

LAWYERS Assistance

By J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell

THE MIRACLES OF RECOVERY

At the Lawyers Assistance Program (LAP), I routinely receive heartfelt expressions of gratitude for the work we do. I recently obtained approval from a totally confidential LAP participant to anonymously share with you excerpts of that participant's recent sobriety report. It is a candid, behind-the-scenes look at LAP-assisted recovery.

The following submission chronicles an alcoholic lawyer's plunge into darkness and the path taken back into the light. Many others in our profession have successfully walked similar paths and literally saved their lives by so doing. In reading the account below, it is best to keep in mind that not one of us is immune. Any one of us can be beset with alcoholism or addiction at some point in our lives. With that said, through the eyes of a person who confidentially reached out to LAP, here is how the miracle of recovery unfolded:

I first heard about the LAP, Inc. from a friend and fellow legal practitioner. I had just failed to meet a very important deadline and was in trouble. Instead of making the same old excuses and trying to lie my way through the problem, I decided it was time I came clean with someone, with everyone. I told my friend that I had been on a five-day drinking binge that took me across the state of Louisiana. I also explained that during those five days, I decided I was through with practicing law and would just drink the rest of my life away. As it turned out, my friend understood the depths of addiction firsthand by way of his own loved ones who had fought the disease. Then that friend did something I will always be thankful for — he put me in touch with the LAP and Buddy Stockwell.

When I contacted the LAP in 2011, I really had no idea what it was or what

Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (LAP)

Your call is absolutely confidential
as a matter of law.

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being involved in the LAP entailed. I was immediately given hope and the LAP referred me to an addiction assessment and treatment program. I think it is important to relay my mindset at that point in time. I had hit bottom. The best description I ever heard of an alcoholic's hitting bottom is that the next thing that the alcoholic person is about to lose due to drinking is more important to them than alcohol.

I was about to throw my legal career away and literally lose everything. If my drinking continued, I would ruin my relationship with my spouse, miss out on seeing my children grow up, and very likely drink myself to a painful death. I was at the crossroads. I was willing to go to any lengths to get sober. Soon after completing the treatment program, I voluntarily entered into monitoring with the LAP.

My thoughts at the time were that even though my situation was totally confidential, and no one was requiring me to be monitored by the LAP, I entered into LAP monitoring anyway as "insurance" on myself. I wanted to put in place every incentive possible to stay sober. Being involved in the LAP gave me everything I wanted and then some. It was difficult to comply with monitoring at first; I missed a few drug screening check-ins and complained about the costs of drug screens and such. I also had to make the time to actively become involved in

all aspects of recovery, stay sober, and work hard on making progress in my early recovery. After a few months, I began to deeply appreciate what the LAP monitoring program required me to do.

The LAP also did something else great for me; it put me in direct contact with other people in the legal profession who also had experiences with alcoholism. I now have people I can turn to who can relate to me and understand what it's like to be an alcoholic attorney. To me, nothing has been more important in my recovery than the people in recovery I have met and the wisdom they have shared. The LAP has been a major part of my success in sobriety.

Since that first day I reached out to the LAP, many miracles have taken place. My family is proud of me and I now enjoy being there for them in a loving, healthy, sober manner. I am also a very productive attorney who serves clients well. My future is bright again. I will always remain a supporter and friend of the LAP. Thank you LAP for helping save my life.

Miracles of recovery often begin very simply: the person in pain genuinely surrenders and honestly reaches out for help. If you are ready to ask for life-saving help, call LAP at (866)354-9334 or email LAP@louisianalap.com. It is totally confidential and you do not have to give your name.

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