



PROGRAM MATERIALS
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Navigating Stress and Trauma in the Legal Profession

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5301 North Federal Highway, Suite 150, Boca Raton, FL 33487
Phone 561-241-1919



Navigating Stress and Trauma in the Legal Profession

Marlo Lyons

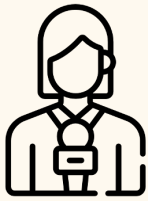
J.D., Executive, Career, and Team Coach



Learning objectives

1. Understand stress, trauma, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue, and the consequences of these conditions
2. Learn strategies for managing stress and trauma
3. Learn how to develop a trauma-informed legal practice or workplace to improve organizational health
4. Understand how to sustain a stress and trauma-informed workplace to benefit employees and employers

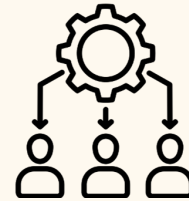
A little about me



Journalist



Entertainment
Lawyer



HR Executive

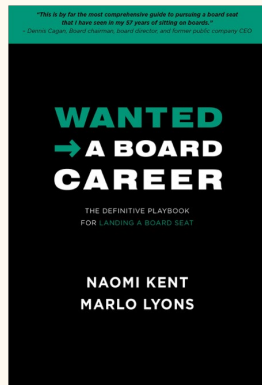


Certified Executive,
Career, and
Team Coach
Workshop Facilitator

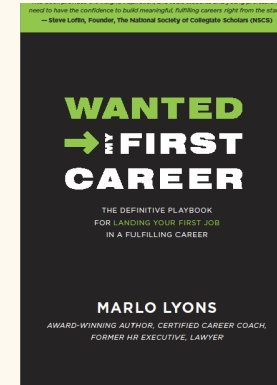
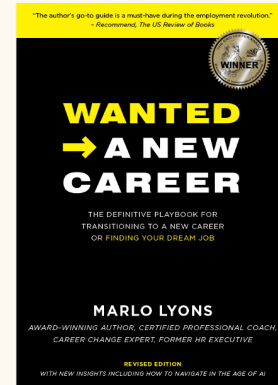
A little more about me



Podcast
Work Unscripted



Award-Winning and Best-Selling Author



HBR Contributor



Understanding stress, trauma, vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue



What are stress and trauma?

Stress

A state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation.

Vicarious trauma

Absorption and internalization of traumatic experiences of others (clients), leading to emotional and psychological distress similar to symptoms experienced by primary trauma victims.

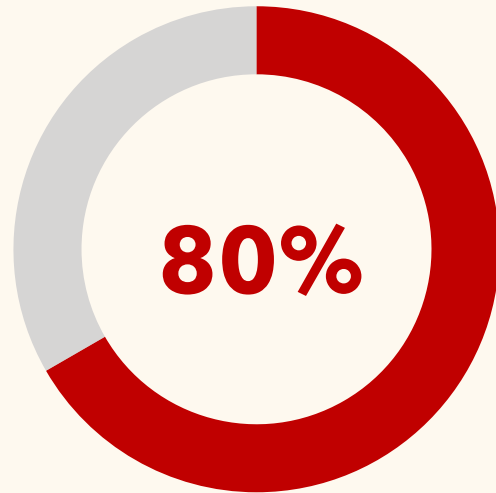
Trauma

A person's experience of emotional distress resulting from an event that overwhelms the capacity to emotionally digest it.

Compassion fatigue

Emotional exhaustion that lawyers can experience from prolonged exposure to the suffering of others and the constant demand to show empathy and compassion.

Stress statistics



**of US workers feel stressed
in the workplace**

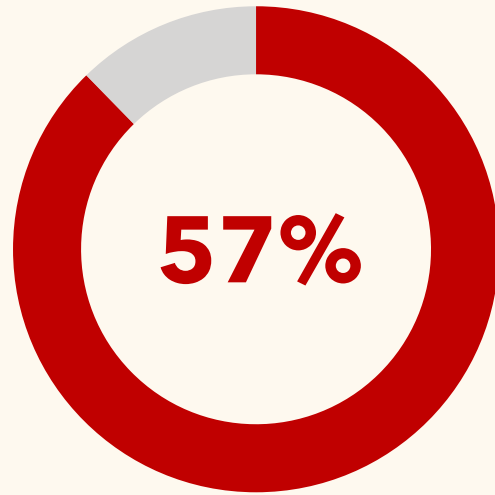
-National Institutes of Health

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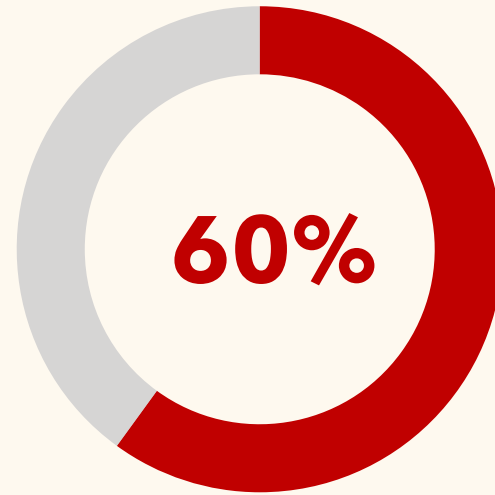
In-house lawyers report feeling
stressed or burned out

-Thomson Reuters

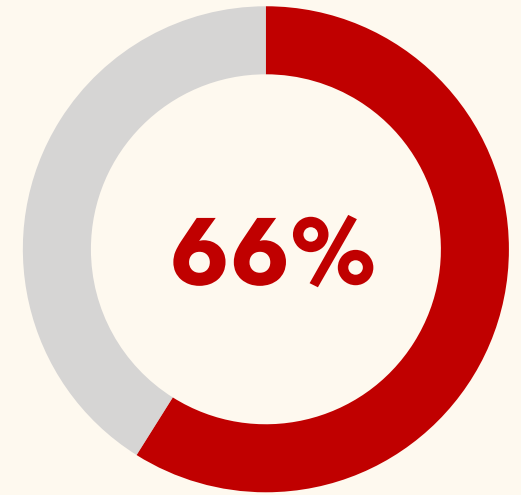
Stress statistics



Career does not provide enough work-life balance



Rated stress level high or very high



Time in the legal profession is a detriment to their mental health

Causes of stress and trauma in the legal profession



Workload/time pressures

Heavy workloads; tight deadlines; long working hours



Competitive environment

Pressures on billable hours, client acquisition, and career advancement



High stakes

Feeling responsible for delivering favorable outcomes to clients



Emotional demands

Needing to manage clients' emotional situations such as family disputes, criminal cases, and personal injury claims



Causes of trauma in the legal profession

Lack of work-life balance

Late nights mean a lack of time for personal fulfillment

Lack of leadership training

Lawyers tend to be trained to be lawyers, not leaders and therefore are not inherently natural managers over others

Economic pressures

Tight budgets, downsizing, and overall uncertainty of the firm's profitability

Masking/perfectionism

Hiding neurodivergence, differences, and trying to be perfect in every situation in the office and with clients



Causes of trauma in the legal profession

Client engagement

Repeatedly hearing and engaging with traumatic stories can lead to vicarious trauma, where lawyers themselves begin to experience symptoms of trauma

Violation of values

Dealing with ethical dilemmas or systemic injustices can lead to conflicts with personal value

Direct event exposure

Witnessing traumatic events such as crime scenes or disturbing evidence or threats from disgruntled clients, opposing parties or others involved in case

News monitoring

Watching yourself be misquoted or misrepresented

Stress and trauma symptoms

- Concentration / focus issues
- Difficulty making decisions
- Worry / feeling of dread
- Irritable; snapping at people
- Biting nails / picking at skin
- Grinding teeth / clenching jaw

- Aches and pains
- Insomnia; sleep disturbances / nightmares
- Digestive issues
- Aggressive behaviors
- Decreased sex drive
- Weight gain
- Diabetes

- Reproductive issues
- Eating disorders
- Headaches / migraines
- Racing heart rate
- Withdrawing
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Alcohol and drug abuse

Causes of trauma in the legal profession

28%

Depression

19%

Anxiety

21%

Alcohol

11%

Drugs

10-12%

Experience Suicidal Ideation



Managing stress and trauma



Managing stress and trauma

1. Develop Self Awareness
2. Self-Care
3. Cultivate Resilience



Develop self-awareness

What do you need emotionally and mentally to be the most productive?

- Mindfulness meditation
- Body scan meditation
- Reflective journaling
- Gratitude journaling
- Active listening
- Therapy/ counseling
- Coaching

- Self-reflection techniques
- Weekly review
- Mind-body connection
- Mindful activities
- Self-assessment tools
- Self-compassion
- Use positive affirmations



Self-care

Potential self-care opportunities

- Fitness programs
- Yoga and meditation sessions
- Healthy nutrition
- Professional development and Training
- Ergonomic workstations
- Micro stretching

- Prioritize connections
- “No meeting” days
- Digital detox days
- Sports leagues
- Group activity

Cultivate resilience

Re·sil·ience

/rə'zilēəns/
noun

The capacity or ability to recover quickly from a difficult experience.*

American Psychological Association

**Any trauma, adversity, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress*



Resilience v. resistance

Re·sil·ience

noun

The capacity or ability to recover quickly from a difficult experience, including stress and trauma.

Re·sistance

noun

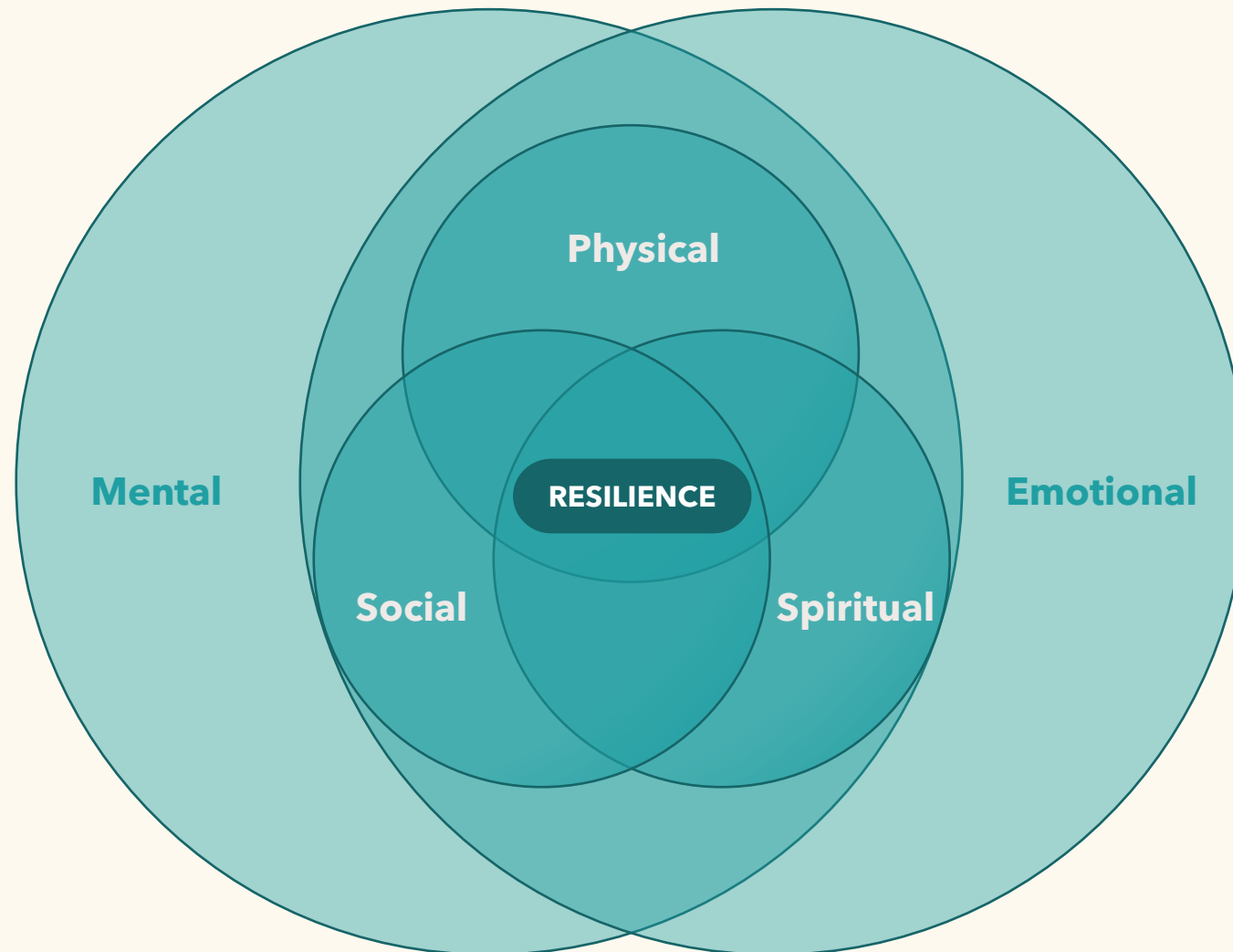
The act or power of resisting.

Resisting

verb

Enduring or withstanding a difficult experience.

Kinds of resilience





Developing resilience

Mental

- Accept change/adversity
- Dedicated, uninterrupted time (pause)
- Cultivate a growth mindset
- Build coping strategies when not in a situation that needs resilience
- Understand your values
- Observe and learn from others

Emotional

- Manage anxiety through concentrated breathing
- Prioritize self-care
- Use active behaviors
- Build deep connections / relationships
- Monitor news intake
- Develop positive lifestyle habits (sleep, eating healthy)
- Be self-aware of length of emotion
- Give yourself grace



Developing resilience

Avoid

- Negative self talk
- Limiting beliefs
- Isolation
- Quick fixes
- Comparing to others
- Fear of failure



Developing resilience

1. Identify triggers
2. Monitor reaction
 - *What emotion do you feel?*
 - *How does your body feel?*
3. Practice power of the pause
 - *Practice mindfulness*
 - *Break down tasks*
 - *Step outside of yourself in the moment*
4. Shift perspective to growth mindset
 - *Turn negative thoughts to positive affirmations*
5. Lean on your support system
6. Engage in self-care
 - *Breath*
 - *Hobbies*
7. Reflect and learn
8. Celebrate successes



Developing and sustaining a stress and trauma informed workplace

Developing a stress and trauma informed workplace

Benefits to employees



1. Improved mental, physical and emotional health and well being
2. Empowers employees to own their health and well-being
3. Feeling valued
4. Better employee performance and engagement
5. Increased transparent communication
6. Improves workplace culture
7. Personal and professional growth

Developing a stress and trauma informed workplace

Benefits to employers



1. Values employee well-being
2. Promotes positive work culture
3. Normalizes self-care
4. Enhances employee engagement and loyalty
5. Boosts productivity and performance
6. Fosters agility and adaptability to change
7. Commitment to ethical practices



Developing a stress and trauma informed workplace

Pre-steps

Acknowledge presence
of stress and trauma

Leadership buy-in to
cultural shift

Educate leadership and staff about
the prevalence of stress and trauma
in the legal profession and impact
on well-being and performance

Acknowledge presence
of stress and trauma



Developing a stress and trauma informed workplace

Support structure

Employee Assistance Programs

- Individual counseling
- Crisis intervention
- Legal/Financial consultations

Mentor / Peer support networks

Executive / Life coaching



Developing a stress and trauma informed workplace

Group resources

Workshops
and seminars

Helpline

Specialized
groups

Mindfulness
practices



Developing a stress and trauma informed workplace

Work-life balance policies

Remote work
options

Flexible
schedules

Reduced
caseloads

Require
mandatory
breaks / PTO



Developing a stress and trauma informed workplace

Training and awareness

Training
programs

Mental health
first aid

Promote
mental health
first culture

Transparent
communication

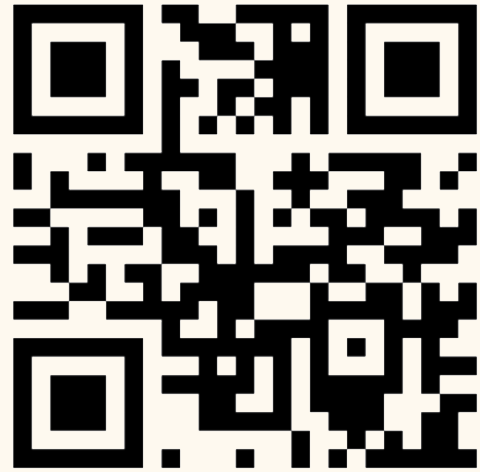


Sustaining a stress and trauma informed workplace

Incorporate the program into everyday work and align to the overall culture

1. Allocate resources to the program
2. Provide regular training sessions and workshops
3. Demonstrate continued genuine leadership commitment
4. Conduct regular check-ins and feedback

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MarloLyonsCoaching.com



[Work Unscripted Podcast](#)

marlo@marlolyonscoaching.com