

Finding and Building a Community of Wellness: Mentorship, Connection & Civility in Today's Legal Practice

Presented By:
Hon. Paul Bacigalupo (Ret.)
Hon. Leslie Landau (Ret.)
Lee Mendelson, Esq.

MCLE Day Day 2 - March 4th 2026

PROGRAM AGENDA

FRAMING WELLNESS THROUGH CONNECTION & COMMUNITY

MENTORSHIP AS A WELLNESS TOOL

APPLICATION PROCESS

ISOLATION & MODERN BARRIERS TO CONNECTION

**COMMUNICATION, CIVILITY & EMPATHY AS WELLNESS
SKILLS**

PRACTICAL TOOLS & TAKEAWAY TIPS

Engagement Poll #1

WHO IS IN THE ROOM?

1. WHAT IS YOUR PRACTICE SETTING? (SOLO, SMALL FIRM, MID-SIZE, LARGE FIRM, GOV, IN-HOUSE)
2. How many years have you been practicing?
3. What is your work environment? (hybrid, remote, in-person)



GUIDED BREATHING EXERCISE

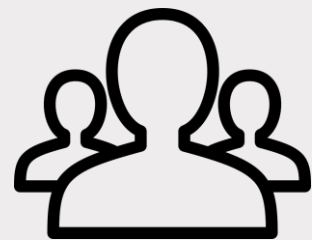


FRAMING WELLNESS THROUGH CONNECTION & COMMUNITY



Hidden in Plain Sight

Wellness challenges often appear as professional performance problems — missed deadlines, incivility, communication breakdowns



Connection as Protection

Human connection is a key protective factor in maintaining competence and professional resilience



Root Causes

Stress, burnout, financial strain, caregiving, substance use, post-pandemic isolation, and social fear



Mentor, connect, and practice
with empathy

**BUILDING A COMMUNITY
OF WELLNESS**

Engagement Poll #2

1. I FEEL ABOUT MY LAW PRACTICE:

a. HAPPY

b. MIXED

c. BURNED OUT

**2. I FEEL MORE HOSTILITY FOR OR FROM
OPPOSING COUNSEL THAN I USED TO**

**3. I miss the social contact of in person
appearances in court**

**4. I am less involved in professional/Bar
organizations than I used to be**



ISOLATION & MODERN BARRIERS TO CONNECTION

Lingering Pandemic Effects

- Remote work → reduced in-person connection
- Social media
- Limited informal interactions (courthouse, bar events)
- Accelerated stress and loneliness trends among lawyers

Generational & Tech Divergence

- Younger lawyers socialize digitally; older lawyers practiced in-person
- Phones & social media as both coping mechanisms and anxiety sources
- Evidence shows reduced well-being with constant digital engagement

Rebuilding In-Person Community

- Bar associations, practice groups, volunteer activities
- Intentional re-entry into physical professional spaces

COMMUNICATION, CIVILITY & EMPATHY AS WELLNESS SKILLS

Pick Up the Phone

- Direct communication diffuses conflict faster than email or text
- Examples from negotiation and discovery disputes
- Phone calls humanize interactions — voices create empathy

Recognizing Distress in Others

- Incivility often signals personal struggle beneath the surface
- Asking "Are you okay?" with authenticity changes dynamics
- Treating difficult counterparts with grace as a professional skill

Building Peer Support Networks

- Peers (not mentors) often understand lived experience better
- Reciprocal "being seen and heard" relationships
- How to cultivate horizontal support alongside vertical mentorship

MENTORSHIP AS A WELLNESS TOOL

Why Mentorship Matters

- Lawyers often feel unsafe sharing vulnerabilities internally
- Mentors provide guidance on professional skill-building AND personal resilience
- Mentoring as an early-intervention tool — before crisis level is reached

Types of Mentorship

Formal Programs

- firms, courts, bar associations

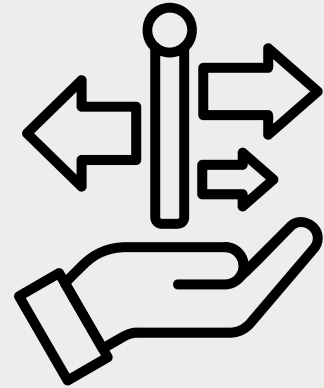
Organic/Peer-Driven

- natural relationships that develop over time

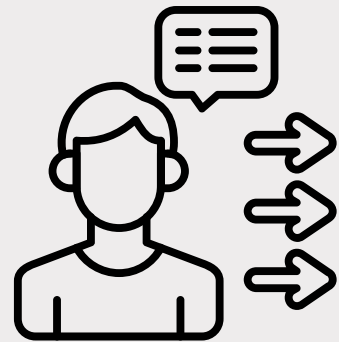
Multiple Mentors

- Career, subject-matter, and well-being

HOW TO FIND A MENTOR - THE 3A FIT TEST



Alignment -
shared values
and goals



Approachability -
accessible and
open



Admiration -
genuine respect
for their path

Engagement Poll #3

- 1. DOES YOUR WORKPLACE HAVE A FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAM?**
- 2. Do you currently have a mentor?**
- 3. Would you like to have a mentor?**



PRACTICAL TOOLS & TAKEAWAY TIPS

Mentorship

1. How to initiate a mentor relationship
2. Structuring regular check-ins
3. Knowing when to 'graduate' from a mentor

Connection & Community

1. Reestablishing in-person professional routines
2. Using bar associations and CLEs to build networks
3. Setting healthy boundaries with digital engagement

Civility & Wellness

1. Techniques for de-escalating conflict
2. Asking curious questions rather than reacting
3. Small daily habits that reduce stress and build resilience

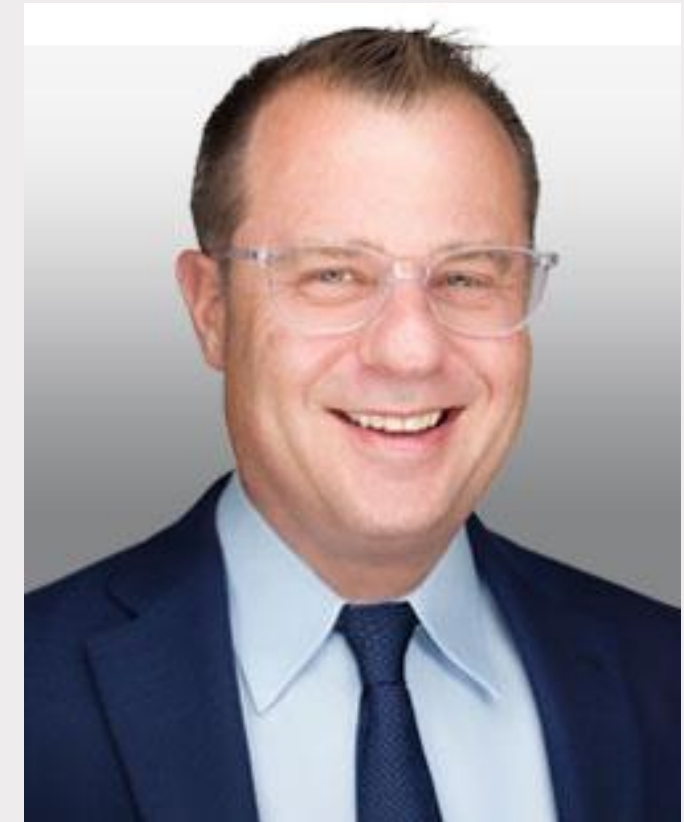
Thank You



Hon. Paul Bacigalupo (Ret.)
ADR Services, Inc.
judgebacigalupo@adrservices.com



Hon. Leslie Landau (Ret.)
ADR Services, Inc.
judgelandau@adrservices.com



Lee Mendelson, Esq.
ADR Services, Inc.
lmendelson@adrservices.com