



## LIV Personal Support Services

### LawCare

The LIV's confidential counselling service aims to help members deal with personal and professional problems that interfere with their work performance and personal life.

Find out more at [www.liv.asn.au/counselling](http://www.liv.asn.au/counselling).

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# Mental health: did you know?

**1 Did you know that** anxiety disorders and depression are the second leading cause of healthy years lost due to death or disability in Australia? They are real and common health problems – not laziness, weakness of character or an inability to cope with stress.

**2 Did you know that** lawyers and law students are several times more likely to suffer from depression than the general population? In a 2007 study, *beyondblue* found that 15 per cent of lawyers suffered from moderate to severe depression. Even more disturbingly, Professor Ian Hickie of the NSW Brain and Mind Research Institute reported last year that up to 41 per cent of law students, 31 per cent of lawyers and 19 per cent of barristers suffer from depression.

**3 Did you know that** there are many possible causes of depression? Isolation, medical illness, substance abuse, some personality traits and stressful events such as personal conflict or difficult working conditions can contribute to the onset of depression.

**4 Did you know that** lawyers and law students may be especially vulnerable to depression and/or anxiety disorders because they tend to have certain types of personalities? The law often attracts people who are perfectionists and/or pessimists. These personality traits may make people more vulnerable to depression or anxiety disorders.

**5 Did you know that** another reason for the high level of depression among lawyers could be the high level of alcoholism and drug abuse that exists in the legal profession? Reducing or eliminating your drug and/or alcohol intake is a good way to prevent or help treat depression.

**6 Did you know that** there are also many other ways to prevent the onset of depression? Getting regular exercise and sufficient sleep, making sure you catch up regularly with family and friends and using relaxation techniques like breathing exercises can all help to prevent or treat depression.

**7 Did you know that** you may be able to tell if someone you know is depressed? People suffering from depression are likely to have persistent low mood and a loss of interest in their usual activities for a continued period of at least two weeks. If this is combined with symptoms in three of the following categories, they may need professional help. The categories are: **physical symptoms** (fatigue, appetite or weight change, headaches, disturbed sleep patterns, feeling sick or rundown), **behavioural symptoms** (social withdrawal, substance use, recklessness, concentration or memory problems, stopping enjoyable activities such as eating, exercising, or sex), feelings of being overwhelmed, unhappy, guilty, indecisive, disappointed, irritated, or having low self-esteem and finally, having **thoughts of hopelessness or worthlessness**.

**8 Did you know that** there are some things you can do to help others?

Friends or colleagues suffering from depression may need to talk to someone who will listen non-judgmentally to how they are feeling. You can also help them to get information about depression from organisations such as *beyondblue* ([www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)). You may even wish to offer to go with them to an appointment as moral support.

**9 Did you know that** there are some things you shouldn't do if you think someone is suffering from depression? Telling someone to "get over it", "snap out of it" or "stay busy" is likely to discourage them from seeking help. Ignoring the problem, or encouraging the sufferer to use drugs and/or alcohol to treat their condition, are other unhelpful strategies for dealing with depression.

**10 Did you know that** there are effective treatments available for depression and anxiety disorders? Medical, psychological and alternative treatments may all be useful in treating anxiety and depression. People suffering from these illnesses will recover faster if help is sought as early as possible.

**11 Did you know that** it is extremely important that you take care of yourself? Supporting someone with depression can be demanding, so make sure you take time for yourself.

**RACHEL VAGUE**  
Law graduate