



Even Lawyers Get the Blues

Let's face it; we are all born human first and take on our professions second. As lawyers you are subject to the same human frailties as anyone else, from any walk of life. However, as people who have spent a considerable number of years gaining your education and honing your craft, often problem solving for others, lawyers can be a particularly difficult breed to help when the personal problems are their own.

The first hurdle for the lawyer to overcome is ego. In this case it is the belief that you can solve everything or alternately, that you wouldn't dare have a personal problem as that would simply be too embarrassing to admit to oneself or others.

Assuming you do admit you cannot solve your own personal problem and are willing to seek help from outside resources, the next hurdle is finding an appropriate resource. Key to the search, two factors rise to the top: confidentiality and competency.

With regard to confidentiality, some lawyers look for resources outside of their usual community. Some will travel several communities away to ensure not bumping into someone known or come up against a conflict of interest by using someone for a personal issue who also consults on professional matters. Further, the service setting may also be a consideration in the quest for confidentiality. Hence some lawyers will look for secluded offices with separate or single use waiting rooms and other lawyers will look for practitioners with home offices where confidentiality can often be better protected.

As for competency, most lawyers look for grey hair. In other words the service provider is a respected elder with years of practice wisdom. Not just practice wisdom and grey hair though, lawyers need to know that the service provider can withstand and manage the cross-examination that inevitably takes place when a lawyer is confronted with observations they may otherwise not prefer.

The service provider must be able to deliver and defend information in the counselling process and

respect that the cross-examination isn't personal, just the most ingrained strategy for lawyers to test the input derived from their years of practice.

Be it individual, marital or family counselling, when stuck, professional counselling and guidance from people trained and well experienced can help overcome personal problems. Sadly far too many lawyers resist help for themselves, their marriages or families because of embarrassment or fear that they may lose credibility.

The real message here is, get help, don't suffer, and look to improve your situation.

Strategies to overcome perceived barriers include finding a respected service provider, often in a nearby community. To find one and maintain your privacy, you can pretend to be looking for a service provider from a particular community on behalf of a client. Ask around and see what names continue to float to the surface when you ask, "Who's the best?" Do so in a few neighbouring communities.

Finally, make some calls and test the service provider by phone. Describe the problem, the social context and need for confidentiality. See who responds best and make an appointment.

The life you improve will be your own. After all, even lawyers get the blues and have personal, marital and family problems. You don't need to have these problems forever though. Help is often just a phone call away.

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