

The Cost of Composure

High-Functioning Depression
&
Anhedonia

Judicial Conference 2025

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The Unique Emotional Labor of the Judiciary

- Chronic exposure to human suffering without the ability to express personal reactions.
- Isolation due to ethical boundaries limiting social or emotional support.
- Perfection pressure knowing a misstep could have impactful consequences.
- Suppression of personal bias or emotion, even in the face of injustice.
- Constant decision-making with incomplete information and impactful outcomes.

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**Sometimes, depression doesn't look
like despair.**

It looks like achievement.

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Comparison: Burnout, Classic Depression, and HFD

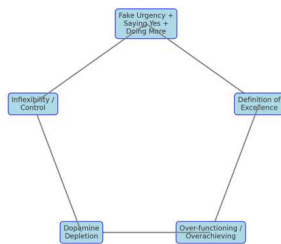
Condition	Core Symptoms	Functional Impact	Key Differentiator
Burnout	Exhaustion, cynicism	Work-specific dysfunction	Resolves with rest/time away (e.g. weekend)
Classic Depression	Hopelessness, withdrawal	Global impairment	Visible symptoms: bedridden, tearful, unable to complete tasks
High-Functioning Depression	Low-grade sadness, detachment, fatigue	Outwardly successful, inwardly depleted	Hidden behind competence

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How We Get Here

High-Functioning Depression (HFD)

Driven need to impact / create / build =



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Understanding Anhedonia

Anhedonia is the inability to experience pleasure.

It's a key symptom of High-Functioning Depression, where individuals:

- Feel emotionally flat or disconnected
- No longer enjoy hobbies, people, or activities once loved
- Feel guilty or confused by their own numbness
- Are often outwardly successful but inwardly joyless

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What others observe

- Laughing and joking
- Socially engaged
- Responsible and caring
- Always busy

What is experienced internally

- Difficulty showing emotions
- Sense of loneliness
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Emotionally empty
- Distracted from distress

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your brain isn't broken. It's overused and under-res

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Go have FUN

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Surviving vs. Thriving Framework

Surviving	Thriving
Outward-focused	Inward-focused
Reactive	Curious
People-pleasing	Creative
Rigid	Boundary-aware
Adding	Letting go
Doing	Being

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The THRIVE Model: From Overachievement to Sustainable Well-Being

T — Tune inward: Listen to your inner state, not just external demands

H — Honor limits: Boundaries create space for vitality

R — Replenish joy: Fun, creativity, and pleasure are medicine

I — Inquire with curiosity: Open to new stories and perspectives

V — Value 'being' over 'doing': Your worth is not your workload

E — Engage support: You were not meant to do this alone

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