief is immediate. The cost is cumulative.

Connecticut is not immune. The Connecticut Lawyers Assistance Program (CTLAP) provides confidential support for lawyers, judges, and law students struggling with substance use, depression, and burnout.<sup>3</sup>

The tragedy is not that lawyers struggle.

The tragedy is that they wait.

## Second Chance Interventions

What began as quiet help became structured service.

I founded Second Chance Interventions, dedicated to helping families and professionals confront addiction before it becomes fatal.

Over seventeen years, I have performed more than 115 interventions and personally escorted more than 60 individuals to treatment facilities across the country.

One intervention involved a young man from Fairfield County. Good schools. Loving parents. Fentanyl.

His parents went to Al-Anon. They listened. They did the hardest thing a parent can do: they stopped cushioning the fall.

They told him he could have a home or he could have narcotics.

He chose narcotics.

He now lives on the streets of Hartford, panhandling. He makes roughly \$100 a day from well-meaning strangers who believe they are helping.

Soft care is not real care.

Handing fentanyl money to a fentanyl addict is not compassion. It is surrender.

We got him to treatment.

Today he is back on the streets.

I'll say it again. This work does not guarantee survival.

But it offers a chance.

## The Lawyer at the Door

A few months ago, colleagues called about a lawyer drinking himself to death at home.

With West Hartford police performing a wellness check, I knocked.

"Hi. I'm Ryan. And I'm an alcoholic."

"Me too. I know who you are. Come on in!" he said.

Not all interventions are combative.

Some people know they are addicted. They simply do not know that change is possible.

That day, I did not sell rehab.

I offered hope. I offered him a chance.

He was obedient. Not to me. To a Higher Power than both of us.

He got in the car. We drove to Kent.

He is sober today.

## What Sobriety Restored

Sobriety did not erase funerals.

But it stopped the cycle.

Today, I live with my wife of ten years. We are raising five children together—two from her first marriage, two from mine, and our Emilia.

My wife asked my ex-wife to be her godmother. Emilia calls her Mama Ali. Her "Mamali." I am the luckiest man in the whole wide world.

Eighteen years ago, I thought rehab marked the end of my career, my credibility, my life as I knew it. Instead, it marked the end of my illusion of control. Addiction thrives in silence and sophistication. It hides behind degrees, titles, and reputation. Recovery begins in humility. In our profession, we are trained to argue, to control outcomes, to believe intelligence will save us. Sometimes it will not. Sometimes survival requires something far simpler: obedience. The willingness to follow directions. The courage to ask for help. And the discipline to examine ourselves as rigorously as we examine everyone else.

Second Chance Interventions  
PO Box 1986  
Lakeville, CT 06039  
interventionshelp@gmail.com  
860-995-5742

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*Ryan McGuigan is the founder of McGuigan Legal, LLC.*

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Patrick R. Krill, Ryan Johnson, and Linda Albert, *The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys* (Chicago: American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs and Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States," National Center for Health Statistics, latest available data year.

<sup>3</sup> Connecticut Lawyers Assistance Program (CTLAP), Connecticut Judicial Branch, <https://www.jud.ct.gov/ctlap/>.

# Maintain Your Connection to the Connecticut Legal Community



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# Lawyers Concerned *for* Lawyers: A Gift to the Legal Community in Connecticut

By DAVID WILLIAMS

**L**awyer can be difficult. It is no secret that attorneys and law students are more susceptible than other professionals to difficulties with substance use and mental health. The results of multiple studies addressing lawyer mental health arrive at the same conclusion: Attorneys are more likely to have higher stress, anxiety, depression, and substance use.

Considerable research has been conducted. Two studies stand out.

In 2016, the Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP) in conjunction with Hazelden Betty Ford and Krill Associates assessed responses from 15,000 lawyers nationally. The results were not encouraging. Over 20 percent reported “problematic drinking.” The rate increased with years in practice. Mental health was also at risk with 61 percent of respondents reporting anxiety and 45.7 percent with depression. Many lawyers just suffer along with these issues rather than seek help. Why? Stigma. Fear of being found out. Shame. The CoLAP research indicated that over 50 percent of attorneys surveyed declined help for those reasons.

The University of Chicago and the Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, Massachusetts evaluated the state of lawyer well-being using several research methodologies including a survey of Massachusetts lawyers. The results: 77 percent of those surveyed reported burnout from work, unhealthy alcohol use (42 percent), anxiety,

and depression (26 percent and 21 percent, respectively). Again, stigma was an obstacle to getting help as were time constraints.

Connecticut lawyers are fortunate to have Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, CT (LCL-CT). LCL-CT is a gift to every Connecticut lawyer, law student, and judge. Lawyers Concerned is anonymous, confidential, and free. No records are kept and it is not necessary to call LCL for information.

The LCL-CT website is a great place to start. The site was developed with Connecticut attorneys in mind. See for yourself at [lclct.org](http://lclct.org).

Hundreds of lawyers have utilized LCL services. Over 750 participants attend the Wednesday support group each week. LCL receives about one hundred calls annually from lawyers seeking support for matters related to nearly any subject that might hinder a law practice: Anxiety, depression, closing a practice, substance use, vicarious trauma, and panic attacks, among other reasons.

These callers made the right choice. Lawyers contacting LCL for services or support are surprised and relieved that their call is answered by a knowledgeable and compassionate fellow attorney—someone who has experienced similar challenges and understands their stress.

There are a few of the free and confidential services LCL offers to those who contact us:

- A bi-weekly peer support group that is facilitated by a mental health profession
- Weekly recovery meeting live at the LCL-CT office and zoom
- A bi-weekly recovery meeting in Old Saybrook

There is more! Also available are six free, confidential mental health sessions per calendar year for Connecticut lawyers, judges,

and law students.

Give LCL-CT a try! Call us at: 860-563-4900 for details. LCL-CT is ready and willing to help, even if that help is just a conversation. (Contact Info: Brian McManus, [Brian@lclct.org](mailto:Brian@lclct.org), Mike Kennedy, [Mike@lclct.org](mailto:Mike@lclct.org) ■

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*David Williams has been the executive director of Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, CT (LCL\_CT) since July 2022 and retired from the position in March 2026.*

## LAW STUDENT FINDS HOPE

*"Following my last stint in rehab, I was finally ready to take my sobriety seriously. I was also eager to study for and take the bar exam. I had struggled with substance abuse during law school, but my addiction really took off following graduation. Now that I was finally clean I knew I would need a lot of support. I distinctively remember googling CT lawyer assistance program and was pleasantly surprised to come upon the CT Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers (LCL) website. I was happy to learn LCL was not only open to lawyers but also to law students and law school graduates, like myself.*

*It was during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and as such, the LCL weekly meetings were Zoom meetings only. I remember logging on to the meeting weekly and feeling right at home. I could relate to what others were saying and they could relate to me, regardless of where we were in our lives and careers.*

*Not only did I find support, I also found hope! There is no judgment. While LCL now meets in person on a weekly basis, it still also meets via Zoom and that is an amazing benefit for those of us unable to physically join each week. I am now coming up on three years clean and sober, and sobriety has given me a life beyond my wildest dreams. I was able to pass the bar exam, become employed as an attorney, and recently gave birth to my second child. I still rely on my weekly LCL meetings for support! Life can still get stressful, but I know I am not alone.*

*I have met so many great individuals in LCL who I now consider friends who I can reach out to for support if need be. I am so grateful to have found LCL and the people in it!"*

### **Brian McManus**

Executive Director

*Brian McManus is a Hamden native and currently resides in Fairfield with his wife and family. He earned a B.A. in History from Providence College and a Juris Doctor from Quinnipiac University School of Law. Brian practiced law for 17 years before transitioning in 2013 to the field of mental health and substance use disorder treatment and recovery. Since then, he has held roles with several organizations, including the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR), Mountainside, The Lighthouse, and most recently Bicycle Health, a telehealth-based opioid use disorder treatment program.*

*Brian holds the Recovery Coach Professional-Facilitator (RCP F) designation through CCAR and is a Certified Peer Support & Recovery Professional (CPSRP) through the Connecticut Certification Board.*

*Outside of his professional work, Brian enjoys spending time with his family and serving his community. He is a member of the board of directors for Operation Hope of Fairfield, which works to address housing and food insecurity across Fairfield County. He has also mentored high school students through The Shepherds Program and remains active in the Providence College alumni community, where he previously served as president of the Providence College National Alumni Council.*

*Brian has been in sustained recovery since November 2010.*

### **Michael Kennedy**

Assistant Executive Director

*Attorney Michael (Mike) Kennedy is the Assistant Executive Director at the Connecticut Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers in Rocky Hill.*

*Mike is a skilled, compassionate, and empathetic attorney with over twenty-five years of legal experience. He brings to LCL-CT special talents and practical knowledge from his personal experience of vulnerability, resilience, and recovery. A "friend of Bill W.," Mike developed the skills and expertise to become an excellent source of support to others in recovery. Attorney Kennedy inspires colleagues by conveying realistic expectations with understanding and patience.*

*Mike is well versed in the emotional and physical toll that mental health, substance abuse, crisis, and personal issues can have on the legal community. He is dedicated to helping colleagues identify, accept, and overcome destructive life-altering experiences. Attorney Kennedy embraces the philosophy that the well-being of the legal community is achieved through outreach, trust, and action.*

*Attorney Kennedy is committed to community service and serving at-risk and vulnerable populations. He is an active volunteer and participant for the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center in West Haven, CT, and Connecticut Lawyers Assistance program. Mike brings to LCL-CT the energy and compassion to successfully engage members of the Connecticut legal community.*

*Residing in Old Lyme, CT, Mike enjoys quality time friends and family and visiting outdoor locales to fully appreciate the beauty and serenity of nature.*

# Letting Go to Level Up: A Lawyer's Guide

By TANYEE CHEUNG

**T**he legal profession is built on control. From the earliest stages of training, attorneys are taught to anticipate risk, identify weaknesses, and shape outcomes. Precision is expected. Deadlines are unforgiving. Details matter. Success often depends on the ability to foresee what could go wrong and take steps to prevent it. In that sense, control is not only valuable—it is foundational.

But there is a less examined dimension of control that operates beneath the surface of legal work: the effort to control our internal response to events. And unlike external control, which can improve outcomes, internal overcontrol often degrades performance. Many of the inefficiencies in legal practice are not driven by the work itself, but by the friction created in how we react to the work.

## Where Energy Is Quietly Lost

Consider a common supervisory scenario. An associate turns in a draft agreement. It is generally solid, but it contains several errors: a defined term used inconsistently, a cross-reference that does not align, a provision carried over from a prior deal without proper adjustment. The reviewing attorney notices the issues and feels a familiar internal reaction—frustration, perhaps disappointment, perhaps concern about reliability.

At that point, two processes unfold simultaneously. The external process—identifying the errors, correcting them, and providing feedback—is necessary and productive. The internal process—the narrative of ‘This shouldn’t be happening,’ ‘I thought we went over this,’ ‘Now I have to spend more time fixing this’—is often neither. Yet the internal process is where a disproportionate amount of energy is spent.

The mistake may take five minutes to fix. The reaction can consume far more.

This dynamic is not limited to supervision. It appears across the full range of legal work—in negotiations when opposing counsel takes an aggressive position, in client demands that arrive late at night marked ‘urgent,’ in court schedules that shift despite our frustration, and in the self-critique that follows a deposition or

client presentation. In each instance, the external issue is real and often requires action. But the internal escalation that follows is frequently optional—and costly.

## The Misunderstanding of ‘Letting Go’

In a profession that values rigor, the phrase ‘letting go’ can sound imprecise, or even risky. It may be associated with passivity, lowered standards, or a lack of accountability. That is not what is being proposed here. Letting go does not mean accepting substandard work, ignoring errors, avoiding difficult conversations, or relinquishing professional responsibility.

Instead, it refers to releasing the unproductive internal resistance that attaches to events. A useful distinction can be drawn between action and reaction. Action—correcting the draft, addressing the issue, advising the client, adapting to the changed timeline—is required for effective lawyering. Reaction—the internal narrative of ‘This shouldn’t have happened’—does not improve outcomes and frequently degrades them. Letting go is the capacity to maintain full engagement with the action while reducing or eliminating the unnecessary reaction.

## The Energy Constraint in Legal Practice

Legal work is cognitively intensive. It requires sustained attention, analytical precision, and sound judgment under pressure. These capacities depend on a finite resource: mental energy. When energy is diverted into internal friction—replaying conversations, resisting circumstances, amplifying frustration—less remains available for the work that actually matters.

Reducing internal friction produces tangible performance benefits. Reactive thinking tends to be narrower and more rigid; when frustration or urgency dominates, the ability to evaluate options objectively diminishes.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, when internal resistance is reduced, cognitive bandwidth increases, supporting more nuanced analysis and more strategic decision-making. Associates learn best in environments where feedback is clear, direct, and not emotionally charged. And clients under pressure look to counsel not only for expertise, but for steadiness—an attorney who can respond to challenges without visible internal es-

calation communicates confidence and control, even in uncertain circumstances.

### A Practical Framework: The LET GO Approach

The shift described here does not require a change in personality or temperament. It requires the introduction of a brief pause between stimulus and response. The LET GO framework provides a five-step process that can be applied in real time:

#### L — Look and Label

Be aware and see if you are “reacting.” Label what you are feeling—frustration, irritation, urgency, disappointment. Naming it creates distance from it. Remember you are the one who is looking at the reaction, you are not the reaction and you do not need to become entangled in it. This distinction alone can interrupt the automatic escalation that follows most triggering events.

#### E — Examine the Facts

Strip away the narrative and identify only what is objectively true. The filing had an error. The closing was delayed. The client

sent a late message. Facts require action. Stories require energy. Know which one you are dealing with.

#### T — Test the Narrative

Ask the one question that cuts through: Does holding onto this thought change the outcome? If the answer is no—and it almost always is—the narrative has no utility. It is not serving you or your client. Set it down.

#### G — Ground in Reality

What happened, happened. It will not ever un-happen. This is not resignation—it is the most lawyerly move available: accepting the facts as fixed and immovable, and building your next move from there rather than from the story around them. Reality is the only ground worth standing on.

#### O — Operate with Clarity

Now act. From this grounded, clear-eyed place, address the issue directly, communicate precisely, and move forward. This

*Continued on page 32 →*



# Expanding Access to Justice: A New Incentive for Pro Bono Service in Connecticut

By ELIZABETH M. ROWE

**P**ro bono services have come a long way over the past several years. Yet there remains a pressing need for lawyers to help those who make just enough money to live on but cannot afford an attorney when a legal problem arises. Common legal problems such as eviction, foreclosure, family issues, taxes, debt, or applying for veterans' benefits leave people trying to figure it out pro se or waiving their rights under the law.

We know this unfortunate situation happens every day, and there are not enough professional legal aid attorneys to do it all. We need more active lawyers to volunteer for pro bono work. Persuading lawyers to engage in pro bono work can be a challenge.

Lawyers are typically risk-averse. We may be afraid of helping because we can't fix all the problems, or we're unsure whether our help will be good enough. Sometimes we have too many things going on in our own lives, or we weren't aware of the needs.

Nevertheless, we must be proactive, and the Connecticut Judicial Branch needs your help. So, we've made it easy for you through the state's annual requirement for minimum continuing legal education (MCLE).

As attorneys, you must complete at least 12 credits of MCLE annually, of which at least two credits are in legal ethics or professional development. There are various

ways to achieve this goal, and Connecticut has some of the most generous standards for MCLE credit:

- We have full reciprocity for credits earned in other jurisdictions; we do not charge fees to record credits or become an MCLE provider.
- The Branch offers free MCLE credits through its "Calendar Call" podcast available on our website.
- We are a self-certifying state, which means that lawyers, as officers of the court, certify compliance without having to file the documentation certifying their verification.
- We offer several alternatives for MCLE credit, including writing for a legal publication, teaching law students or lawyers, and judging moot court competitions. Please note that some alternatives do cap how many credits may be earned.

Effective January 1, 2026, the Judicial Branch added another way to earn MCLE credit: attorneys who perform pro bono legal services to members of the public who cannot afford counsel may earn *up to six credits a year*. Specifically, one hour of MCLE credit is earned for three hours of service, capped at six credits a year. This new option has two requirements: first, that lawyers help Connecticut residents, and second, that the work is done through a recognized pro bono program administered by a Connecticut nonprofit organization, bar association, or the Connecticut courts.

If you are looking for an easy option, consider the Volunteer Attorney Program. This fully remote program requires neither an extended commitment nor a visit to a courthouse. In addition, ethics rules protect you against any accidental conflicts of interest. The categories are specific—Contract Collection, Family Law, Foreclosure, and Small Claims. Your assistance is limited to that initial remote meeting, and you are not obligated to provide further service. Another tremendous benefit of the program is that new attorneys have an opportunity to shadow an experienced attorney.

If you sign up to help, you must complete a short application and offer dates that



Image credit: FG Trade | Getty Images



you would be available to meet with the public, starting with just one afternoon of assistance.

To obtain additional information about the program, please contact Rose Ann Rush (for Contract Collection, Foreclosure, and Small Claims) [RoseAnn.Rush@jud.ct.gov](mailto:RoseAnn.Rush@jud.ct.gov) or Nicole Collins (for Family Law) [Nicole.Collins@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Nicole.Collins@jud.ct.gov).

The Volunteer Attorney Program is one of many options available for credit. You can also help in a legal clinic, help veterans, or help low-income people complete their taxes. If you have more specialized skills, you can help by taking a pro bono case in federal court. The Judicial Branch

is working with the pro bono providers and the bar association to create a portal for lawyers to view pro bono opportunities. The Connecticut Bar Association also has a detailed webpage providing numerous options for approved pro bono work that you can visit at [ctbar.org/probono](http://ctbar.org/probono). There are so many options to suit your skill set or personal preferences. In addition, these programs provide opportunities to build your knowledge base.

Despite all the bad lawyer jokes, attorneys by their nature are generous, helpful problem-solvers. You won't last very long in the legal profession, unless you actually like helping other people, fixing problems, and let's be honest, beating the

odds. Pro bono legal service offers you all of that and genuine job satisfaction from people, who otherwise had no way to fix their problems and move forward in life.

For questions about obtaining MCLE credit for pro bono legal services, please contact [MCLE@jud.ct.gov](mailto:MCLE@jud.ct.gov) or visit our website for frequently asked questions about the new MCLE credit option at [jud.ct.gov/MCLE](http://jud.ct.gov/MCLE).

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*Elizabeth M. Rowe is a First Assistant Bar Counsel for the Office of the Statewide Bar Counsel, which administers attorney regulation and discipline in Connecticut on behalf of the Statewide Grievance Committee. In addition, she provides legal advice to the MCLE Commission.*

# Imposter Syndrome and Personality: Who Are You?

By PAIGE M. VAILLANCOURT

Statistically, you've felt it. You felt it when you were sworn in, made your first oral argument, received praise from a colleague, cashed a bonus check, were promoted, received an award big or small, won a trial, landed a big client. That awkward, surreal, existential agita that triggers the little voice in the back of your mind to tell you it isn't real. You don't deserve any of it. How did you even get here? The applicant pool must've been small. They must've struggled to get quality candidates this year. You're going to make a mistake and it'll all come crashing down. You're incompetent. *Why are you an attorney? Who let you be an attorney?*

Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you're a fraud, that all of your success, everything you've achieved, is because of luck or timing or mistake—something other than you and your abilities.<sup>1</sup> Common features include perfectionism, fear of failure, overestimating the intelligence of others and underestimating your own, feeling guilty about success, and generalized anxiety.<sup>2</sup> It is not a diagnosis. Anyone can experience it. And if you don't know what it feels like, consider yourself lucky. Approximately 74 percent of lawyers experience imposter syndrome at some point.<sup>3</sup> This number rises to 83 percent for young lawyers.<sup>4</sup> Instances are higher in minority populations and, in fact, the phenomenon was first recognized and described in a study on high achieving women.<sup>5</sup>

Those who experience imposter syndrome are go-getters that fall into five archetypes based on how they measure competence.<sup>6</sup> The Perfectionist, unsur-

*Paige M. Vaillancourt is a partner at Rescia Vaillancourt, P.C. with offices in Connecticut and Massachusetts and an adjunct professor at Western New England University School of Law. Her practice involves a variety of bankruptcy matters, including debtor and creditor representation, workouts, and trustee litigation, as well as small business representation.*



prisingly, focuses on perfection. Anything less is failure. The Natural Genius focuses on the ease and speed of success. Having to struggle is failure. The Superhero focuses on the ability to juggle multiple tasks and/or roles. Dropping one ball

our profession, I'm sure you identify with at least one of these. And it can have some serious implications. You work harder or longer hours or overprepare to avoid being exposed as incompetent. You procrastinate because starting the task means po-

***"Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you're a fraud, that all of your success, everything you've achieved, is because of luck or timing or mistake—something other than you and your abilities.<sup>1</sup> Common features include perfectionism, fear of failure, overestimating the intelligence of others and underestimating your own, feeling guilty about success, and generalized anxiety."<sup>2</sup>***

is failure. The Expert focuses on extensive knowledge. Not knowing something is failure. The Soloist focuses on doing it all alone. Asking for help is failure. Given

tentially making a mistake or failing at it. You pass on a good opportunity or don't apply for a job because you don't think you're qualified. It can "increase rates of

anxiety, depression, and burnout.<sup>7</sup> You stifle and inhibit your own future growth.

Couple this with the fact that we all wear different faces of personality depending on our social environment. These faces can even be different depending on which subset of environment you're in. For example, your professional face—the one you wear for clients, supervisors, colleagues outside your firm—is very different from the one you wear for your personal friends and family, and it may even be different from the one you wear for judges on one end of the subset and colleagues inside your firm or more familiar professional peers on the other end. There are, of course, things you would say to your law partner that you would never say to a judge. These faces of personality can (and should) all be genuinely you. But it can be hard to reconcile these facets of ourselves and the juxtaposition can make the professional face feel like a mask for a play—it's all one big act—and if that mask slips, if people saw who you really are, well, they'd know you're

a fraud. *There's the imposter syndrome.* It can leave us second-guessing every interaction with a colleague, overanalyzing every hobby, interest, or past experience shared, every piece of clothing worn.

So, what can you do to combat it? Look inward. Focus on what you've achieved and stop comparing yourself to others.<sup>8</sup> Your success may look very different from someone else's, even in the same practice area. But if you achieve something, you are qualified for it. Remind yourself that you can only do your own best and no one is perfect.<sup>9</sup> Make a struggle or failure a learning experience and value what it can teach you.<sup>10</sup> These are simple concepts that we've all heard before, but simple doesn't mean easy to employ. These things take work.

When I started considering the law as a career, someone told me that I could never be a successful lawyer because I couldn't even go to the grocery store without someone holding my hand.<sup>11</sup> I dust that memory off when the existential agita

that is imposter syndrome creeps in after a career win. Those words were damaging twelve or so years ago. Now I use them as weapon of vindication against the feeling that I don't deserve this. I do. You do. Find your self-validation and use it. Enjoy your success. ■

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Imposter Syndrome*, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/imposter-syndrome>.
- <sup>2</sup> Suzanne Feigofsky, *Imposter Syndrome*, 8 HEART-RHYTHM CASE REPORTS 861 (2022), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9811106/>.
- <sup>3</sup> *Imposter Syndrome in the Legal Profession*, GIBSON DUNN, <https://www.gibsondunn.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/WebcastSlides-Imposter-Syndrome-in-the-Legal-Profession-7-JAN-2025.pdf>.
- <sup>4</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>5</sup> Feigofsky, *supra* note 2.
- <sup>6</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>8</sup> PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, *supra* note 1.
- <sup>9</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Imposter Syndrome*, STANFORD UNIVERSITY, <https://ctl.stanford.edu/students/imposter-syndrome>.
- <sup>11</sup> For the record, everyone has a household task they hate. Thankfully, my husband is a wonderful grocery buddy.



## Serving the Needs of the Connecticut Legal Community

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers – Connecticut, Inc. (LCL-CT) is a Connecticut non-profit corporation dedicated to providing information, support and assistance to Connecticut lawyers, judges, and law students in matters of substance use, mental health, stress, and wellness.

There is no cost. All contact is private, confidential, and anonymous and protected under C.G.S. §51-81d(a), as amended.

We offer access to confidential mental health resources, support groups and an array of links to information tailored for attorneys. Scan the QR Code on the right and see for yourself!

**FREE and CONFIDENTIAL Support for Connecticut Judges, Lawyers, and Law Students**  
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is where your training and judgment shine—unencumbered by the friction that reaction creates.

### LET GO in Practice

Consider a negotiation call where you are trying to resolve an issue for your client. The stakes are real, your position is sound, and the outcome matters. In that context, internal friction is not just a personal cost—it is a professional liability. An attorney visibly rattled by opposing counsel's tone, or consumed by the indignity of being interrupted, shifts the dynamic in the room. Composure is credibility. The moment you are seen reacting, you have handed the other side something they did not earn.

A personal example illustrates how quickly this can unfold—and how differently it can end. I was on a call with opposing counsel. After he spoke, I began to respond—and he cut me off. My instinct, honed by years of advocacy, was immediate: Excuse me, can I finish? The frustration was real and, frankly, justified.

But I had recently been practicing loving kindness meditation, which among other things invites you to reflect on moments when you have been kind, when others have been kind to you, when others have not been kind to you—and when you have not been kind to others. That last reflection gave me pause. I have cut people off. Not out of disrespect, but because I thought I understood their point and was trying to move things forward efficiently. The line between impatience and advocacy is thinner than we like to admit.

So I let him speak. He cut me off a second time. When he finished, I simply asked: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Something shifted. Without any accusation or agitation on my part, he heard himself. He apologized—genuinely—and from that point forward, he let me finish. We resolved the issue. I left the call without the residue of frustration that so often lingers after contentious conversations.

That is LET GO in practice. Not passivity. Not surrender. Clarity—about the facts, about my own patterns, and about what actually serves the outcome. Over time, LET GO becomes less a technique you reach for in difficult moments and more a reflex—part of how you show up, for your clients, your colleagues, and yourself.

### Conclusion

The legal profession places a premium on the ability to manage complexity, control risk, and produce precise outcomes. These skills are indispensable. But performance is also shaped by how efficiently energy is used. And a significant portion of that energy is often consumed not by the work itself, but by the internal reactions that accompany it.

LET GO allows attorneys to maintain high standards, act decisively, communicate clearly, and conserve the energy required

to do so consistently. What happened, happened—and that reality is the only ground worth standing on. In a field where clarity, judgment, and sustained focus define success, reducing internal friction is more than a personal benefit. It is a professional advantage. So the next time you feel that familiar surge of frustration or resistance, remember: LET GO, and level up. ■

*Tanyee Cheung is a debt finance partner at Finn Dixon & Herling LLP and is chair of her firm's Wellness Committee and past chair of the Connecticut Bar Association's Wellbeing Committee. Attorney Cheung holds a Master's in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. Through her Awareness and Alignment Coaching Practice, she brings the science of positive psychology to attorneys and professionals ready to close the gap between where they are and where they want to be. For more information on coaching you can reach out to Attorney Cheung at Tan@ThruNow.com.*

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Arnsten, A.F.T. (1998). The biology of being frazzled. *Science*, 280(5370), 1711–1712. Stress hormones activated during emotional reactivity measurably impair prefrontal cortex function—the region responsible for judgment, planning, and impulse control.

## President's Message Continued from page 6

Finally, I hope my story also reminds people that often, the traits we struggle with, the ones that can hold us back if left unchecked, are the same ones that have helped us succeed. The wellness goal isn't perfection. It's progress. And that means that even imperfect progress towards improved wellness is something to be celebrated. ■

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> One of my oldest friends actually suspected I had ADHD much earlier. She's known me since high school, her husband and her daughter have ADHD, and she recognized some of my symptomatology. She's gently steered me in this direction and supported me in figuring this all out over the last couple of years. Love you, Michelle.
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