

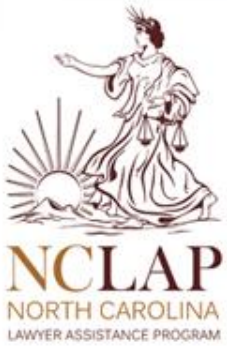
# Getting Lost in Our Own Lives

Robynn Moraites  
Executive Director  
NC Lawyer Assistance Program





**Our ideal employee can function without sleep while working a 120 hour week. And is, of course, highly family oriented.**



Let's call a spade a spade. We must understand the true reality and nature of the system within which we operate.

Do we as a profession really practice what we preach?

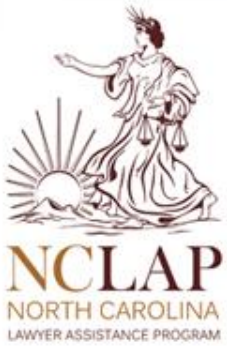
We give it lip service until we hit a critical point personally.



**Legal Profession and Self Care.**  
See the reality for what it is, in order to better navigate it.





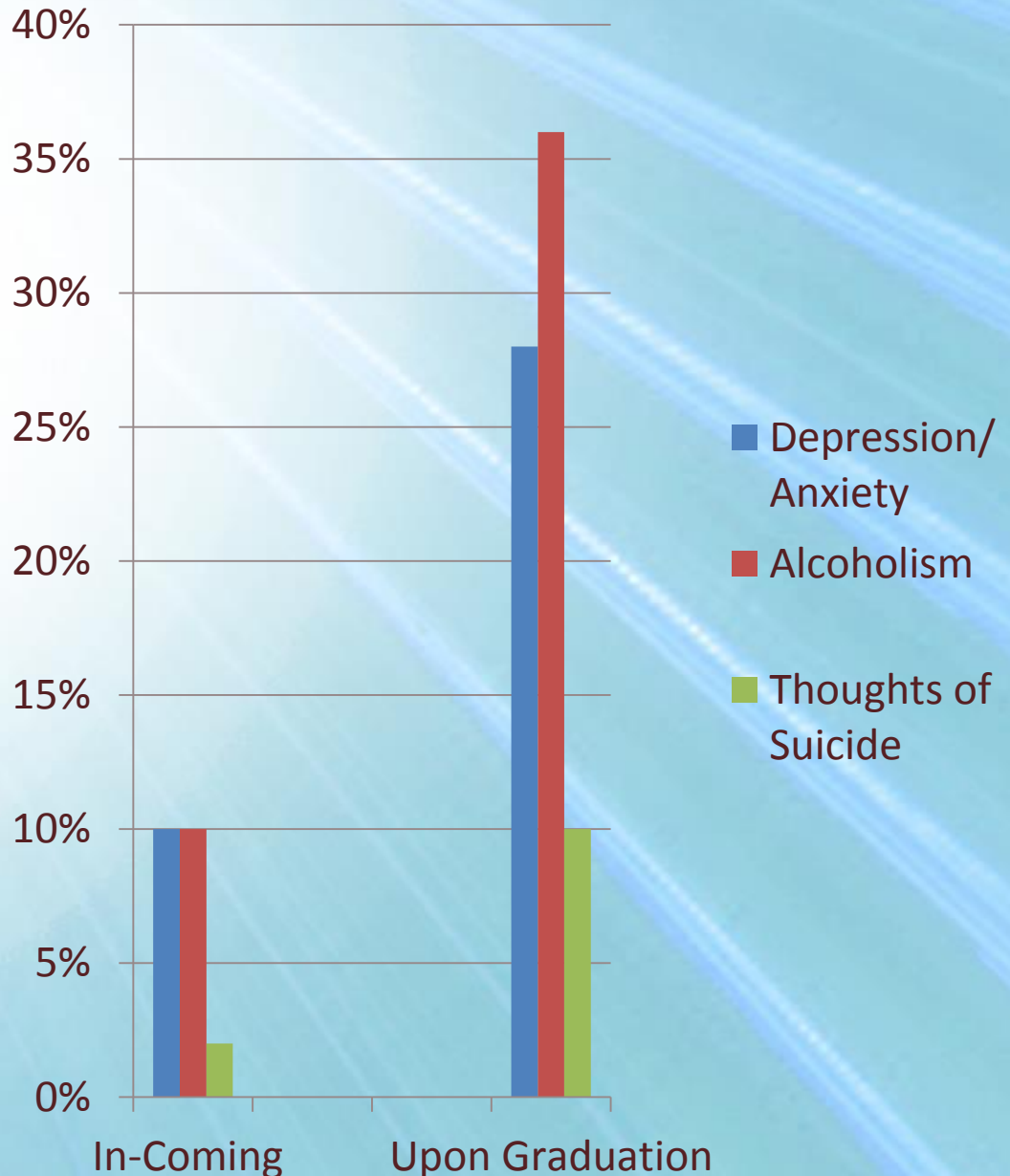


## Good News! You're a Lawyer! ...The Bad News:

Longitudinal Law School Study – you check in but you don't check out.

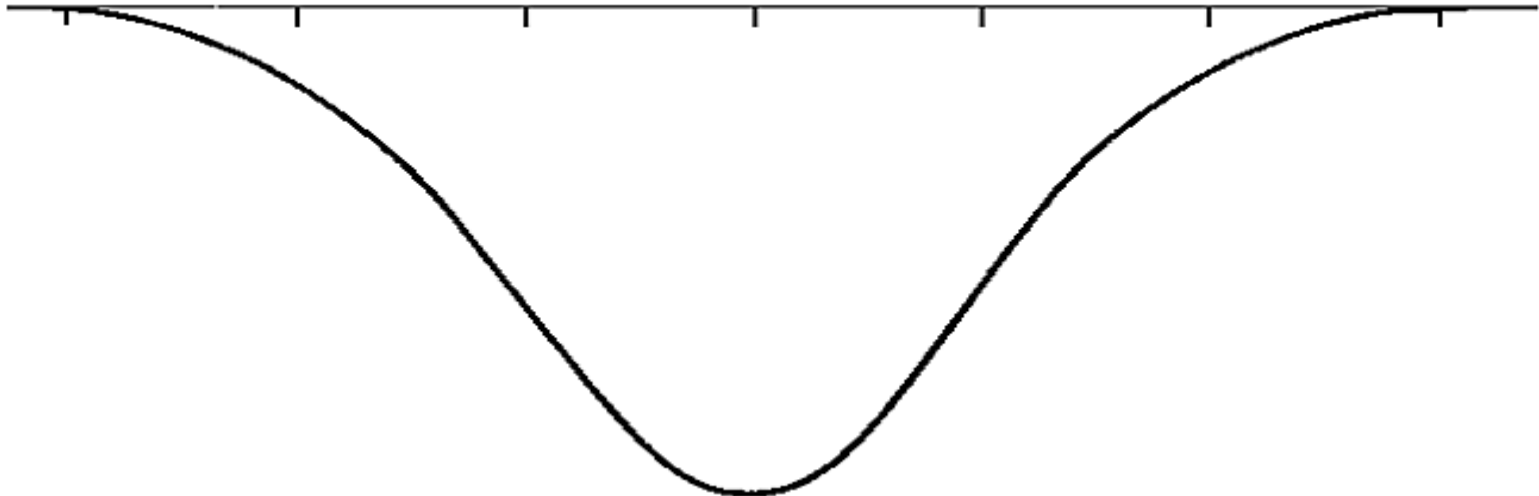
One Research Study:

- Loss to connection of intrinsic values
  - Increase in identification with extrinsic values
  - Loss in perceived autonomy
- (18-25% range)



# Happiness & Satisfaction Career Trajectory

Pre-Law      Law School      Associate      Partner      Leader in  
profession



# Current State of the Legal Profession



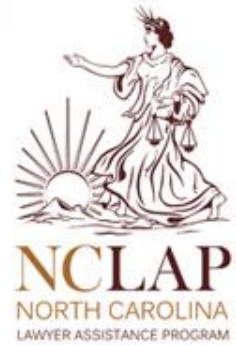
# Why?

- Being studied.
- Ideas include :
  - False Self Syndrome
  - Limbic brain resilience
  - Top two major contributors for lawyers

# False Self Syndrome

- We all (meaning all people on the planet) have it to some degree.
  - The disconnection with true self if for no other reason than to fit in our society and culture
  - Need to meet expectations, to succeed
- In its basic form – being “out of touch” with ourselves and overly identifying with the roles we play.
  - Disconnection from feelings and authentic internal experience





## The Roles We Play – An Unspoken Agreement

Mores are one explanation. Society defines roles, too. The young can have fun in certain ways, but adults are discouraged from engaging in similar activities. Or vice versa.

- We all play roles, and they constantly change. The role of employee or entrepreneur differs from boss and manager or from parent, spouse or child.
- Peoples' personas change, even if subtly, as they play their everyday roles; they change depending upon the interaction or scenario.



# The Roles We Play

Rescuer

Manager

Super Mom

Chairperson

Devoted Dad

Taxi Driver

Referee

Counselor

Hero

Cruise Director

Problem Solver

Loving Spouse

Go-to Guy/Gal

Volunteer

The Advocate



Stellar Employee

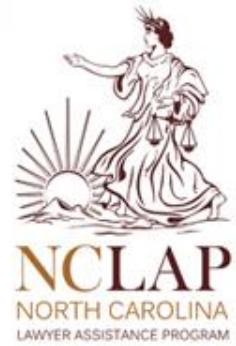
Committee member

The Comedian

Financial Provider

Dependable One

The Intellectual



# Adding to that...False Self Syndrome

- Legal profession adds new layers and dimensions
  - Zealous advocacy;
  - Always the helper;
  - Law busts boundaries;
  - Confidentiality;
  - Isolated-workload;
  - Tomorrow never comes;
  - Success.



# Typical Attorney Workload



# Competitive Nature of Stress

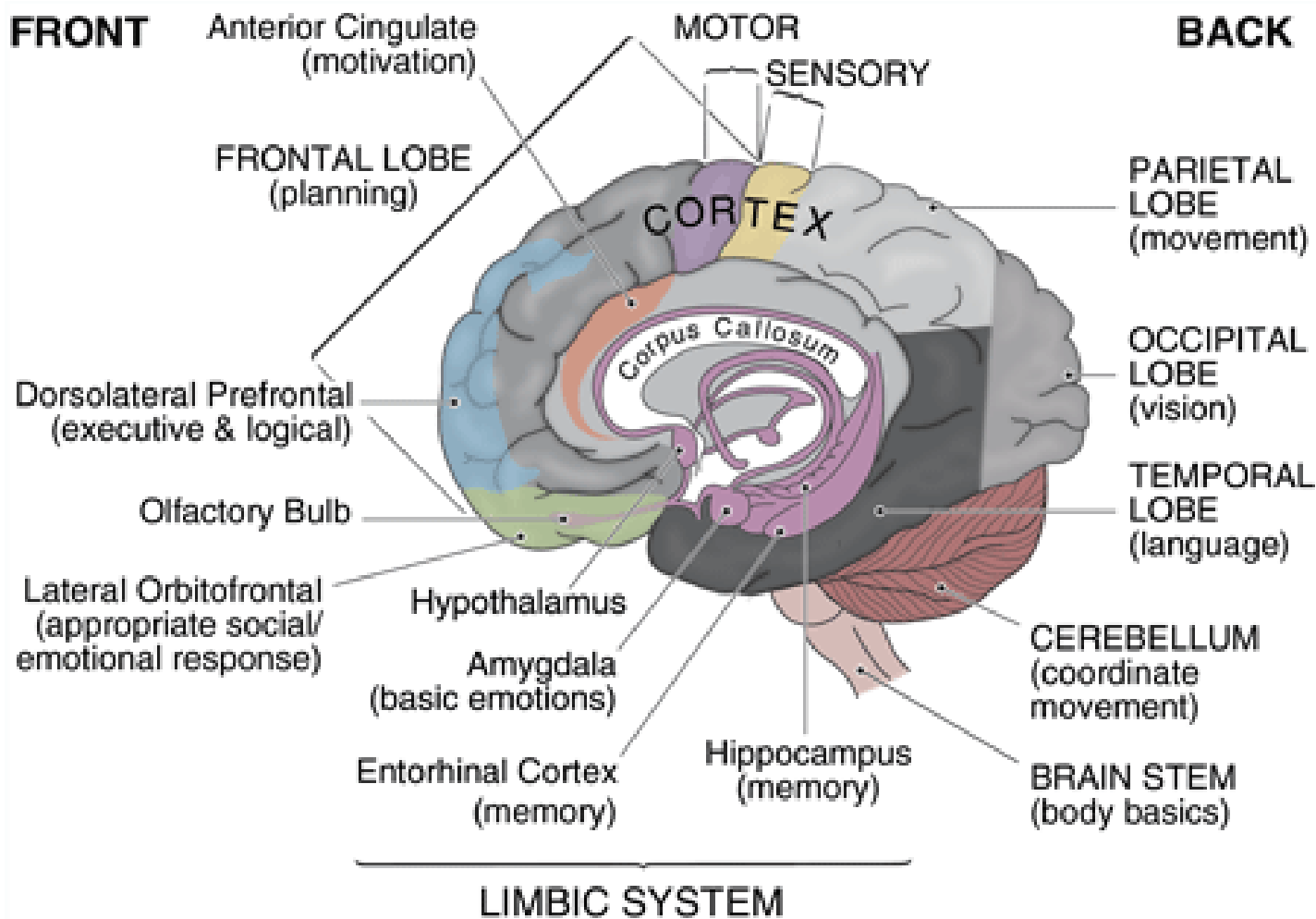




# False Self

- The profession of law greatly reinforces the false self syndrome and encourages disconnection from authentic experience.
- Lawyers are a self-select group already prone to this tendency.
- Can be a recipe for disaster.

# Our Poor, Ignored Limbic Brain



# Limbic Brain

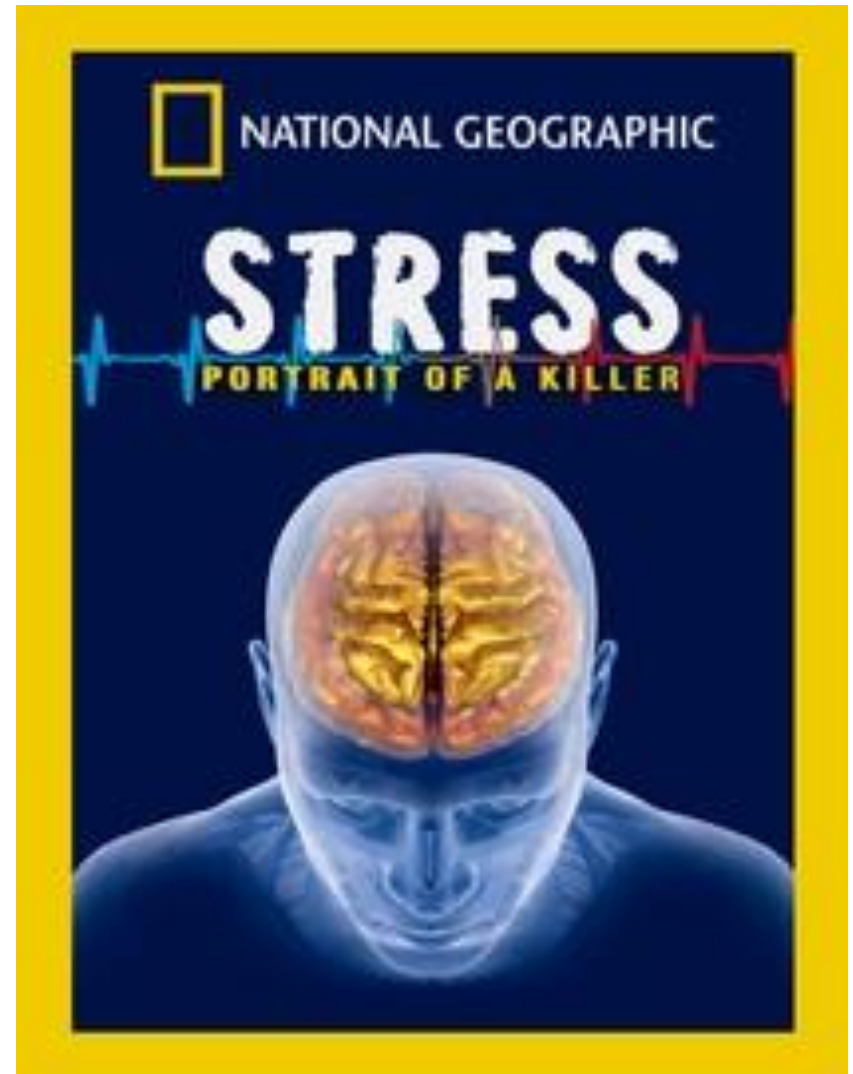
- This is where emotional resilience resides.
- We must attend to it or ignore it at our peril.

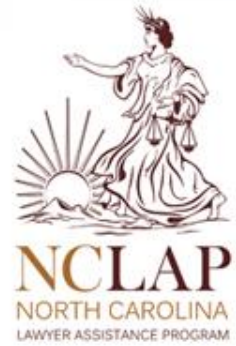
# Stress: Portrait of a Killer

This movie sheds wonderful insight into the propagation of illness in today's society via the inner workings of the human stress response.

Only 50 minutes long.

Available on Netflix.



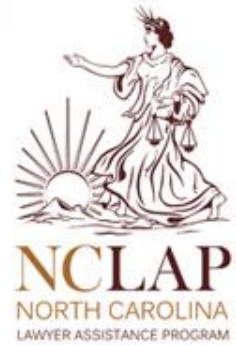


# So, what is a lawyer to do?

- Critical to maintain, renew or begin extracurricular activities that nurture the limbic brain
  - Focus is on heartfelt joy and connection to self, others, and community
    - This does NOT mean volunteering for a bar committee to add something to your résumé. That is OK, it just does not count for this purpose.
    - Not superficial connections. These are OK, they just do not count for this purpose.
    - The guiding features: it brings you no outer recognition or benefit other than joy to your heart.
  - Example of tomorrow never comes



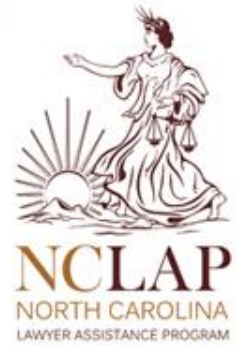




# So, what is a lawyer to do?

- Practice good boundaries from the onset
  - Believe it or not, it is easier to start now than to try to turn it off later
    - We teach people how to treat us
    - Many lawyers think they do not have a choice – we always have a choice
  - Do something at the end of the day to affirmatively transition out of work into home life
  - Turn off the crackberries
  - TAKE vacations; USE those vacation hours
  - Make good choices now that do not limit future options
    - i.e. buy a less expensive/smaller house
  - Take 3-day weekends when things are quiet
    - Realize many practice areas are feast or famine and work within that framework



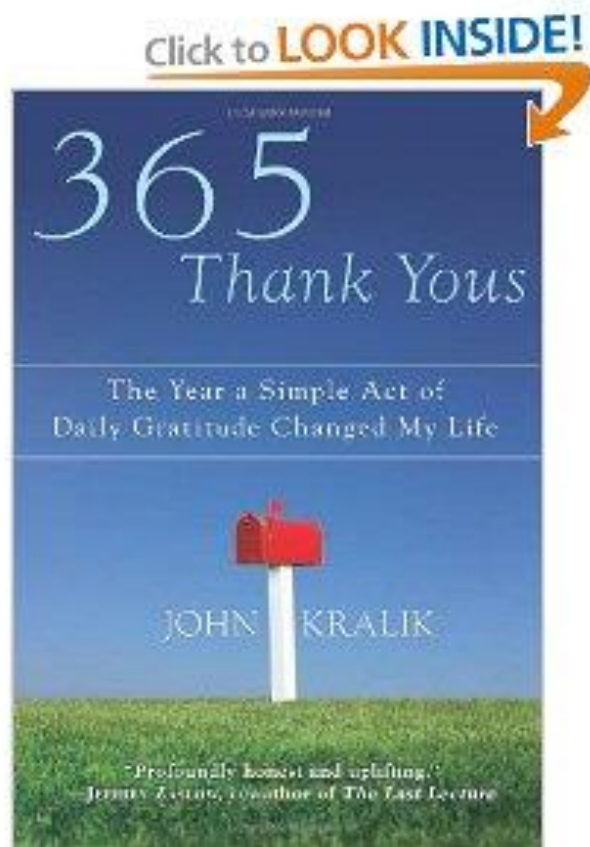


# So, what is a lawyer to do?

- Activities that help us gain and maintain a broader perspective (beyond our jobs, beyond our false selves):
  - Some kind of mindfulness practice
    - Yoga, meditation, martial arts, etc.
  - Spiritual readings within your faith tradition
    - If you don't have a faith tradition, maybe explore it
  - A daily gratitude list
  - Regular exercise as part of a daily routine
  - Finding ways to laugh and have real fun

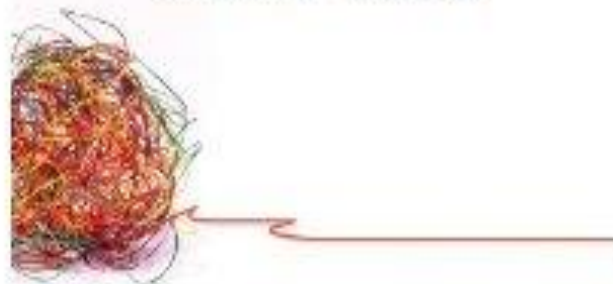


# Some books on these topics...



## Mindfulness

AN EIGHT-WEEK PLAN FOR  
Finding Peace  
IN A  
Frantic World

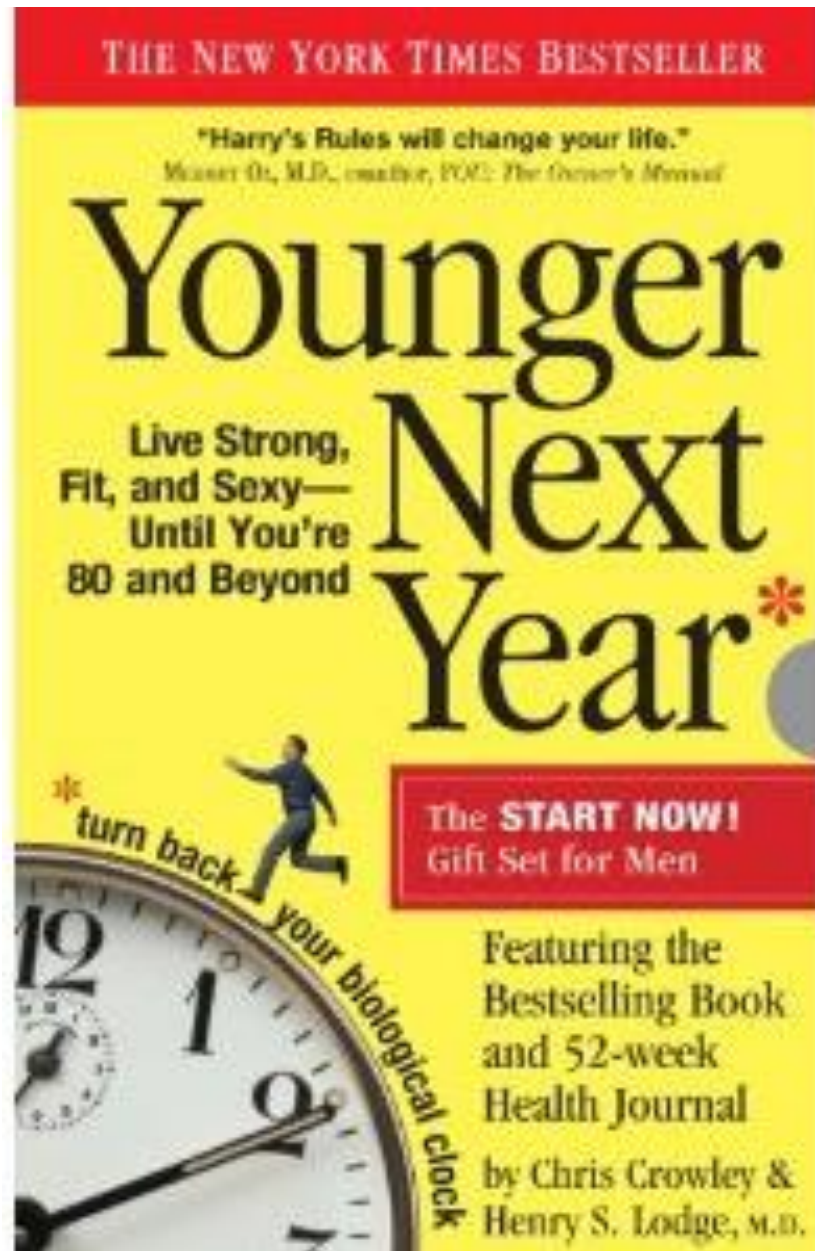


Mark Williams and  
Danny Penman

FOREWORD BY JON KABAT-ZINN

## Regular Exercise Routine

- This book is written by a lawyer and his doctor and explains the evolutionary biology of aging. Most of what we call aging in this country is decay...
- This book explains in rather simple terms why exercise is so critical to our optimal functioning.





Alas...you will forget...we all do.





# Future Practice Advisory...

- Doesn't imply weakness, just "human-ness"
- Is more about "dis-ease" than disease.



# So slow, is it even moving?



Rather slow and insidious....  
then increases... then overwhelming.....



Burning

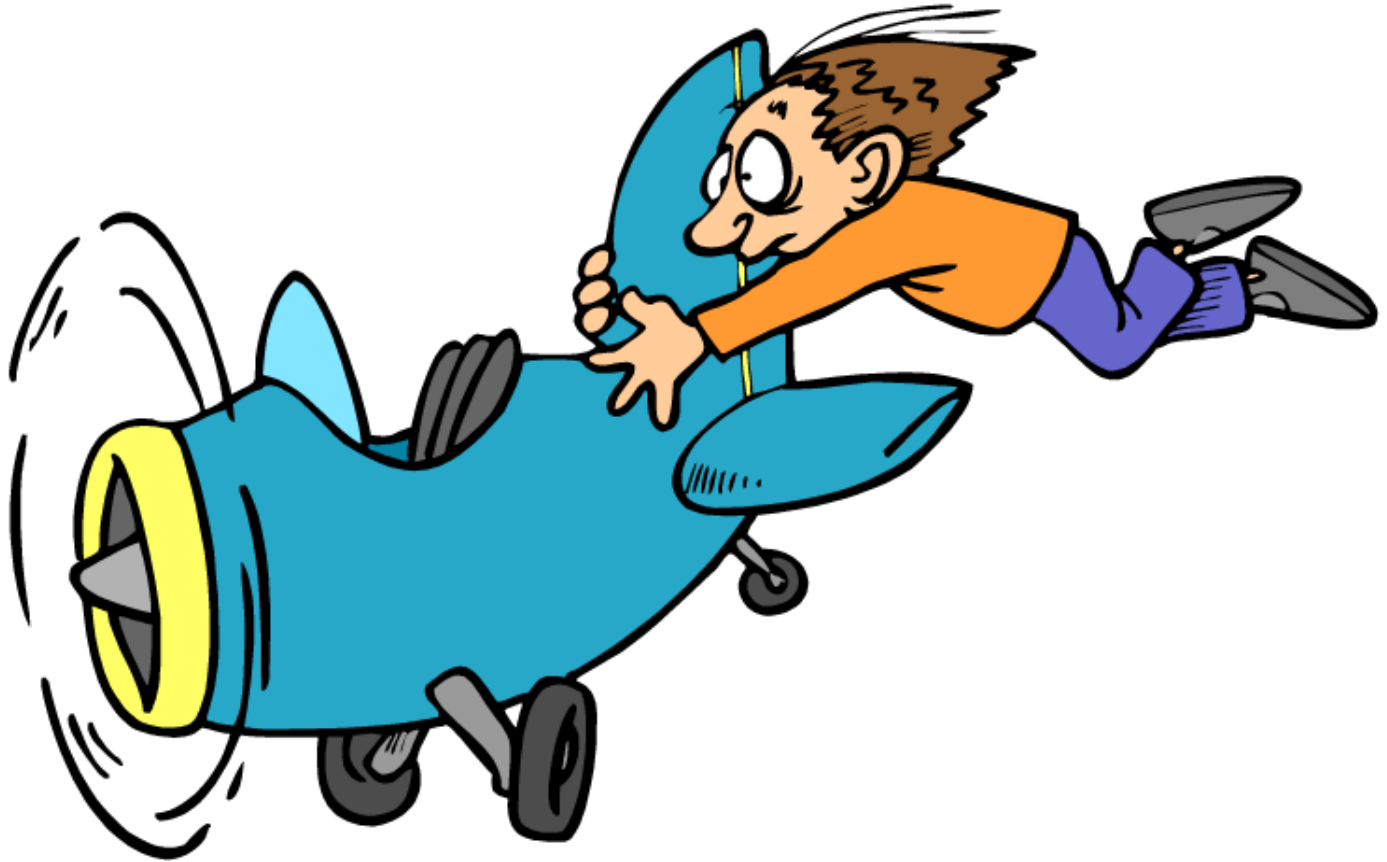


Uncomfortable

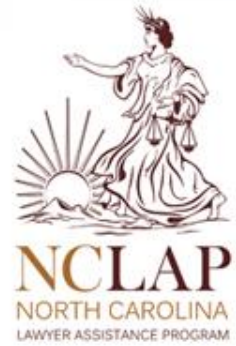


Overwhelming

# So what happens?



**We crash.**

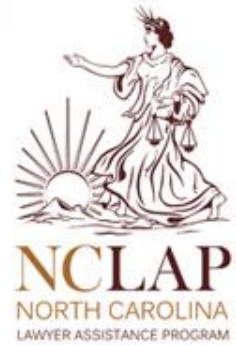


# LAP: Safe, Confidential & Free

- Services are FREE, paid for by your State Bar dues
- Completely confidential – Pursuant to Rule 1.6
  - Assist
  - Assess
  - Educate
  - Refer
  - Support







# LAP: Safe, Confidential & Free

- Issues we help with include:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Career Counseling
  - Family Issues (including parent, spouse or child addiction - we can give you resources)
  - Alcoholism or Drug Addiction
  - Stress, Burnout, Compassion Fatigue
  - Trauma
  - Grief & Loss



# Remember... mighty forces are at work



Not the least of which  
is ourselves and our  
drive for recognition,  
success, achievement  
and perfection...in  
many ways we each  
are the single biggest  
force we must each  
overcome.

We always have a  
choice. (movie clip)

But we always have a choice.





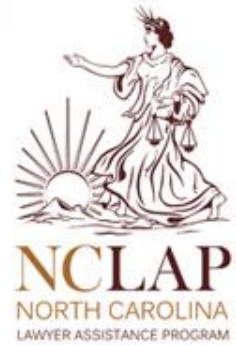
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I'll be a little late for work today because I hate my job.

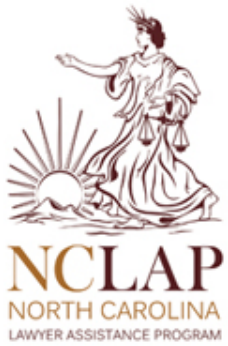




# The Take Away

- Conscious choice vs. unconscious reaction
- Keep fun things happening in your life





# In the event you wind up there...

**Robynn Moraites**

Executive Director

704-892-5699

[Robynn@nclap.org](mailto:Robynn@nclap.org)

**Cathy Killian**

Charlotte and Areas West

704-892-5699

[Cathy@nclap.org](mailto:Cathy@nclap.org)

**Nicole Ellington**

Raleigh and Areas East

919-719-9267

[Nicole@nclap.org](mailto:Nicole@nclap.org)

**Towanda Garner**

Piedmont Triad Areas

919-719-9290

[Towanda@nclap.org](mailto:Towanda@nclap.org)



# Thank you!