

WORKING WITH DISTURBING SITUATIONS

We understand that some barristers are subject to particular strains because of the work that they do.

Working in threatening or distressing environments such as those advising on child abuse, IPV, sexual abuse, violence and death can evoke emotions in each of us which can be both disarming and dispiriting.

The totality of these cases can insidiously creep up on us and slowly take their toll on our mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

This could be evidenced by ongoing tiredness, labile moods, being told you are 'grumpy' or argumentative, poor professional boundaries, resenting the next client who walks in the door, decreased frustration tolerance or depression, along with excessive drinking or other risky behaviours as a way of coping.

We know that with such constant exposure of these traumatic cases, professionals can experience secondary traumatisation.

Self-care must become a priority, where you decide the best way, through a combination of personal and professional behaviours that sustain your wellbeing. Consider it as an investment. An investment for you, your family and continuing to be effective in your workplace.

Self-care requires discipline and adherence to a plan. Some options could include:

- Changing work hours
- Exercise
- Investing in good food
- Sleep hygiene (great mood stabiliser)
- Being responsive to the needs of your family
- Adjusting your financial expectations and commitment
- Peer-to peer reviews and conversations

Self-care really requires the ability to be self-aware, reflective and have insight as to the best way of looking after yourself.

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