

## Depression

Whether depression fosters drinking or drinking fosters depression is the subject of recent research at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Based on a group of 936 people studied, the general conclusion seems to be that women who are depressed for two to three years are more apt to drink to excess and men who drink to excess for two to three years are apt to become depressed. Drinking (or drugging) to excess is depressing enough; recognizing yourself as an alcoholic or an addict sounds even more depressing. So I thought.

Thinking didn't make the depression or the drinking change. At seventeen I was depressed. Years of drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco and marijuana -- all to excess -- didn't change that. I was simply older, depressed and alcoholic. Such substances didn't make me any less anxious, any less afraid, or any more brave or creative. And stopping didn't either. Quitting drinking and smoking, however, did cheer me up in that I had fewer things to worry about and it was cheering not to be actively killing myself on a daily basis. No term paper, exam, client or case -- nobody and nothing -- is worth doing that to yourself.

I was lucky. A few years ago, I showed up at the Bar Association one day visibly depressed. I was crying. The sympathetic receptionist ushered me to an empty conference room and gave me the number of someone who could help me. Even though I had gone to a counselor for years, I met with the counselor, was given assistance, and after a few months, realized that I had an alcohol problem and that I couldn't continue to drink. The Bar Association referred me to a member of Lawyers Helping Lawyers who told me about regular meetings and helped me with my billings. I started going to an attorney/law student Alcoholics Anonymous group on a weekly basis.

For those of you who think you might have a problem with depression or substance abuse, help is available. For confidential assistance, call Pat Spataro, NYSBA LAP Director, at 1-800-255-0569.