Lawyer Well-Being in the Age of the Coronavirus

Presented by

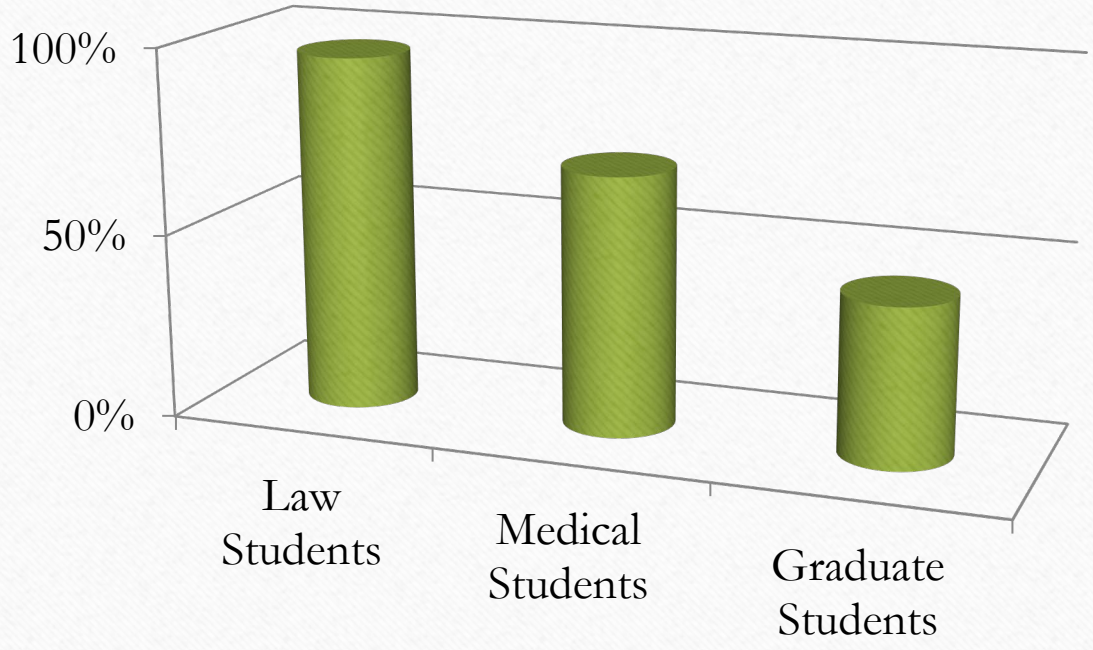
Chris Ritter, JD, MEd, Director of the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program

Major Problems for Attorneys:

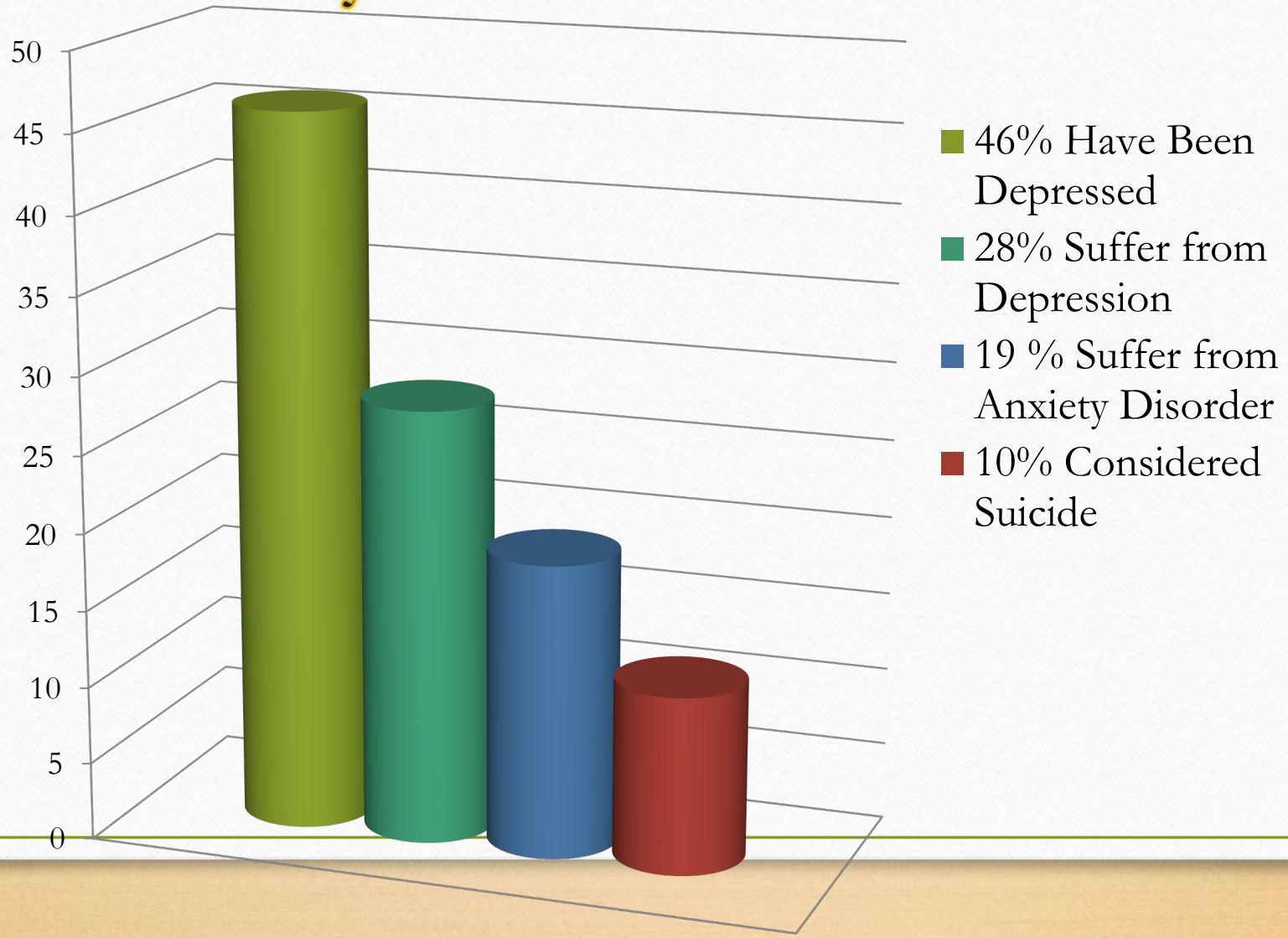
- Stress / Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout / Secondary Trauma
- Alcohol / Substance Abuse
- Cognitive Impairment
- Suicide
- Gambling and other process addictions

How Graduate Students Rank for Anxiety

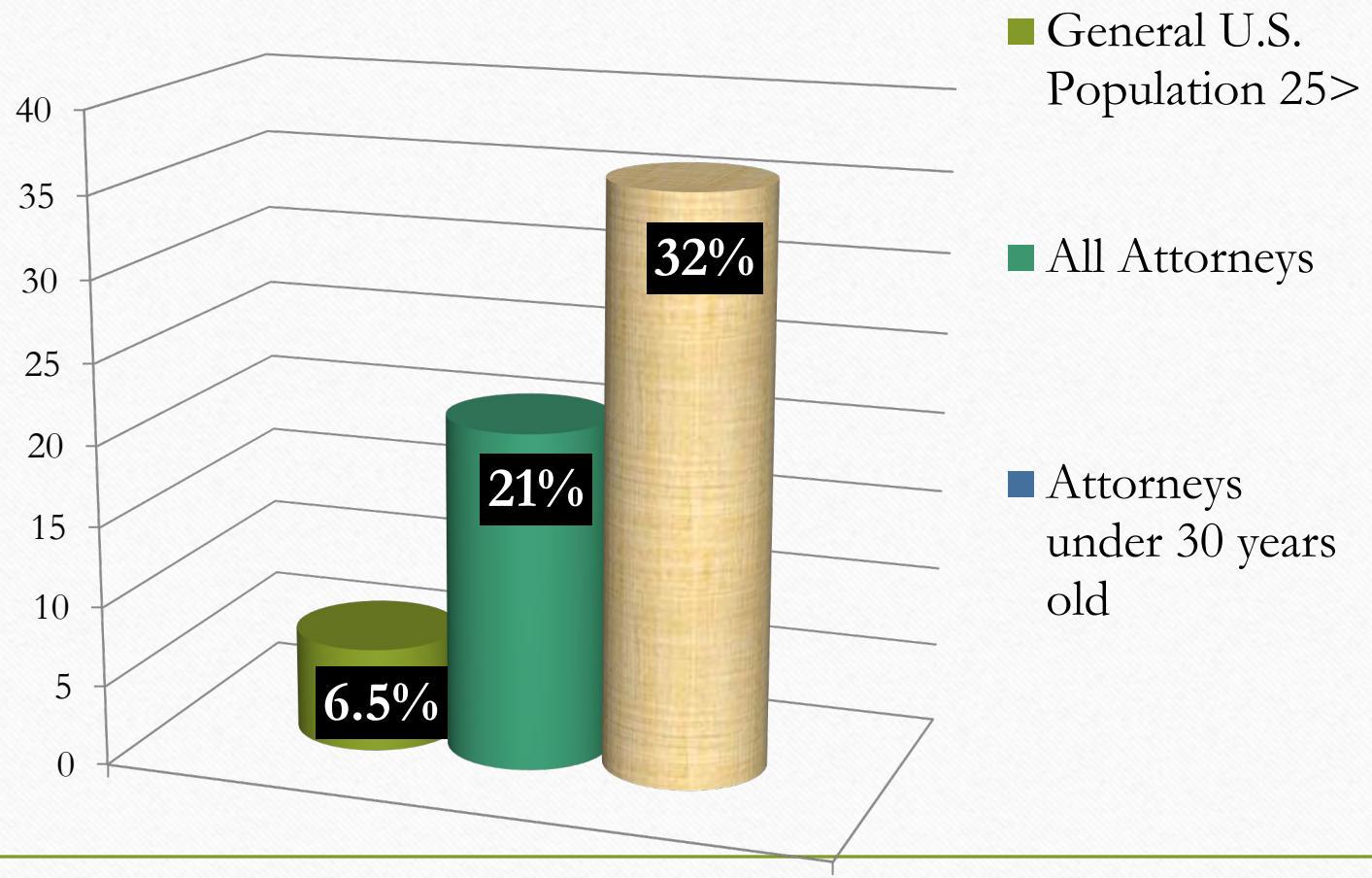
Law Students: 96%
Medical Students: 70%
Graduate Students: 43%



2015 ABA Study of Almost 13,000 Attorneys: Attorney Mental Health Issues

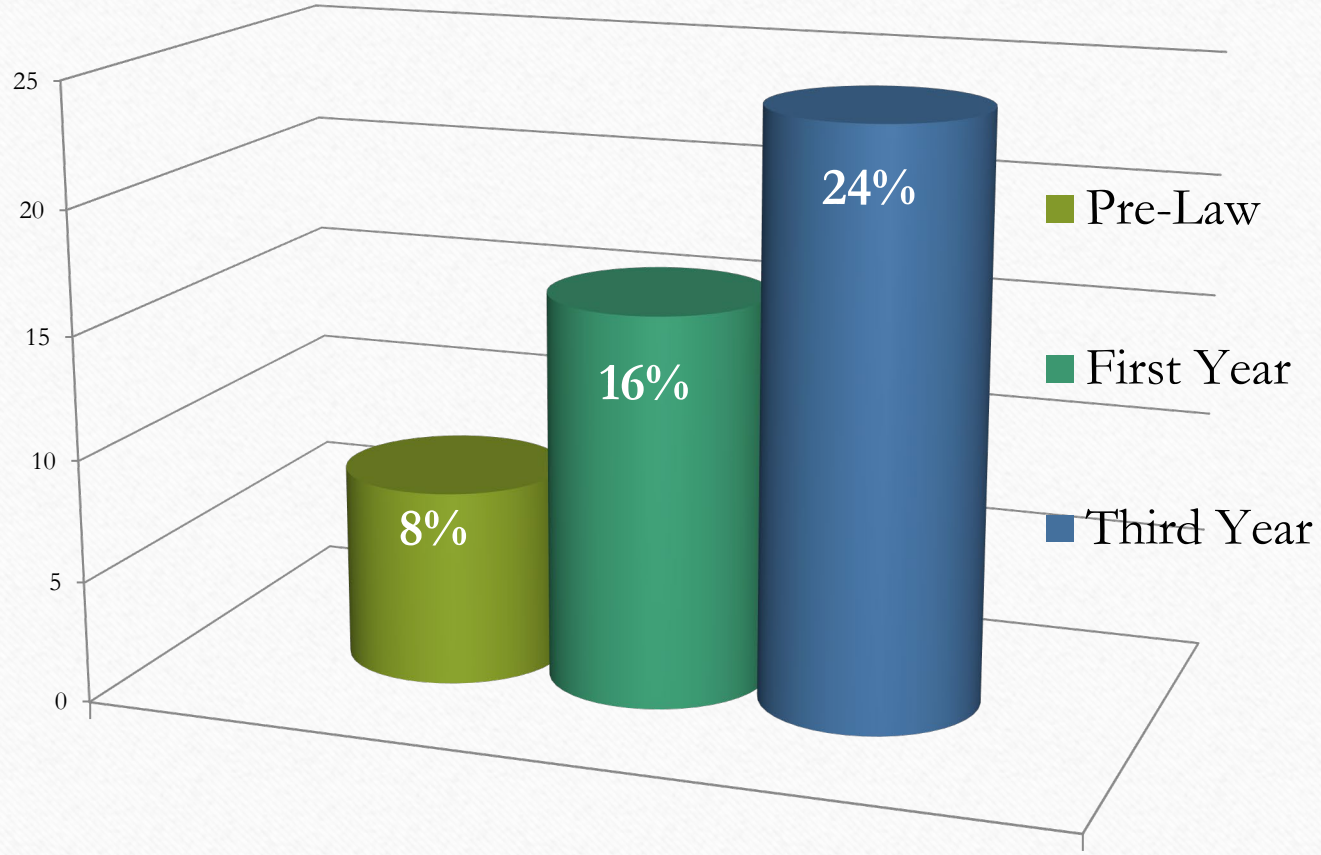


2015 ABA Study of Almost 13,000 Attorneys: Attorneys with Problematic Alcohol Issues



"Problematic Drinking" = hazardous, possible dependence

How Drinking Affects Law Students



Percentage of Law Students Reporting a Problem with Alcohol

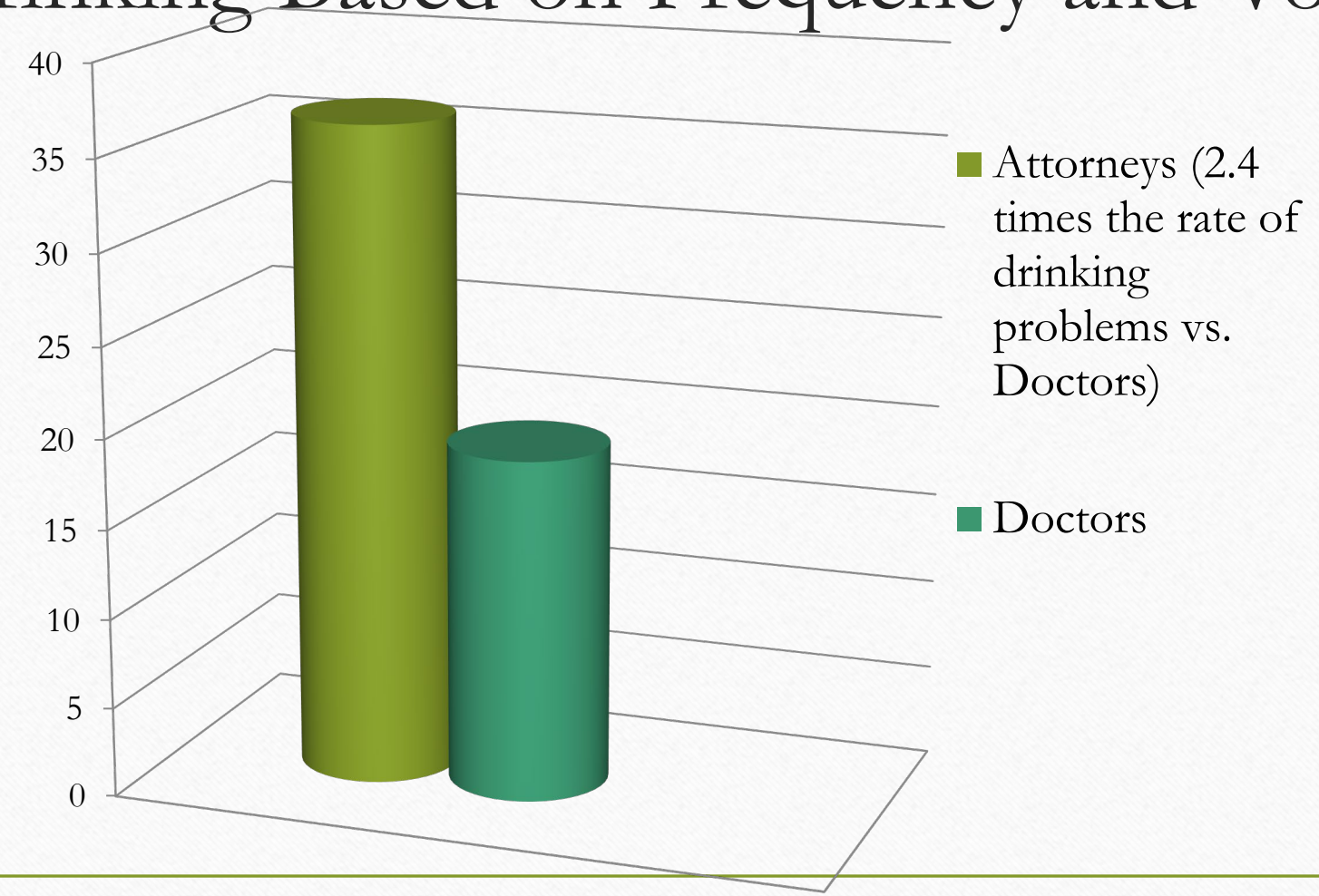
Quarantine Impact on Mental Health

In a study of 129 participants during quarantine, 28.9% had symptoms of PTSD and 31% had symptoms of depression.

Quarantine Impact on Mental Health (cont.)

- 24 studies documented that quarantined people developed symptoms of low mood, anxiety, and depressive disorders.
- 1/3 of Americans reported Coronavirus has had a serious impact on their mental wellbeing
- 60% feel the virus has seriously hurt their daily lives

2015 ABA Study: Lawyers' vs. Doctors' Problem Drinking Based on Frequency and Volume



Depression

According to a 1991 Johns Hopkins University study of depression in 105 professions, lawyers ranked number one in the incidence of depression.



Lawyers and TRAUMA



trau·ma

ˈtroumə,ˈtrômə/

noun

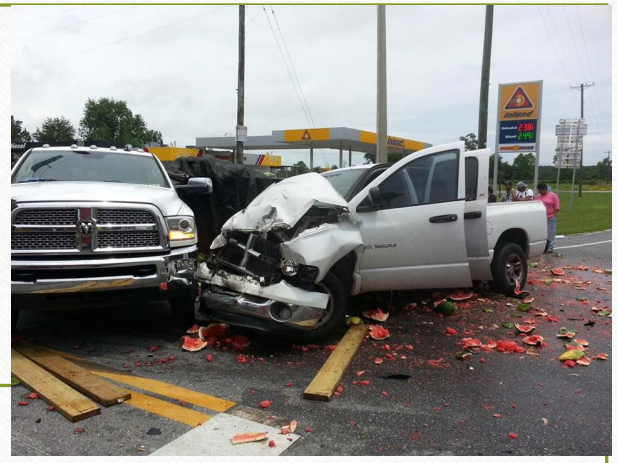
noun: **trauma**; plural noun: **traumata**; plural noun: **traumas**

1.

a deeply distressing or disturbing experience.







Kinds of Traumas Lawyers Experience

Direct:

- threats from criminal defendants
- being yelled at by a client death
- being devastated by a result
- attorney or judge conflict

Secondary:

- seeing a client lose a custody matter
- dealing with serious injuries and
- seeing a client go to prison
- dealing with assaults

The Negative Impacts of Technology on Law Students and Lawyers



- Inundates them with information that causes anxiety
- Reminds them of tasks not performed and needs not yet met
- Distracts them from making progress on important work
- Impacts their self-concept, self-esteem, and expectations negatively

The Negative Impacts of Technology on Law Students and Lawyers (continued)

- Wastes their time so that self-care time and sleep time is unavailable
- Results in an addictive cycle of stimulation and hard to quit dependencies
- Prevents healthy social interaction / substitutes for actual social interaction

Television



- Americans between 25 and 34 watch 26.5 hours per week of television, those 35-49 watch 36.5 hours per week (Koblin, 2016).

- Americans are watching more than 7 hours, 50 minutes per day of television per household (Madrigal, 2018).

Internet Use



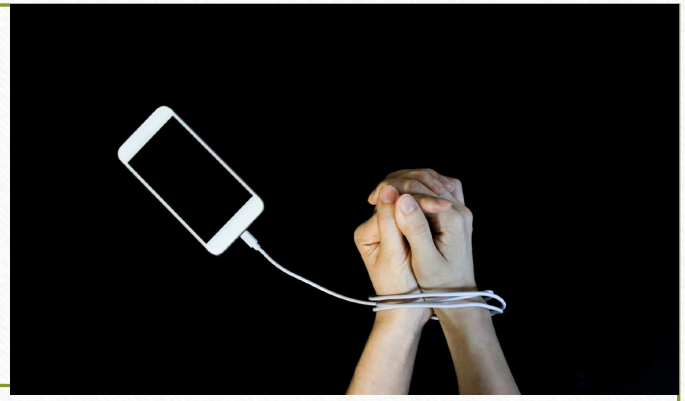
- A recent study showed that people are averaging 24 hours per week on the internet (Hymas, 2018).

Email



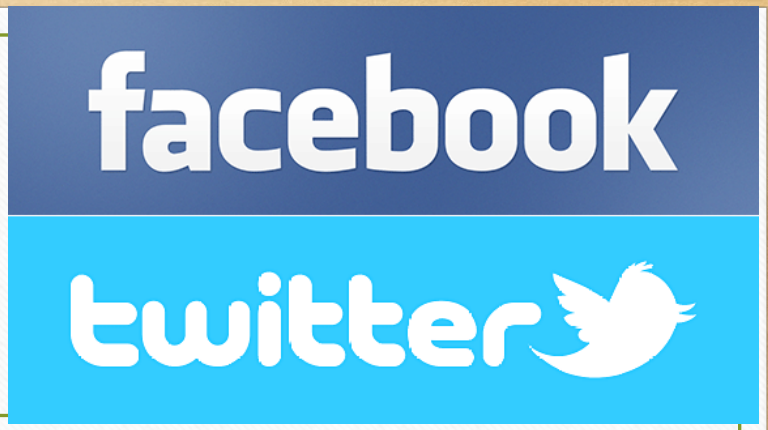
- On average, professionals have more than 200 emails in their inbox and receive 120 new ones each day (Plummer, 2019).

Smart Phones



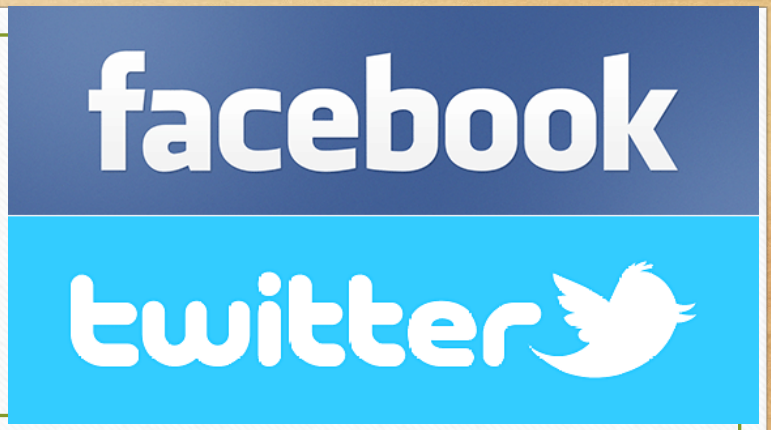
- A 2018 study found that people age 15 to 24 are averaging 4 hours per day on smartphones and all adults were averaging 2 hours and 49 minutes per day (Hymas, 2018).
- Nokia conducted a study that found that the average person looks at their smart phone 150 per day (Ahonen, 2011).
- In 2016, Americans sent about 94 text messages per day. (Burke, 2016).

Social Media



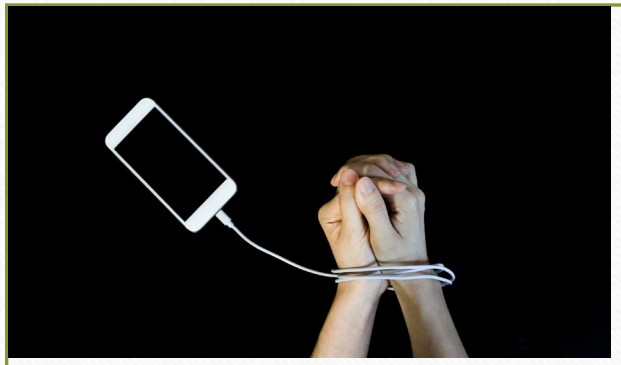
- In 2018, Facebook users averaged 24 minutes per day (Clearvoice.com, 2018).
- A clear link between Facebook use and depression involving social comparison and envy or disappointment in one's status (Cheever, 2014).
- Unfriending on Facebook was associated with strong negative emotional responses (Bevan, Pfyle, & Barclay, 2012).
- Increased loneliness was shown among more intense Facebook users (Lou, Yan, Nickerson, & McMorris, 2012).

Social Media (cont.)

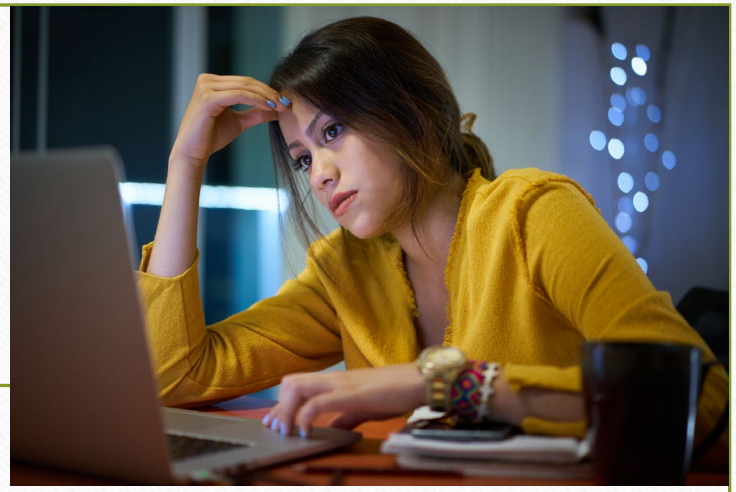


- Instagram users average 15 minutes per visit
- Twitter users average 2.7 minutes per user per day
- Pinterest users average 14.2 minutes per visit
- LinkedIn users average 17 minutes per user per day

(Bagadiyat, 2019)



Weekly Screen Time



26.5-36.5 Hours on Television

19.6-28 Hours on Smartphone

25+ Hours on a PC in the Office

WEEKLY: **71-89.5+ Hours per Week Staring at Screens**

DAILY: **10-13+ Hours per Day Staring at Screens**

Five Strategies for Improving Your Relationship to Technology



1. Set Limits



- Check email 2-3 times per day (and let clients and colleagues know/expect that).
- Limit Social Media to 10 minutes per platform per day, Use a timer (Hunt et. al, 2018).
- Monitor your use (use monitoring apps, check Screen Time on Iphone, etc.).
- Use Do Not Disturb.

Additional Email Time Saving Suggestions

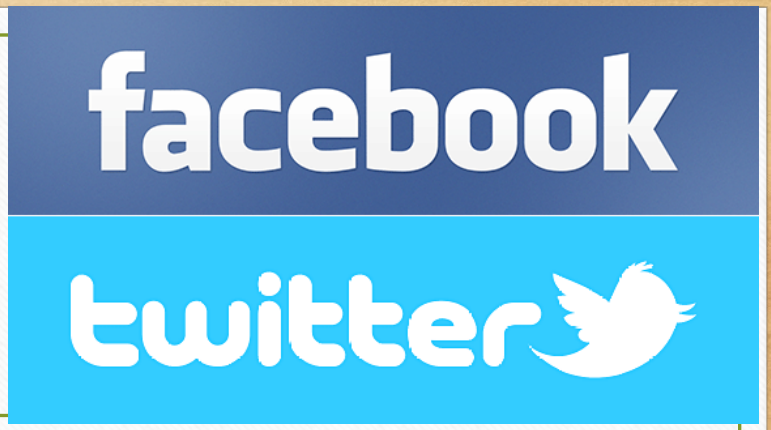
- Move every email out of your inbox the first time you read it
- Use the search functionality with search operators to re-find emails
- Set up just two email folders and use shortcuts to archive emails there
- Avoid processing irrelevant or less important emails individually

2. Disconnect.



- Turn off notifications.
- Do not charge your phone beside bed.
- Do not keep phone with you during meals, exercise, or social activities.
- Read a book or magazine rather than your phone or tablet.
- Get away from your PC to do some work, take healthy breaks from the screen, and don't take the laptop with you on weekends or vacations.

3. Manage the Apps.



- Delete Facebook, Twitter, Instagram from your phone.
- Install wellness, mindfulness, usage, and other healthy apps.

4. Unfollow the Unhealthy.



- Unfollow friends on Facebook that are hateful, hurtful, or distressing.
- Stop checking what is trending in the news: it's mostly bad.
- Do follow uplifting people and resources, we are what we read.

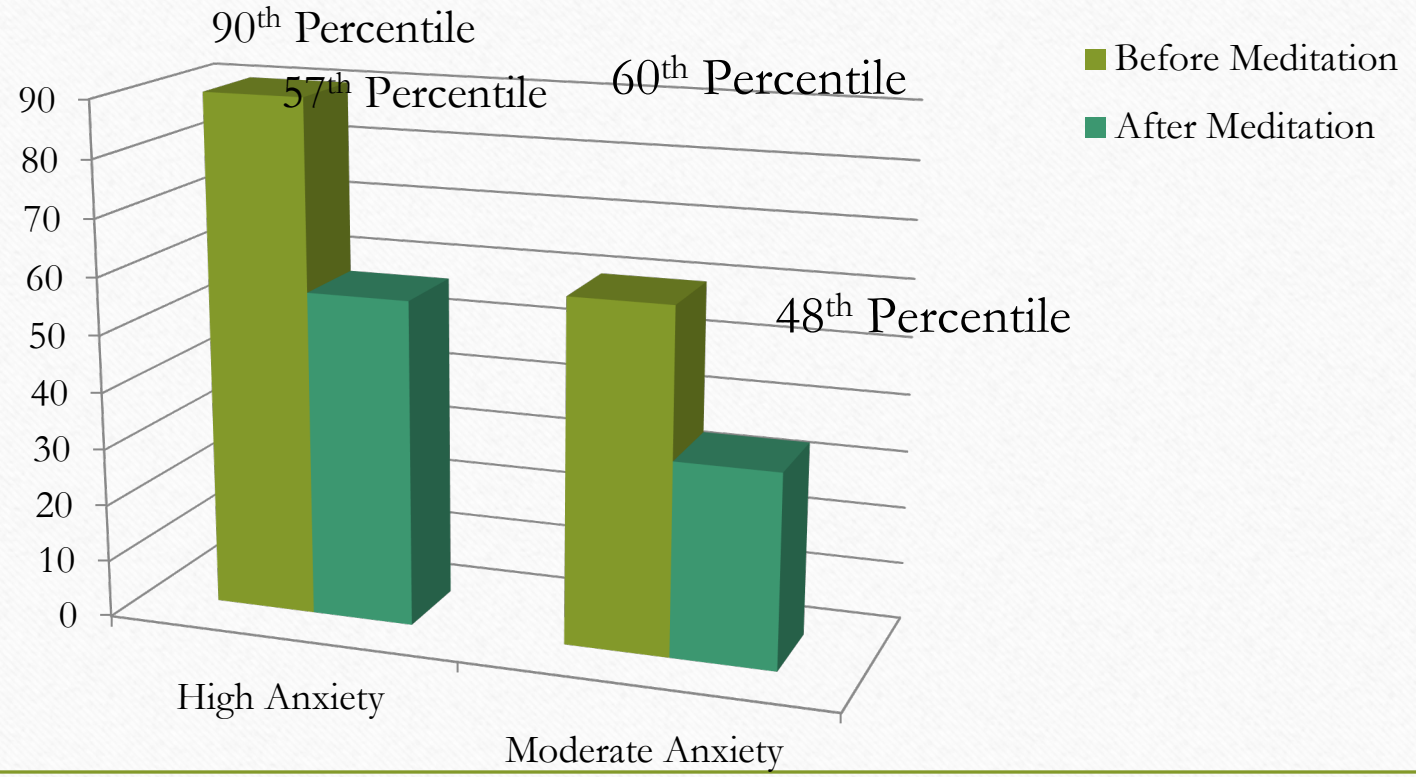
5. Schedule Self-Care Time.



- 4% of your life is 1 hour per day, make that the minimum for self-care.
- Use your calendar and other technology to remind you to unplug.
- By scheduling events that are away from screens, it can free you from technology.

Mindfulness and Breathing Exercises

After 2 Weeks of Breathing Exercises



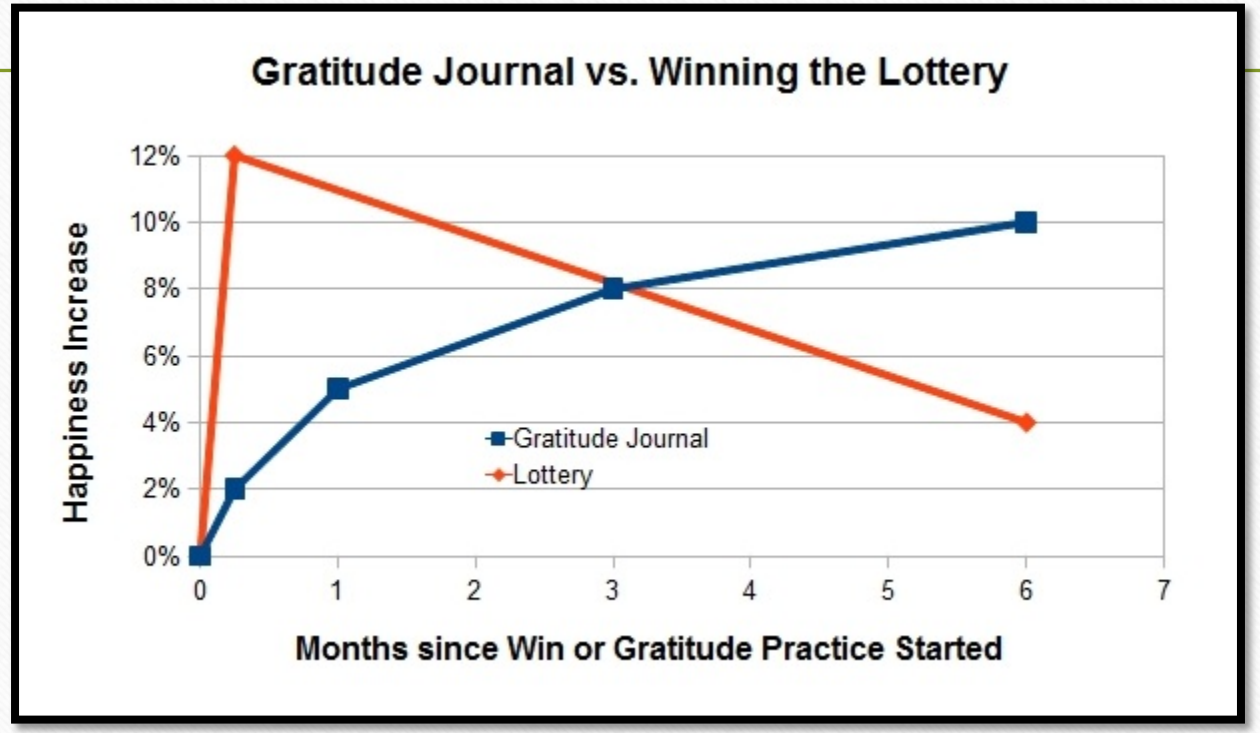
Ways to Activate the Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Running/Hiking/Walking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Playing a Musical Instrument
- Yoga
- Painting / Creating Art
- Gardening / Working with Hands
- Golfing
- Cooking

Practice Gratitude.



Gratitude Journaling



Debrief

Debriefing is telling someone about what has happened,
or going over an experience or set of actions,
to achieve some sort of order or
meaning concerning them.



Help Others.


SERVICE
learning
engagement
partners
Impact
post-course
cultural
clients
adult
tutor
community
literacy
program

Helping Others

In a 30,000 person study on the affect of stress over 10 years on the rate of death, people who believed that they had a very stressful year and that stress was harmful to their health had 43% higher risk of death than those who did not.

A related study showed that the effect of stress on death rate was **completely offset** where people were regularly helping others.

LAPs Provides:

- Confidential support
- Referrals to licensed professionals with the experience or expertise you need
- Information about local group support and resources
- One-to-one local peer support
- Self-care information
- CLE / Education on Wellness
- Access to funding for care
- Service opportunities



LAP Directory:
www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/
Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program
1-800-343-TLAP(8527)