

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

HUSEIN (00:03):

This is a preview of episode four of Lawyered Unplugged, the exclusive podcast series for members of the Lawyered Patreon community. I'm Husein Panju. And on this episode, we're speaking with staff clinician and registered social worker Doron Gold about the role of mental health in the legal profession. And although the challenges of mental health are by no means a new topic, this issue has been getting renewed attention due to increasing cases of social isolation, both pandemic-related and non-pandemic-related. And we'll be speaking about why this specific profession is uniquely impacted, the role of perfectionism, and tangible practical tips for both individuals and organizations. All of that and a lot more is coming up in just a bit. This is Lawyered Unplugged. Hello everyone. Thanks for joining us on the show today. This will be our first episode that I've released in 2022, so glad to have you here for this. The interview that you're going to hear in a few moments is going to be a preview from one of our latest bonus episodes from our series called Lawyered Unplugged. And this episode is about the area of mental health in the legal profession.

HUSEIN (01:25):

As you know, the theme of these bonus episodes has been decluttering the law. And I think that there's a clear recognition that mental health is central towards to access to justice. And I think we can all agree that mental health is extremely important and it requires year-round awareness. And given that this recording is being released in late January, and this is the time of year where a lot of companies implement campaigns around mental health, I wanted to release this episode about the exact issue around this time. Because in order do their jobs effectively, legal professionals need to recognize their core humanity in their clients, in their colleagues, in their partners in the legal profession, and, most importantly, in themselves.

HUSEIN (02:09):

Now I know that I'm not the first media outlet to publish literature on this specific topic about mental health and the legal profession. And for the better, there's been many articles that have been written about this, many interviews, other podcasts as well. Many will be coming out this week. Many will be coming out later on the year. And so what I'm trying to do in this recording is to ask our guests the hard questions to challenge some of the key precepts that we typically hear about with the goal of expecting some practical tips for individuals and organizations.

HUSEIN (02:46):

Now, as you know, the regular episodes of this podcast are free and always will be freely accessible. And we've launched this crowdfunding campaign to improve the quality and accessibility of this podcast. As I've said before, this show is about decluttering the law. And with more resources, we can reach more people and in better ways. So in exchange for becoming part of the Patreon community, you can receive a bunch of exclusive rewards, including shoutouts, early access to content, and many more. And, again, one of these benefits is access to these full bonus episodes. They're sprinkled throughout the year. And compared to our substantive episodes, they're more practical and relate to what we can all do to declutter the law in the profession.

HUSEIN (03:28):

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

We've now released about four or five of these bonus episodes. There's a few in 2020, some in 2021 as well. We've had episodes about building community in the legal profession. We've had episodes about finding purpose in your career. We have episodes about what it's really like to be in our council. And we have a lot more coming up in the future as well. And, again, this audio file is a short preview of the episode, and I've done my best to include, I'd say, the most salient points, the most practical elements related to the subject matter.

HUSEIN (03:59):

If you want to hear the full 75-minute version of this episode, where there's a bit more context and a bit more discussion about these topics, and if you want to hear about all of our other policy episodes, you can check out [Lawyeredpodcast.com/patron](http://Lawyeredpodcast.com/patron) to find out how to get more information. And, again, that website is [Lawyeredpodcast.com/patron](http://Lawyeredpodcast.com/patron), and included that in the podcast show notes as well. So thanks again for supporting and for listening. And with our further ado, here is the episode preview of today's episode.

HUSEIN (04:29):

Doron a staff clinician at Homewood Health, which is the provider of Ontario's legal professions' member assistance program. He's a registered social worker, certified professional coach and psychotherapist as well as having previously practiced law for 10 years, primarily as a family and civil litigator. Since 2006, Doron has assisted lawyers, paralegals, law students, judges, and their immediate family members with personal and professional issues such as addiction, depression, anxiety, and career stress. Doron's role at Homewood Health includes psychotherapy with clients, assisting with the ongoing management of Homewood's pure volunteer program, as well as providing workshops and presentations to various groups in the community.

HUSEIN (05:17):

Doron has written and been quoted extensively in publications, such as Lawyer's Weekly, Law Times, Canadian Lawyer, and LAWPRO Magazine on various topics related to lawyer distress and wellness, as well, Doron wrote a regular lawyer therapist column in Law Times. And he's been asked to speak to various groups throughout Ontario on topics as varied as work-life balance, lawyer stress 101, retirement, vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. And he's also the co-author of the CBAs Mental Health and Wellness in the Legal Profession online course and the recipient of the 2016 CBA Wellness Forum award of excellence.

HUSEIN (05:58):

So Doron, thanks for joining us on the show today.

DORON (06:00):

Thank you so much. I'm so glad to be here.

HUSEIN (06:02):

So we're really excited to have this interview. We've had some feedback from a number of our listeners and members of our Patreon community about topics that they wanted to hear about, specifically for

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

our bonus episodes. And mental health was of the ones that was a consistent theme. And so I think I mentioned to you before this recording, I had the opportunity to listen to you at a different [CBD 00:06:25] conference a few months ago. And a lot of your comments really resonated with me, and I thought that our listeners might enjoy the same.

HUSEIN (06:32):

So this conversation is going to be about mental health in the legal profession. In terms of getting started to level set, one of the themes that's been noted, especially in the last year or so, is the role of mental health amongst lawyers and whether there is a unique impact amongst the profession. So based on your experience, do you think that the legal profession is disproportionately impacted by mental health issues?

DORON (07:00):

So I'll start with the fact that it's been demonstrated statistically that it is the case. A study about five years ago run by the Betty Ford Hazelden organization sponsored by the American Bar Association showed statistically, I believe it was 28% of lawyers suffering with depression, 19% with anxiety, 21.6% with some type of substance use disorder. All of those numbers being anywhere from three to four times higher than members of the general population. So that's a statistical validation of your question.

DORON (07:38):

In terms of what makes that happen, I come at it from two angles. One angle is, are lawyers different? The answer is, generally speaking, yes. Lawyers have actually been observed, they've been studied, and there are certain personality traits, some of which are very helpful, some of which make it easier to succeed in law, some of which get in the way of mental health. And sometimes those two things coincide. Things that you do that make you good as a lawyer, perhaps a level of perfectionism, might make it very difficult for you to have balance because you never feel like you've done enough or that you're ever good enough.

DORON (08:17):

So do lawyers have certain traits? On the one hand, yes. Lawyers have been observed to have intelligence, perseverance, are drawn to autonomy. Lawyers are also observed to be hyper self-critical. And the combination of hyper self-critical with very hesitant to show vulnerability means that world inside the lawyer's head is quite a thing to behold, lots of self-criticism, lots of self-judgment, lots of self-denigration for many, coupled with the absence of reaching out for comfort and validation from other human beings.

DORON (09:03):

So I, for years, have had this little joke that a lawyer left alone with their own brain is a dangerous person, because with a good brain comes the ability to formulate all kinds of scenarios, to think about things from every angle upside down and 360 degrees. And if one takes a tiny little bit of information and inside their own head, they think it to the ends of the earth and they come up with a conclusion that they are completely screwed, and then they don't talk to anyone about it because they don't want

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

to show vulnerability. They don't want to let anybody see them sweat. Then the truth inside their head is true to them.

DORON (09:43):

So it may not be true in the real world. It may not be an objective truth. But their subjective truth in the absence of any testing in the real world is their truth, and they're living accordingly, which could mean that if they are believing that they are not good enough, not smart enough, not strong enough for certain things, and they believe that to be entirely true, that's extremely demoralizing. It's extremely distressing, and that person is alone with it.

HUSEIN (10:14):

It's like that expression about we're kind of the stories that we tell ourselves over and over again.

DORON (10:18):

Exactly. And human beings are attachment creatures. We are built to be connected to other people. We are built to validate each other. And validate each other doesn't mean I make you valid by telling you you're good. You're already good. I don't define your value. But we care about each other and we support each other, especially in difficult times. Lawyers, in particular, try to distance themselves or keep away from that exposure. Because if you imagine, if the internal world is self-judging and self-critical, that person is likely to then project on to every other person they meet that same self-judgment, assuming therefore that the other person will judge them just as harshly. Then why would they talk to anyone about these struggles?

DORON (11:05):

They're just going to get negative back. I'll just keep it to myself, hold my breath until it gets better. So, as I said, there's that one side of it, which is personality related. They're self-judging, they're perfectionistic, et cetera. That inherently causes them to be more distressed than the average person and much less inclined to ask for help for it.

DORON (11:28):

And then there's the job on the other side, which in and of itself is a stressor. And I'm going to say when I say the job I'm going to include law school, because law school has also been demonstrated to... I mean, empirically, they've demonstrated law school is extremely distressing, can lead to depression, anxiety, substance use, et cetera. And so the workload that lawyers have and the fear of being sued, the fear of being reported to the regulator, running a business if you're a sole practitioner, keeping your clients happy, keeping up with the law in the litigation that's adversarial, so you're always under scrutiny for any mistake you make and they'll exploit it anytime they can, so you're at war a lot of the time, at least proverbially.

DORON (12:25):

So all of those things together, coming with propensities, and then putting yourself on a battlefield and being the type who isolates leads to a person who is inclined, is more susceptible to some of the distress that we've discussed.

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

HUSEIN (12:43):

Right. So you mentioned a couple of things in terms of traits like perfectionism and intelligence and perseverance, which seem to correlate strongly with the legal profession. But, I mean, I can think of a bunch of other professions that have similar values like the medical profession, accountants, actuaries,

HUSEIN (13:01):

... even architects, there's this expectation of perfectionism. So do you think that this is manifested differently in the legal profession that to get into some of the mental health impacts?

DORON (13:14):

For the most part? No, it doesn't manifest differently. In fact, I participated at the Ontario Bar Association a few years ago, in a summit of people from various fields, psychologists, engineers, doctors, pharmacists, et cetera. And the collective conclusion was a lot of similarities. A lot of similarities in the population, a lot of similarities in the stressors they have, variations, of course. And variations in the types of vulnerabilities they have. So for instance, lawyers don't have as much susceptibility to addiction to opioids, because they don't have as much access as doctors or pharmacists have to opioids. So there's an example where it's different, but the perfectionism and the fear of making a mistake and the high standard that is set, right from the moment you get into professional school. Because think about it, the moment you get into professional school, as smart as you are, and as good a student as you are, to have gotten the marks to get into, for instance, law school. You're now surrounded by a bunch of other people who are just as smart and just as able to get into law school.

DORON (14:20):

And they're all very impressive and they're all very intimidating. And I know a lot of law students starting with me, 30 years ago, who was intimidated as hell by my colleagues. I did not feel as smart as they were. I did not feel as capable. I didn't feel like I had a legal brain the way some of them did, law nerds. And that was very discouraging. I tried to hide my ignorance. I tried to hide my insecurity as best I could, but that took a toll. So right at law school forward, that definitely exists. There's a sense of, "I am surrounded by greatness. I'm surrounded by geniuses." Now, it's not actually true that it's all great. One of the stories I often tell law students is about how, when I got into law school, as I said, I was very intimidated by the people I went to law school with.

DORON (15:16):

I found myself feeling very much less than. So five years later, in 1999, after I graduated, I got an invitation to the five-year reunion of the Osgoode Hall Law School, class of '94. And I didn't go because I was not doing well in my life. I was depressed and I was not in a good place. And I imagined that all people I went to law school with were all now partners on Bay Street, every last one of them. And they were all driving nice cars and doing amazing work. It would've just been awful to show my face amongst those gods. So I didn't go to the reunion. And then at the 10-year reunion in 2004, as much as I was doing very well in the practice of law, just came off of a court of appeal win. I had been successful at a number of levels of court doing trials and motions, et cetera, tribunals.

DORON (16:07):

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

But I felt at that point, like everyone I went to law school with, had lapped me. By then, they're all now partners on Bay Street and my brain is telling me every single one of them is a partner and they all have beautiful houses and 2.3 kids and they're just world beaters. And I'm just doing my little law, in my little office. I felt embarrassed. So I didn't go to that reunion either. And that's in spite of being pretty good at my job. But then comes 2009, I get an invitation to the 15th reunion. By then I'm now working at the Lawyer Assistance Program in Ontario, no longer practicing law, working as a coach and as a case manager, helping lawyers with personal distress.

DORON (16:49):

At that point, I'm in my element and I'm feeling like, "Yeah, I'm going to go to this reunion." And when I go in there and people start to hear about what I do for a living every day, one after another starts up to me, wanting to talk about all the problems they'd had over the last 15 years. All the addictions and the divorces and the job loss and the Law Society complaints and the depression. They were all humans all along. I just didn't give them credit for it.

HUSEIN (17:13):

Yeah. And these are all the... that people typically don't advertise on their social media or even when they speak to you face to face.

DORON (17:20):

It's the Facebook syndrome. The only thing you see on Facebook is beautiful children and really nice vacations.

HUSEIN (17:25):

Right. Or nice food in fairness.

DORON (17:26):

Right. You don't see... Yeah, sure. The food porn. But you don't see the hard days and that's because we don't want people to see that in us. So we're alone with it. That's why reaching out for help, that's why me doing outreach like this even, is an integral part of normalizing the humanity of lawyers.

HUSEIN (17:48):

So one of the questions been submitted by one of our patron members was, do you have thoughts on what leaders in the profession can do to help, to reduce stigma and make legal workplaces more accommodating in support of the legal professionals with mental health issues or those who are struggling with their mental wellness?

DORON (18:08):

It's a cultural question. Because one, in order for one to feel supported in a workplace, the culture of that workplace has to be a supportive culture. To have a supportive culture and to have a de-stigmatized culture, leaders from the top down need to be open, need to be transparent even about... and sometimes about their own struggles. Attending to one's own wellness, needs to be normalized and validated instead of looked down upon. Law firms, there's a whole conversation online these days

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

about... It's like pushback against the concept of wellness sessions at law firms, "Enough with the wellness sessions if you don't make systemic change. Me drinking more water is not going to make a difference to my stress level."

DORON (19:02):

So there is truth to that. Although I absolutely believe it's a combination of both. It's a false choice, but it is absolutely true that law firms, legal departments and insurance companies and banks and wherever lawyers work, leadership can't just give lip service to mental health. You can't just say, "We care about you. We want you to be well, here's your yoga room. Make sure you get your eight billable, 10 billable, 12 billable hours a day in." I'm not going to believe you when you say you care about me.

HUSEIN (19:41):

It's like this greenwashing trend that was popular a couple years ago, or even now. About how we'll put things on our website about how we value diversity and we value the environment. But then when you look at their practices, it speaks a different story.

DORON (19:56):

It's exactly right. And that's actually a great example of what leaders can do, because when you say valuing diversity, you can have all of that on a website. But if the overwhelming number of equity partners in a law firm are white straight men, if there is still systemic, covert or even overt racism in an office, "Thanks for caring about me, but I'm still being treated like an other. I'm still not being given a path to leadership myself. I'm still not being given the best work. I'm still not being given resources I need to do my job well. So thank you for the website and all the lovely things that you said, but it doesn't help me very much." That actually makes people more cynical because it's as though, if I throw a couple dollars at a promotional campaign... And that's part of, I don't want to be too controversial here, but that's part of some of the criticism of Bell Let's Talk.

HUSEIN (20:57):

Sure, absolutely.

DORON (20:58):

It's done a lot of really good things. A lot of great stuff happens as a result of it. A lot of de-stigmatization comes as a result of it, but Bell also charges inmates for collect calls from incarceration. So put your money where your mouth is. Everyone, law firms, legal organizations, law schools put money where your mouth is, lip service creates cynicism. It makes people not believe even good messages when they come, because they figure, "They're just saying that, but they don't believe it." So the example I have is a few years ago, probably more than 10 years ago, actually on a webinar, I had a question come from a student on Bay Street. "I work on Bay Street and we have a yoga room, but I'm afraid to use it."

DORON (21:44):

And when I was asked, "What should the law firm do?" My answer was, "Well, the managing partner needs to take up yoga. You need to model the things you say are important to you. You need to model

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

the humanity you say you value in your people. You need to model that taking time off for grief, taking parental leave. You need to model those are actually important things. Not just that it's we have the policy, but you probably shouldn't use it too much. Because you'll develop a reputation." Well that's not going to work.

HUSEIN (22:14):

Are there other are kinds of investments that you think legal departments or firms or whatever could make to address mental health meaningfully?

DORON (22:26):

It's again, somewhat controversial. But to me, the word investment is very interesting and it may be the first I've ever thought of it this way, based on the way you framed the question. But investment's just money. And one of the greatest stressors for legal professionals is the pressure to make the organization money. "So I work all of these long hours because I need to justify the Chagall painting that's in the lobby." And so you want to invest? Invest in resources, invest in more lawyers so that each individual lawyer has good assistance and good law clerks. Each individual lawyer has a lower workload. The firm will make less money. So that's why I'm saying I'm connecting it up with investment. There's a very good chance those people are going to be more productive with the time that they spend.

DORON (23:23):

But as I said, it's relatively controversial thing to say because it's not the way things have been done. My inclination is that it's going to change by virtue of the forces of the market. The pandemic has accelerated it. You've heard of the great resignation. Well, there are people who are leaving firms and starting their own firms. There are people who are not putting up with a certain partner who is particularly abusive, because they're done and life's too short, "I'm going to go work somewhere else." I've seen lots of movement in the last couple of years, people have just been more open to it because the world was turned upside down. Change seemed easier because the world is change right now.

DORON (24:03):

Those are the market forces... To use a capitalist term. Those are the market forces that actually spur on change in the way organizations operate. It would be nice if it wasn't crisis that caused that, but we'll take it. We'll take whatever positive change occurs. But as we said before, there is also pushback about that. There are also some places who are holding fast to the way things have always been done. And we'll see if that sustains.

HUSEIN (24:33):

And again, I just don't want to make this just about dollars and cents. But I think that there is this financial incentive for businesses to not build their associates to the ground. They'd probably have a more productive... Lawyers who will stay or clerks who will stay if they're not going to get burned out. And I can think of a number of lawyers who've taken lower paying jobs for the benefit of working in a fantastic workplace that values them and their humanity.

DORON (25:03):



**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

There absolutely is a business case separate and apart from the moral case, there is a business case for treating your people humanely. Everything from people who are treated humanely, being more productive and more loyal to... And tied in with the loyalty, the second part of what I was going to say, which is attrition is a problem. If it costs a firm, especially a large firm, a lot of money invested in a new associate until they become profitable. And if you spend \$180,000 on a new associate before they actually start to turn a profit for you. And it is at that point that they decide, "I don't want to take it anymore and I'm leaving." You invested and it's a lost investment. So there are lots of good business cases. You don't want people who are so burned out that they actually make mistakes and expose the firm to liability. It's another business reason not to do that. It's good for your reputation. It is becoming more

DORON (26:00):

... More accepted in society that the way that an organization treats its people or the way that an organization presents itself to society, affects buying choices. Now, some people are going to want that killer lawyer who works 20 hours a day and they don't care what kind of environment they work in, they want a killer.

DORON (26:21):

Okay. But there are some people who are going, just like people invest in ways that are more sustainable, that's a market force. There will be people who will hire lawyers on the basis of the reputation of the firm, it's connection with social responsibility, how much pro bono work it does, et cetera. That will exist too, that's a market force that's going to be brought to bear as well.

HUSEIN (26:45):

Right. And this stems across, I mean, from the client perspective as well. They can tell if a lawyer is satisfied and being treated well, just like you could, when you go to a retail store, right? It's very easy to tell what the work conditions are like there, behind the desk or behind the kitchen, just based on how the staff are directed. So I think that similar principle applies as well for lawyers as well, right?

DORON (27:06):

It's the dirty little secret of law practice. It is actually populated by individual humans and those individual humans act in certain ways, and they treat people in certain ways and they respond to things in certain ways. And the clients are observing this. The clients see this rest out lawyers, the clients see the ones that are more balanced.

DORON (27:25):

The clients often see how they're treated in court by other counsel, whether they have a good reputation or not such a good reputation. They see how they're treated by judges and whether they have a good reputation with the bench or not. They see if there are undue amount of adjournments being called for because the lawyer seems to be missing court a lot for various reasons.

DORON (27:49):

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

Clients see that, but it's nuanced, right? So are they putting their finger on exactly why? I think they may go into it thinking, I'm hiring a robot, I'm hiring a law machine who is going to affect the change that I desire. But as they go along, they start realizing they're dealing with a sentient being. They're dealing with a person, with all their vulnerabilities and all their strengths.

DORON (28:15):

And so they see all that stuff, but we like to think of it as the practitioner, doing the work, getting the result, without dealing with did that practitioner just get out of a difficult relationship? Did that practitioner's dog die two days before? Is that practitioner have bipolar disorder that is not currently being treated well with meds? Is that practitioner an abuse survivor who has recently been triggered by some event in their life, who is now drinking again, because they don't want to talk to anyone about it.

DORON (28:53):

See these things exist. They are all in the end, a bunch of humans who have all this history and all of these strengths and vulnerabilities. And I would actually say vulnerabilities are often strengths. As a family lawyer, my vulnerabilities served me really well. I had an emotional intelligence born of life experience, sometimes hard life experience that made me effective.

DORON (29:15):

So it's not vulnerable and strong, and those are the two poles, but that's the thing that we want to keep in mind. It's a profession full of humans. And we can't just think about them as, do the job, I don't want to hear about your kids, I don't want to hear about the death of your dog. I don't want to hear about it. The job needs to be done.

DORON (29:42):

And that's what pushes women out of practice, right? Because having children and having, unfortunately the brunt of the workload around family responsibility, is something the legal profession has just not been interested in hearing about. The legal profession has just been, can you do the job or not?

HUSEIN (30:01):

Right.

DORON (30:01):

Well, legal profession is learning. They're losing a lot of talented people. People who could be very effective for them by virtue of not paying attention to those very important things.

HUSEIN (30:14):

We've talked a little bit about investments and when it formed, but what does that look like practically. To focus on the humanity of the lawyers and individuals, what does that mean?

DORON (30:25):

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

Some of it is what we discussed already, which is what is the workload of the person? What is the flexibility that the person has when their child needs suddenly to be picked up from school, to go to a doctor's appointment? Is it a humane workplace? Is it a place absent of misogyny and sexism and Islamophobia and antisemitism and ableism? Is it a workplace where people are kind to each other?

DORON (30:52):

I know that seems like an obvious thing to say, but a lot of legal workplaces are not kind workplaces. There are places where bad behavior is tolerated because boy, oh boy, that guy is a real Rainmaker. So we tolerate his bad behavior, except the brunt of the bad behavior is taken by the juniors.

DORON (31:13):

So how do we change it? How do we make it more humane? We treat the people with humanity and humanity is about empathy and kindness and flexibility and listening. And that's not how legal workplaces were built initially. There are now, I know of legal workplaces that are being built like that. I know of people who have left unhealthy legal workplaces and just created a healthy legal workplace. And that's part of the change we talked about earlier.

DORON (31:42):

What's changing? Well, the people are actually making the change because the profession itself is not making the change. It's a slow moving process. It's individual by individual, but sometimes that's how systemic change happens.

HUSEIN (31:58):

These healthy workplaces, what does a healthy workplace look like in comparison to one that's not?

DORON (32:05):

It's a humane, kind, supportive workplace, where people are kind to each other, where there's lots of mentorship, constructive mentorship, not just nominal mentorship. There is a reasonable amount of work and a reasonable amount of time off and taking vacations is encouraged and saying no to additional work, having boundaries is encouraged and not frowned upon. And people are remunerated fairly and advancement is possible. And allowing people to focus on the areas of law that they are most inclined to work in is possible.

DORON (32:46):

So it's obvious, and yet, I guess it can't be that obvious because it isn't being done that often. We're dealing with the individual as they are and the gifts they bring. And we want to those gifts. We want to feed the things that will make that person flourish because that flourishing person is good for our organization.

HUSEIN (33:06):

Right. And just empowering people to bring their whole selves to work as well, I think, goes a long way.

DORON (33:11):

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

Absolutely. I mean, the fierceness to be yourself is scary. If you're not sure that, that's going to be accepted if you're not sure that people aren't going to frown upon your differentness. But I have found, I mean, I learned it through training as a coach, 15 years ago, just throw the spaghetti against the wall and see if it sticks. People will forgive if it was a clumsy attempt.

DORON (33:35):

And what I find now, as a therapist, I sometimes go to places other people might not go, throw something out there somebody might not because my instinct inside of me is speaking and saying, this is in the space, say it out loud, see how it resonates. And if it doesn't, move on, but very often it resonates because I've slowed myself down enough to my instincts and my senses and my gut. And I think everyone is like that. Everyone has internal wisdom that they're afraid to show because people might think they're weird. But God bless the freaks. Those of us who are freaks, change the world. You know what I mean?

HUSEIN (34:22):

One of the last things I just want to touch on is we've talked a lot about, in passing about strategies that people can do to improve their mental health. I mean, particularly in the legal fashion. So for example, you mentioned, getting enough sleep, being more deliberate about how you use your time, not trying to be perfect. Are there any other specific practices that you recommend to your clients, in terms of improving their own mental health?

DORON (34:48):

Sure. I mean, the sleep is really a very important one. I've always put that at the top of my list because it's so fundamental, it's so straightforward. And yet, it's the thing that gets short shrift so much. So sleep is actually sometimes a little bit more complex than we think, because sleep hygiene includes all kinds of things like not having back lit screens, like phones or televisions in your bedroom, getting news alerts at 3:00 AM that you absolutely must let your phone light up for you at 3:00 AM. That's not healthy. Your brain needs the message that it's dark and it's sleeping, it's sleep time.

HUSEIN (35:27):

And that deep sleep as well.

DORON (35:29):

Absolutely. And that's also affected by substance use proximate to when you go to sleep or substances like alcohol or caffeine. So people shouldn't be ingesting those within two or three hours before sleep and having your bed be a place for sleep, don't work in your bed. Let your brain connect bed with sleep and darkness with sleep and time. You should have very set times for sleep when you go to bed and when you wake up, same time every day, even on the weekend so that your circadian rhythms are in rhythm.

DORON (36:04):

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

So there's some examples. If you look up the concept of sleep hygiene, there's lots of good information on best practices for sleep, but sleep is important. Social support is very, very important. Not being that isolated person that I mentioned earlier, that person, who's afraid to show who they are.

DORON (36:22):

We need people. We need to share our lives with people, both in terms of sharing our distress, but also sharing fun and love and everything else. We need to be connected with people. So having a social support network, whether that's family, whether that's high school friends, whether that's a professional group that, Canadian Bar Association, Advocate's Society, Criminal Lawyers Association.

DORON (36:46):

Find your people. Black Students Association, RODA, local law associations, in smaller communities. Find your people find community. Because when you find community in a world that's connected, boy, are we unconnected or disconnected? So finding community allows you to feel like you belong somewhere, allows you to share who you are and also help people. That kind of social availability and social belonging is so important to mental health.

HUSEIN (37:19):

And I'm sure a lot of people would say that. I would agree with that, but also would say that it's become a lot more difficult to do that in the last couple years, due to the pandemic.

DORON (37:29):

Absolutely.

HUSEIN (37:29):

So what do people do if, I say if, but what do people do when they feel so disconnected and are stuck at home and anxious about getting the virus?

DORON (37:39):

They do what they can do, which is in many cases, virtual options. And only so much of that because you can't sit and stare at a screen all day. You have meetings and court appearances all day on Zoom and then you want to have drinks with your friends on Zoom. It might not be the greatest thing. So maybe you just do it by phone.

HUSEIN (37:59):

Right.

DORON (37:59):

It's not easy. The hope is that we're nearing a time, given the fact that we've been able to have more face-to-face interactions where people are being at least creative about those and people are mitigating as much as possible. It's been a unique, difficult time the last couple of years. No one has just cruised their way through the pandemic.

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

DORON (38:20):

It's made everything harder for most people. It often hasn't been the primary stressor for people, but it has been there present with everything else people are doing, work from home, fear about health, family tensions, all of that. Lots more people are drinking than were drinking before the pandemic. So there's lots of ways that it's affected people.

DORON (38:45):

The Serenity Prayer says, "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." We work with what we can't change and we find the things we can. We find the places where we have agency,

DORON (39:00):

... where we have the ability to make things better for ourselves. Sometimes there are more ways that we can make things better than we even anticipate.

DORON (39:10):

One more thing I should mention, by the way. As part of social support, I want to also suggest professional support.

HUSEIN (39:17):

I was just going to-

DORON (39:18):

There you go. I wanted to make sure that people know. Every jurisdiction in Canada has a lawyer assistance program. When I say lawyer assistance, it often includes law students. In Ontario, it includes paralegals and immediate family members. I'll give you the example of the Ontario program because it's the one I work for, but every jurisdiction in Canada has an assistance program for legal professionals. In BC, I believe, it includes law clerks and such. Each jurisdiction has its own rules.

DORON (39:45):

The idea being, the profession, as part of what you said about things changing, the profession has realized also, the law societies have realized, it is in the interest of the administration of justice that we have a healthy profession. So the profession offers these assistance programs at no cost. They are confidential programs. In Ontario, we're funded by the Law Society of Ontario and LAWPRO, but they don't know who calls us ever. No personal information is shared. We reassure people about confidentiality. That's important because legal professionals are very much cautious about who's going to know about their personal stuff. We don't share personal information. So it's a safe place to call. We're happy to say it's a very used program. People use our program actively. We know that those concerns are surmounted very often.

DORON (40:41):

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

What they get are things like professional counselors, professional therapists like myself. We have three former lawyers on staff as therapists in Ontario. They have counseling. They have a peer support program with lawyers and paralegals who have been through their own life challenges who have offered themselves as support person for other members of the profession. There are other peer support programs in Canada. There's a very robust one in BC. Just someone to talk to. Not someone who's going to give you advice or fix your problems, but who's going to listen. Having someone in the profession sitting across the table from a lawyer who has dealt with addiction to alcohol and is in recovery and is stable and you're struggling with your alcohol use, and here you have this person who's not judging you, who's compassionate, sitting across from you or on a phone call or on a Zoom call with you, who is not judging you, who is offering you also not just that compassion, but also that hope that recovery's possible because they've gotten to a better place.

DORON (41:42):

We match people on the basis of all kinds of affinities, whether it be BIPOC status, LGBTQ+ status, culture, geography of a different part of the province, the type of law they practice. Primarily, we match on the basis of the issue the person is struggling with. The person struggling with depression will be matched by someone who has experience with depression. The person struggling with bipolar disorder will be matched with someone who has experienced bipolar disorder, etc. The idea being they're not alone. They have a person on an ongoing basis that they can talk to who gives them support and validation, and they're not alone. Then it also includes all kinds of other EAP supports, like nutritional counseling. They can look that up.

DORON (42:27):

Our website is [myassistplan.com](http://myassistplan.com). I'll even give the phone number, if you don't mind. (855) 403-8922. That's the Ontario number. If you go on the Canadian Bar Association website, their wellness site, they have a list of all the lawyer assistance programs across Canada. If you look up lawyer assistance and the province name, you'd probably find it in Google, quite frankly.

HUSEIN (42:47):

Perfect. For people who are driving or jogging, we'll put all the links on the website and on the podcast handle as well.

DORON (42:53):

Great. Great.

HUSEIN (42:54):

Last question, Doron. You've talked about a lot of issues, and a lot of your day-to-day job seems to be speaking about these difficult problems people are facing on the mental health area. So that being said, do you have reason to be optimistic about where we're going in terms of this mental health issue within the legal profession? Is there a light at the end of the tunnel, do you think?

DORON (43:17):

Oh my goodness, yes.

**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

HUSEIN (43:19):

Why do you say that?

DORON (43:20):

Well, I believe in momentum. So progress, not perfection. I don't believe that if we're not there yet, we'll never be there. I believe that we progress. If the direction is good, I'm going to be optimistic because we're going in the direction that is positive.

DORON (43:36):

The newer generations that are coming up are much more open to these issues than generations like mine. The professions are becoming more open, and the law schools are becoming more open, and the society is becoming more open. Of course, there is pushback in certain areas, but the fact that we have all of this momentum in one direction means that the challenges we have along the way that we still need to work on are not a reason to be pessimistic. They're a reason to work on those challenges, too. We work on them as they show themselves. But the direction is a positive direction. It's slower than I'd like, but slow is better than not at all, or even going backwards.

DORON (44:22):

It's interesting. I've been doing this, as I said, about 15 years just in the lawyer assistance field before I ever was a lawyer or a law student, or after. I'm still, as you probably can tell, very passionate about this, because it's doable. I see the results. I see on a day-to-day basis as a therapist working with legal professionals that when they learn to give themselves a break, when they learn to feel like there's nothing wrong with them, they're just going through a difficult time and they need support, I see the results. I see clouds lift. I see weights come off of their back. I see progress in their careers.

DORON (45:04):

Sometimes the progress is changing the area of law or the firm you work with. Or sometimes the progress is the progress I did, which was leaving law together. That's absolutely an option. It's people becoming more and more of themselves and accepting of themselves. That's unidirectional to me. That's the more you know of yourself, the more you're comfortable with yourself, you can't go back.

HUSEIN (45:28):

Great. Well, Doron, I want to thank you so much for taking the time to speak to me and us today. In terms of reasons to be optimistic, I think people like you who are being so candid about speaking about these issues, going a long way. A lot of the themes you mentioned have resonated with me personally. I mean, you talk about perfectionism, and I'll ... You can probably guess how much time I spend into investing into this recording, this interview, and reading all the articles and the notes. But yeah, yeah. I think a lot of the ideas you say may sound intuitive, but the fact that they're not being implemented speaks a lot as well. So again, really appreciate your time. Look forward to staying in touch in the future.

DORON (46:04):

Thank you so much. I'm so glad to be here.



**Lawyered Podcast – Bonus Ep 04 (Preview)**  
**Mental Health in the Legal Profession ft. Doron Gold**  
**Episode Transcript**

HUSEIN (46:11):

That's a wrap on this preview of Lawyered Unplugged. Thanks for listening. I hope you enjoyed what you heard today. If you want to hear the full 75-minute version of this episode, you can check out [lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon](http://lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon) to learn how to do just that. If you become a patron of the show, you'll also be able to hear a bunch of our other bonus episodes that have focused on a variety of topics, ranging from community building and finding purpose in the public sector and the lifestyle of the in-house counsel, and a lot more to come in the future. Of course, there's a bunch of other bonus awards that are available beyond access to the bonus episodes, and these are all initiated to help improve the show and make it more accessible to more people. If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, you can learn more at the crowdfunding website, which is [lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon](http://lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon). That's [lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon](http://lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon), and we'll throw that link up in our show notes as well.

HUSEIN (47:10):

Our guest for today was Doron Gold, and you can learn more about him on his website, which is the [thelawyertherapist.com](http://thelawyertherapist.com). He's also very active on Twitter, and his handle is [@doronjgold](https://twitter.com/doronjgold).

HUSEIN (47:23):

One of the key resources that Doron mentioned in our interview is called the Member Assistance Program, or M-A-P, for lawyers and paralegals. It's provided across the country. In Ontario, the MAP, or M-A-P, is a confidential service that's funded by and fully independent of the Law Society of Ontario and LAWPRO. The MAP provides secure, single sign-on, or telephone access to counseling, coaching, online resources, and peer volunteers. There's a lot more information online. Their website is [myassistplan.com](http://myassistplan.com) and there got resources across the country, of course. But in Ontario, the phone number is 1 (855) 403-8922. There's more information there and even on the Canadian Bar Association page as well. Of course, we'll throw all the links on our website, which is [lawyeredpodcast.com](http://lawyeredpodcast.com).

HUSEIN (48:20):

Our sound editing work is managed by Solomon Krause-Imlach and our website is maintained by Steve Demelo. On the unlikely chance that you're not already doing this, do us a favor and do yourself a favor and just subscribe to our podcast for free on iTunes or your favorite podcast app. You can also follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, or on Twitter. Our Twitter handle is [@LawyeredPodcast](https://twitter.com/LawyeredPodcast) 00:48:43. We've got a bunch more episodes and content coming up next year in 2022, so stay tuned. Until then, keep it legal.