

The Role of Mentorship in Mental Health for Women Lawyers

By Jamie Rosen, Esq.

The legal profession has long been associated with high stress, long hours, and a culture that strives for perfection. For women lawyers, these pressures often compound with additional challenges such as gender bias and caregiving expectations. It's no surprise that women attorneys report higher levels of depression, anxiety, and burnout than their male peers.

As we celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month, it is important to highlight an often-overlooked protective factor in the well-being of women lawyers: **mentorship**. Mentorship—both formal and informal—plays a significant, research-supported role in improving mental well-being, building resilience, and increasing career satisfaction for female attorneys.

The Mental Health Landscape for Women Lawyers

While all lawyers face intense demands, women often experience these pressures differently. Many navigate persistent stereotypes, subtle and overt bias, pay inequity, and disproportionate expectations around availability and caregiving. For women of color, LGBTQ+ attorneys, first-generation lawyers, and lawyers with disabilities, these stressors can be intensified.

The consequences are real. Women lawyers report higher levels of imposter syndrome, a greater sense of isolation, and higher attrition rates. Many internalize the belief that struggling is a personal failing rather than a natural response to a high-pressure profession.

This is precisely where mentorship can make a difference.

How Mentorship Supports Mental Health

Mentorship helps us feel seen and supported. Knowing someone who understands the pressures of the job—and is willing to listen—can ease feelings of loneliness and provide emotional validation. Mentors offer perspective that challenges faced by a mentee are common, shared experiences.

Mentors who demonstrate healthy boundary-setting—whether regarding workload, communication expectations, vacation days, parental leave, or self-care—show that balance is not only possible, but sustainable. Part of my New Year's resolution for 2026 was to follow valuable advice from one of my mentors: learning to say “no” strategically. After reflecting on existing commitments, decide whether a new opportunity aligns with your goals, values and availability.

Mentorship can directly address professional uncertainty. Guidance through the interview process and starting a new job, navigating workplace culture, returning after a leave of absence or career pause, or managing conflict can significantly reduce anxiety and strengthen a lawyer's sense of self and confidence in their career direction.

The NYWBA Community's Role

Mentorship has always been at the heart of the mission of New York Women's Bar Association — to support, promote, and empower women in the legal profession. As we honor Mental Health Awareness Month, the NYWBA continues this commitment by offering mentorship opportunities, integrating wellness programming into its events, and encouraging members to reach out to one another with intention.

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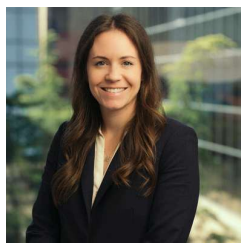
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It's no secret that mentorship increases job satisfaction. When women feel supported, understood, and guided, they are more likely to stay in the profession and progress to leadership roles—creating a virtuous cycle of support for future generations.

Conclusion

The mental health challenges women lawyers face are significant—but they are not insurmountable. Mentorship creates a lifeline of connection and validation. It reinforces that none of us navigate this profession alone and that supporting one another is both a responsibility and a privilege. Discussing past struggles humanizes us and reduces the stigma associated with mental health conditions.

As we reflect this month, consider reaching out to a colleague, mentee, or even someone you admire from afar. Your support could be the encouragement that keeps another woman lawyer not just in the profession—but thriving within it.



Jamie Rosen is a Partner and Chair of the Mental Health Law Group at Meister Seelig & Schuster PLLC, dedicated to representing individuals and families in crisis situations specific to mental health issues and/or alcohol/substance use disorders.

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NYWBA
NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

MOCK TRIAL PREP

Yorkville East Middle School, MS177

Date: Monday, May 18
Time: 10:15 to 12:30

Help students prepare for their mock trial experience scheduled to take place at 60 Center Street on May 22nd.

Email Vlad Frants at vlad.frants@gmail.com or Erika Calderon at ecalderon@dlkny.com to sign up or learn more.

THE NYWBA MATRIMONIAL & FAMILY LAW COMMITTEE PRESENTS

Representing LGBTQIA Clients in Matrimonial and Family Law Cases

PLEASE NOTE UPDATED EVENT DATE
Wednesday, May 27, 2026, 6 to 7:30 p.m

**Donohoe Talbert office bldg
120 W 45th Street (between 6th & 7th Ave)**

Featured Panelists

Delilah R. Chamlin Margaret Donohoe
Erin B. Harrist Paul Talbert

with Judge Jaimee Nelsen,
Referee Alexandra Lewis-Rise

REGISTER HERE

Register Today

**Inside ADR in the Courts:
An Evening with Judges and ADR
Coordinators**

Monday, May 18, 2026
Program 5:30 pm - 7:00pm
Reception 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Where: New York City Bar
42 West 44th Street | New York, NY 10036

Program Fee:
\$20 for Members | \$40 for Nonmembers