

Lawyer Coaching: Finding the Work/Life Balance

By Cheryl Stephens

One in three lawyers would like to change their working conditions to reduce their stress and allow them to spend less time at work, and more time on their personal life. This was the unsurprising result in an independent survey paid for by *The Associates*, a U.S. placement agency for lawyers.

Similar feedback came through an online seminar, *Stress, Substance Abuse and the Legal Community*, offered by [Law.com](http://www.law.com).

The seminar, moderated by Michael Cohen, Director of Florida's Lawyer Assistance program, explored the question, *What are the forces in the legal profession which cause some members to succumb to depression, stress, burnout, and addiction?*

One participant in the online discussions—a managing partner—put it this way: “As lawyers, we tend to view stress as a good thing and depression as a weakness, instead of recognizing that both are symptoms of a life out of balance.”

Law firms that do not recognize the necessity for lawyers to pace themselves and seek a balance allow enthusiastic young lawyers to lead the charge by working maximum billable hours for a few years, only to crash and burn. In addition, these pack-leaders may bring down the house, as well as themselves, with malpractice claims and lost clients.

It's good that issues of lawyer stress and burn-out are being raised in various forums, but in the meanwhile what is the poor, stressed, out-of-balance lawyer to do?

One of the choices available now is *coaching*. The rapid growth and increasing profile of coaching suggests that it has struck a chord with individuals; even those who are “coping just fine, *thank you*,” appreciate a little support.

Coaching is for healthy, creative people who are under too much pressure from too little time and what seem like too few choices. Take some time to look into how coaching can strengthen your practice, and your firm, by helping associates look at their lives and work from different perspectives. Coaching is a great way to empower them to adopt new priorities and to plan their course of action to accomplish change—change that will put them on a path to a new balance and fulfillment.