BUILDING AND MAINTAINING SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN JUDICIAL OFFICERS AND THEIR LOVED ONES

Hon. Jeremy Fogel (ret.)
Executive Director
Berkeley Judicial Institute
SOURCES OF JUDICIAL STRESS

- TOO MANY CASES
- EXPOSURE TO TRAUMATIC OR EMOTIONALLY-CHARGED SITUATIONS
- POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PRESSURES, PARTICULARLY IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES OR VIA SOCIAL MEDIA
- CONCERNS ABOUT SECURITY AND SAFETY
- ISOLATION
- CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS: "COMPLAINING" IS INAPPROPRIATE BECAUSE HAVING THE JOB IS A PRIVILEGE
- TENDENCY OF MANY JUDICIAL OFFICERS TO BE PERFECTIONISTS
- TENDENCY OF MANY JUDICIAL OFFICERS TO AVOID EMOTIONAL CONFLICT
SIGN OF CHRONIC JUDICIAL STRESS

- Preoccupation with work
- Emotional distance, moodiness, impatience
- Insomnia
- Perseveration (repeating the same narrative over and over)
- Increased use of alcohol or other substances
- Physical manifestations (hypertension, compromised immune system resulting in frequent illness)
SOURCES OF STRESS FOR FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS

- LESS SATISFYING DAY TO DAY COMPANIONSHIP
- DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL CHANGES
- SECURITY AND SAFETY CONCERNS
- POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PRESSURES, PARTICULARLY IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES OR VIA SOCIAL MEDIA
- LACK OF FAMILIARITY WITH JUDICIAL OR LEGAL CONTEXT
- NOT KNOWING WHAT TO SAY OR HOW TO HELP
COPING STRATEGIES—ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- AUTHENTICITY: BEING HONEST AND CONSISTENT
- EMPATHY: SEEING THE WORLD AS ANOTHER SEES IT
- COMPASSION: LETTING YOUR CARING SHOW
- APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES: KNOWING THAT YOU CAN’T FIX EVERYTHING AND NOT TRYING TO DO SO
COPING STRATEGIES—COMMON PITFALLS

- LACK OF CANDOR: SAYING THINGS YOU DON’T BELIEVE

- IDENTIFICATION: THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU WOULD DO RATHER THAN ABOUT WHAT MAKES SENSE FOR ANOTHER PERSON TO DO

- TRYING TO DO TOO MUCH: TRYING TO FIX EVERYTHING OR TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANOTHER PERSON’S CHOICES

- DOING TOO LITTLE: MINIMIZING A PROBLEM OR BEING NAIVELY REASSURING
COPING STRATEGIES—ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- ACTIVE LISTENING
  Drawing out and reflecting back

- DETACHED CONCERN
  Being non-judgmental while exercising good judgment

- EMOTIONAL REGULATION
  Noticing how you feel, holding rather than suppressing your response, and expressing emotion when helpful to the relationship
THINKING FAST AND SLOW

- SYSTEM ONE:
  INTUITIVE, REACTIVE, SPONTANEOUS
  GENUINE, BUT PRONE TO UNCONSCIOUS BIASES AND ASSUMPTIONS

- SYSTEM TWO:
  REFLECTIVE, REASONED, DELIBERATE
  NOT ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE IN EMOTIONALLY-CHARGED SITUATIONS,
  BUT CAPACITY CAN BE INCREASED THROUGH MINDFULNESS AND
  OTHER ATTENTION-BUILDING PRACTICES
MINDFULNESS

- Being in the present instead of the past or the future
- Limiting the effects of System One and giving System Two more space in which to function
- Creating space for dealing with difficult conversations or situations
- Allowing one to choose one’s response, including expression of empathy and compassion
HUMILITY

- THIS IS HARD WORK
- YOU WILL DISAPPOINT YOURSELF OR YOUR LOVED ONE REPEATEDLY
- FORTUNATELY, YOU WILL HAVE MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE AND LEARN