



## COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### **Back to School**

*“A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor.” ~Franklin D. Roosevelt*

We are approaching the transition from summer to fall. A new school year begins, the pool is about to close, football season is upon us, and the days are getting shorter. Soon the leaves will change and the air will become crisp and cool. Fall is traditionally a season of slowing down, but the transition can actually feel hectic as we change gears and downshift from the activities of summer to the back-to-school rush.

Research shows that returning to school or not, we can all experience an increase in anxiety and its companion, depression, this time of year. Memory is a powerful tool, and the associations made between the weather and events that occurred in our past mean that both can be “triggers” for the feelings we had during the events. For example, if you experienced something traumatic (death of a loved one, a break-up, a physical injury, etc.) in October, your brain will pair the feelings you experienced with the “feel” of that time of year. During the anniversary of the event(s), when you feel the October weather and see the leaves changing again the next year, you could experience anxiety, stress, depression, anger, and a multitude of other emotionally-charged responses even though the event is over. Alternatively, if there is a stressful or anxiety producing event that repeats itself for years at the same time each year, such as the return to school, that can become a strong imprint on our memory.

Regardless of our chronological age, all law students have had years of experience going “back to school” and all of the feelings and emotional responses associated with it this time of year. What does this time of year mean for you? Did you enjoy getting on that school bus in grade school? What about high school? How about heading back to college? Most likely you have mixed feelings for this time of year. In order to create new and more positive associations, we need to find ways during this transitional time to have fun and enjoy ourselves.

When we have fun, we release the healthiest chemicals in our body, including endorphins. When released, endorphins reduce our perception of physical and psychological pain or stress. They ward off anxiety, depression, and improve sleep. And guess what - they make you feel HAPPY, which in turn boosts your immune system, increases intimacy, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress.

How can you release endorphins? Simple.

1. Laugh: At yourself, a movie, a TV show, a funny or ironic situation happening around you, with friends, roommate(s), family, or your significant other. JUST LAUGH MORE! Challenge yourself to laugh at least 10 times in a day. See what happens.
2. Eat chocolate: We all know that dark chocolate is best, but pretty much any kind will boost your mood. Just watch the quantity. As with most things, moderation is the key!
3. Love: Intimacy with a partner/spouse releases massive quantities of endorphins. Single? Not to worry. Intimacy with friends and family works to release happy chemicals in your body too.
4. Listen to music: Make sure it is a style that you enjoy, and your body and mind will thank you.
5. Eat spicy foods: Eating spicy foods, such as chilis, cause the body to release endorphins to override the momentary painful sensation on the tongue.
6. Meditation: Sitting quietly and focusing only on your breath for a few minutes or better yet, an hour a day allows our ever-working legal minds to REST. The body will reward you for it.
7. Acupuncture, Massage, and Exercise: Our bodies reward us when we move them. Holistic methods like acupuncture and massage help move stagnant tissue in the body and exercise moves muscles.
8. Laugh: Oh, we already mentioned this one. Probably because it is the most important. For more information about how “laughter is the best medicine,” click on the link below:

[http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor\\_laughter\\_health.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health.htm)

Your brain and body are tired. Reward them with some endorphins today and create positive associations with this time of year!

*By Sarah Myers, JD, LMFT, LAC  
Clinical Director, Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program  
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