

Attorney Health & Wellness: 9 signs that you need a lawyer timeout for mental health and refocus

It's no secret that most lawyers work way too much. Early days and late evenings, coupled with looming deadlines and client expectations, can result in a lot of stress and anxiety. That's why it's important for attorneys to recognize the signs of potential trouble and respond accordingly.

You are not a superhuman, and your mental health can suffer if you try to act like one. Here are 9 signs that it's time to step away for rest, relaxation, and refocus.

1. **Constantly sick**

Your body reacts to mental stress with physical consequences. High levels of stress can suppress your immune system, making your body more vulnerable to infections and physical illness. Left unaddressed, long-term stress can even increase your chances of developing serious disorders and diseases.

To further complicate matters, your high-stress lifestyle probably has you eating poorly and ignoring your physical activity. All of these things together can take a serious toll on your body's physical wellbeing and ability to fight off illness. So, if you can't seem to get those migraine headaches in check, or that nagging cough has been around for a bit too long, a mental health timeout may be the cure.

2. **Neglecting your appearance**

Are you someone who likes to look good when you step out into the world, but lately you find yourself caring little about your physical appearance? Neglecting your appearance slip can be a sign of something more serious going on with your mental and emotional wellbeing. Maybe you don't have

the mental energy to address your appearance... or perhaps your appearance is only one of many personal areas you've been neglecting.

Mental health professionals list poor hygiene and lack of personal grooming as warning signs for depression. If taking care of your personal appearance has become more than you feel mentally able to do, consider the possibility that you may need a break.

3. Missing appointments

Have you found yourself missing multiple appointments lately – missed court appearances, ignored phone calls, or neglected deadlines? This could signal an overloaded mind or a lack of interest in your work. Missed deadlines within the legal profession can lead to serious trouble for you, your firm, and your clients. Don't take this sign lightly. Take a break to refocus.

4. Tired all the time

Chronic fatigue and tiredness can occur in two ways. With one, you may be unable to sleep due to racing thoughts or restlessness. No matter how hard you try, you find it extremely difficult to fall and stay asleep at night, resulting in constant exhaustion throughout the day. Sleep deficiencies are commonly reported by patients with anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder, as reported by Harvard Medical School.

The other situation involves sleeping too much. You may find yourself needing to sleep all of the time – day and night. According to psychiatric-disorders.com, this level of lethargy often accompanies depression, as people become "so exhausted at the thought of dealing with everyday life that they use sleep as an escape from their problems."

5. Feeling overwhelmed

A growing legal practice can be a wonderful endeavor, but it can also be an extremely stressful one if you don't have the right tools in place to handle your growth. You end up trying to keep track of everything in your head, which can lead to careless errors and feelings of frustration.

A little time away from the madness of your law office may be all you need to regroup and strategize a better way to handle your long list of

responsibilities. It's hard to make good decisions when you are in the midst of chaos. So, don't be afraid to step away.

6. Concern from Loved Ones

Your family and friends know you better than anyone else. If they start showing concern for your wellbeing and mental health, you need to listen. They are often the first ones to notice drastic changes in your behavior. They may complain about unreturned telephone calls, missed special occasions, or a lack of general interest. These can be signs of something serious, so don't ignore the people who care for you the most.

7. Poor Concentration and Productivity

Do you sit down to get some work done, but just can't seem to think clearly? Poor concentration can lead to poor productivity, which can lead to problems within your legal practice. According to [Mind Health 360](#), concentration issues often present with the following symptoms:

- Jumping from task to task without completing one fully
- Difficulty maintaining attention on a conversation or event
- Difficulty following simple sets of instructions
- Daydreaming
- Making frequent mistakes

If you are experiencing any of these on a regular basis, over an extended period of time, it's probably time for a much-needed mental health break.

8. Irritability and Mood Swings

If your normally calm demeanor has turned into anger and unexplained hostility, you should definitely consider a mental health timeout. Mood swings and irritability may just mean that you're having a bad day. But if they are happening at a level where you feel completely out of character, it may be time for a break. In addition, if you are experiencing extreme episodes, it is probably best to seek professional assistance, as these can be symptoms of serious mental health disorders.

9. Anxiety

Have you recently become uncharacteristically uneasy at the thought of speaking to a jury? Maybe you get irrationally nervous before client meetings. These feelings can be signs of anxiety and left untreated, it can worsen to the point of affecting your entire life.

Anxiety can present itself in a number of ways, including:

- Chest tightness
- Abdominal pain
- Shortness of breath
- Racing thoughts
- Unexplainable uneasiness
- Irrational fears

While a certain level of anxiety is a normal part of life, if you begin experiencing feelings that are persistent, uncontrollable, and overwhelming, you need to step back and tend to your mental health.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, Personal Touch Edits, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.