

DRI for Life: DRI Announces New Initiatives to Enhance Member Health and Happiness

By Brett A. Ross and Susan E. Gunter

A career in the law can be exciting, exhilarating, and rewarding. However, we all regularly encounter news reports and articles that remind us that the legal profession can also take a toll on our mental and physical health. These articles report that lawyers suffer elevated rates of stress, substance abuse, addiction, depression, and even suicide. Of course, for the overwhelming majority of lawyers, we don't need news reports to tell us that. If you have practiced law for more than a few days, you already know how demanding and difficult it can be. We all have different ways of coping with our profession's demands. Some of those ways are healthy. Some are not. Others can be deadly. DRI is committed to helping its members ensure that they cope with the stresses of the legal profession in healthy and productive ways that will ensure we all have the information needed to help achieve a healthy work/life balance.

A few years ago, with the challenges of the profession in mind, DRI created a committee called DRI for Life. The mission of DRI for Life has been to provide information and support for DRI members in various stages of their careers to help preserve the highest quality of life possible. The first year or two of the committee's existence has been dedicated to study and planning of what it is that we can do. We are now putting some of those things into action. This article announces some of those initiatives, which include the following.

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Resource Center** – DRI has already rolled out a series of resource links on its website dedicated to providing information for attorneys in crisis. For people struggling with issues of mental health or addiction, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Resource Center provides links to where to go to obtain assistance in pulling your career and life out of tailspin. This information can be found on the dri.org



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website under the popular resources section found in the bottom right of the home page.

- **Work/Life Balance Resource Center** – DRI has also created and will soon implement a section of its website devoted to the more proactive components of avoiding problems in the first place. The Work/Life Balance Resource Center will provide links to resources and articles providing guidance on how to achieve a healthy work/life balance and cope with problems before they get out of hand. This information will also be found in the popular resources section of the DRI home page.

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- **DRI for Life Column in *For The Defense*** – The DRI for Life Committee, starting with this edition, will be providing a regular column on issues and advice for managing work/life stresses. Starting next month this will include real life stories on how to cope with the challenges of your career and its impact on your personal life successfully.

In addition to these resources, the DRI for Life Committee is also looking at other issues that will be announced in this space going forward. Some of the things that the committee is working on include career path guidance for different stages of law practice, expanded “Blue Zone” activities at the Annual Meeting and seminars, and finding new ways for members to connect and take advantage of the support mechanisms that an organization like DRI can provide.

Whatever challenges you face in your life, as a DRI member you have access to

nearly 22,000 other lawyers who have confronted similar issues in the past. By sharing our successes, and even our failures at coping with these challenges, we can offer tremendous support to one another that can help our fellow defense lawyers cope with problems before they get out of hand. We encourage each of you to take advantage of these resources through the DRI for Life Committee and your personal connection with fellow members.

