

**KCMBA Webinar: “Managing Grief and Stress in Extraordinary Circumstances”**

**Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 10 a.m.**

**Hosted by the Well-Being Committee**

**Guest Speaker: Anne Chambers, LCSW,**

**Director of Missouri Lawyers’ Assistance Program**

**Moderator: KCMBA President Athena Dickson**

With the ongoing and frequently changing news and information about COVID-19 pandemic, many are experiencing anxiety, stress, and other conditions symptomatic of depression. Fear of the unknown regarding this disease can be very disconcerting for both adults and children. And, although following protocols of public health orders and restrictions, such as social distancing, wearing face coverings/masks, etc., is necessary in helping to decrease the spread of this disease, they can also evoke feelings of isolation and disconnection from friends, family, and co-workers.

While we are all experiencing and processing the social, physical, and mental afflictions of the COVID-19 pandemic differently, it is everyone’s responsibility to recognize that it is harder for some than others to cope with the stress, anxiety, and loneliness this pandemic provokes. Thus, it is crucial to continue having an open dialogue regarding public welfare and health issues, including and *especially* public mental health.

Recently, the Well-Being Committee of the Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association (KCMBA) hosted a webinar addressing such mental health issues in relation to everyday stressors and the COVID-19 pandemic. Guest speaker, Anne Chambers, Director of Missouri Lawyers’ Assistance Program spoke to the importance of public mental health, specifically, “Managing Grief and Stress in Extraordinary Circumstances”. Moderator, KCMBA President Athena Dickson also provided helpful information and resources for those who are experiencing grief of losing a loved one or are personally experiencing depression or symptoms of same. Below is some helpful information which was shared and discussed during the webinar:

- **The average duration for many who experience grief from the death of a close loved one is two to four years.**
- **Between mid-July and mid-August, one of four to five people experienced thoughts of suicide.**
- **There are important factors to be mindful of regarding someone we may know who is mourning the loss of a loved one. Such factors to recognize include:**
  - The ages and type of relationship of the person who passed away and the person who is in mourning;
  - The timing of death (i.e. a sudden or untimely verses more expected);
  - The cause or means of death; and
  - The terms of the relationship between the decedent and person who experienced the loss.

- **How to help yourself and ways to cope with the loss of a loved one and/or with stress and/or depression:**

- Practicing daily or weekly meditation;
- Visiting extended family members and close friends you may have not seen or spoken with in a while;
- Staying social and not further isolating yourself from others;
- Participating in fun activities such as playing games, watching uplifting movies, etc.;
- Focusing on the present rather than future events and deadlines.
  - For example, making 'to-do' lists and tackling one or two items daily/weekly as opposed to worrying about getting everything done all at once;
- Journaling about your day/week and expressing your feelings and concerns. This activity can also include other helpful coping mechanisms such as:
  - 1) Participating in a gratitude challenge by committing to focus on things you are grateful for in the moment. A great way to do this is to list 5 things every day that you are grateful for;
  - 2) Writing a paragraph or a couple of sentences about something that recently did not go your way;
  - 3) Acknowledging and writing about several things that have recently gone your way and/or how a negative situation was remedied;
- Exercising daily/weekly;
- Spending time outside;
- Accept and be willing to ask for help from others and outside resources; and
- Practicing the following helpful coping technique for anxiety-ridden work activities:
  - 1) STOP what you're doing.
  - 2) Take a few deep breaths.
  - 3) Be present by observing and feeling the tension in your body.
  - 4) Refocus your attention to one item of business at a time and repeat the above, as needed.

- **Helping others who are dealing with the loss of a loved one and/or are coping with stress and/or depression:**

- Staying in touch and reaching out to let them know you are a source for support;
- Sharing your memories about the person who passed away;
- Alternatively to the above, giving them space from discussing the loss they recently experienced until they are to talk about it; and
- Offer to help in any way you are able, such as:
  - Cooking and helping with meal prep. Meal train is a great resource to use for this ([www.mealtrain.com](http://www.mealtrain.com)).
  - Starting an online funding/donations campaign;

- Sharing resources that focus on mental health, well-being, and self-care such as, therapy, support groups, medical treatment for physical symptoms, and other groups/organizations who offer mental/physical healing practices.

#### Online Resources<sup>1</sup>:

- Missouri Lawyers' Assistance Program (MOLAP): <https://mobar.org/molap/>
- Kansas Lawyers Assistance Program: <https://kalap.com/>
- ABA Report of Attorney Well-Being/ National Well-Being Task Force: <https://lawyerwellbeing.net/>
- ABA's *Law Practice Today* August 2018 issue about Attorney Well-Being: <https://www.lawpracticetoday.org/article/aba-trying-advance-lawyer-well/>
- ABA's Well-Being Initiative Toolkit: [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/lawyer\\_assistance/ls\\_colap\\_well-being\\_toolkit\\_for\\_lawyers\\_legal\\_employers.authcheckdam.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/lawyer_assistance/ls_colap_well-being_toolkit_for_lawyers_legal_employers.authcheckdam.pdf)
- MOLAP Model Policy for Law Firms Addressing Impairment: [https://mobar.org/site/content/Lawyer-Resources/MOLAP-areas/Model\\_Policy.aspx](https://mobar.org/site/content/Lawyer-Resources/MOLAP-areas/Model_Policy.aspx)
- Mindfulness Resource Page: [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer\\_assistance/resources/lawyer\\_wellness/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/resources/lawyer_wellness/)

The above links and additional information about future events and webinars on well-being can also be found on the KCMBA Well-Being Committee website page:

[https://kcmba.org/web/Section/Well-Being\\_Committee/web/KCMBA\\_Website/Section/Independent\\_Committees/Well-Being%20Committee.aspx?hkey=19360296-98cf-4901-b819-c8399b3d8050](https://kcmba.org/web/Section/Well-Being_Committee/web/KCMBA_Website/Section/Independent_Committees/Well-Being%20Committee.aspx?hkey=19360296-98cf-4901-b819-c8399b3d8050)

#### Additional Online Resources:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Page: [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/)
- Veterans Association – U.S. Department of Affairs Veteran Suicide Prevention: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/mental-health/suicide-prevention/>
- National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc. (POMC): <https://www.pomc.com/>
- American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs: <https://abacolap.wordpress.com/2018/08/07/new-well-being-toolkit-for-lawyers-and-legal-employers/>
- Connect.MOBar (Discussion Group page): <https://connect.mobar.org/home>

**In addition to the above resources, please remember that if you or someone you know is struggling, the Missouri Lawyers' Assistance Program offers free and confidential support and they can be reached at 1-800-688-7859.**

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the online resource links may not be viewed without a membership.