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The Pathology of Resilience:  
**Turning Stress into Success**

by Gray Robinson, Esq.



## About Presenter Gray Robinson

**Gray Robinson, Esq.** is a third-generation trial attorney who specialized in family law and civil litigation for 27 years in his native North Carolina. Burned out, he quit in 2004 and has spent the next 16 years doing extensive research and innovative training to help others facing burnout and personal crises to heal. He has taught wellness, transformation and health internationally to hundreds of private clients for years. In 2017, at the age of 64, using the tools and strategies he learned, Gray passed the Oregon bar exam and is again a licensed attorney focused on helping lawyers facing stress, anxiety, addiction, depression, exhaustion and burnout. He has published numerous articles on stress management and well being in the ABA Journal and other legal magazines. You can learn more about his lawyer coaching work by visiting [www.LawyerLifeline.net](http://www.LawyerLifeline.net) and [www.Elevateyourmindcoaching.com](http://www.Elevateyourmindcoaching.com).

## Question 1

What are 5 things  
you see, feel or think  
about me right now?

## Question 2

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 as terrible and 10 as perfect, how would you rate...

- (a) Your career
- (b) Your finances
- (c) Your intimate relationships (including sex life)
- (d) Your social relationships
- (e) Your physical health
- (f) Your physical appearance
- (g) Your satisfaction level, and
- (h) Your stress level

# PAVLOV WAS RIGHT

# LIFE

PLEASURE

PAIN

What is your **definition**  
**of resilience?**





What is your **definition**  
**of success?**

What do you hate  
about **your career?**

What is your **greatest**  
**source of strength?**

# Strength vs Vulnerability

- Your greatest source of strength is paradoxically your greatest vulnerability.
- We become attached to our source of strength and if anything happens to it, it becomes a source of vulnerability.

# Success Definition:

- “Success” refers to life in its abounding fullness of everything you desire: Money, Freedom, Love, Influence, Respect.
- “Success” signifies a contrast to feelings of lack, disappointment, emptiness, and dissatisfaction, and such feelings may motivate a person to seek change in their life.

# Blocks to Success

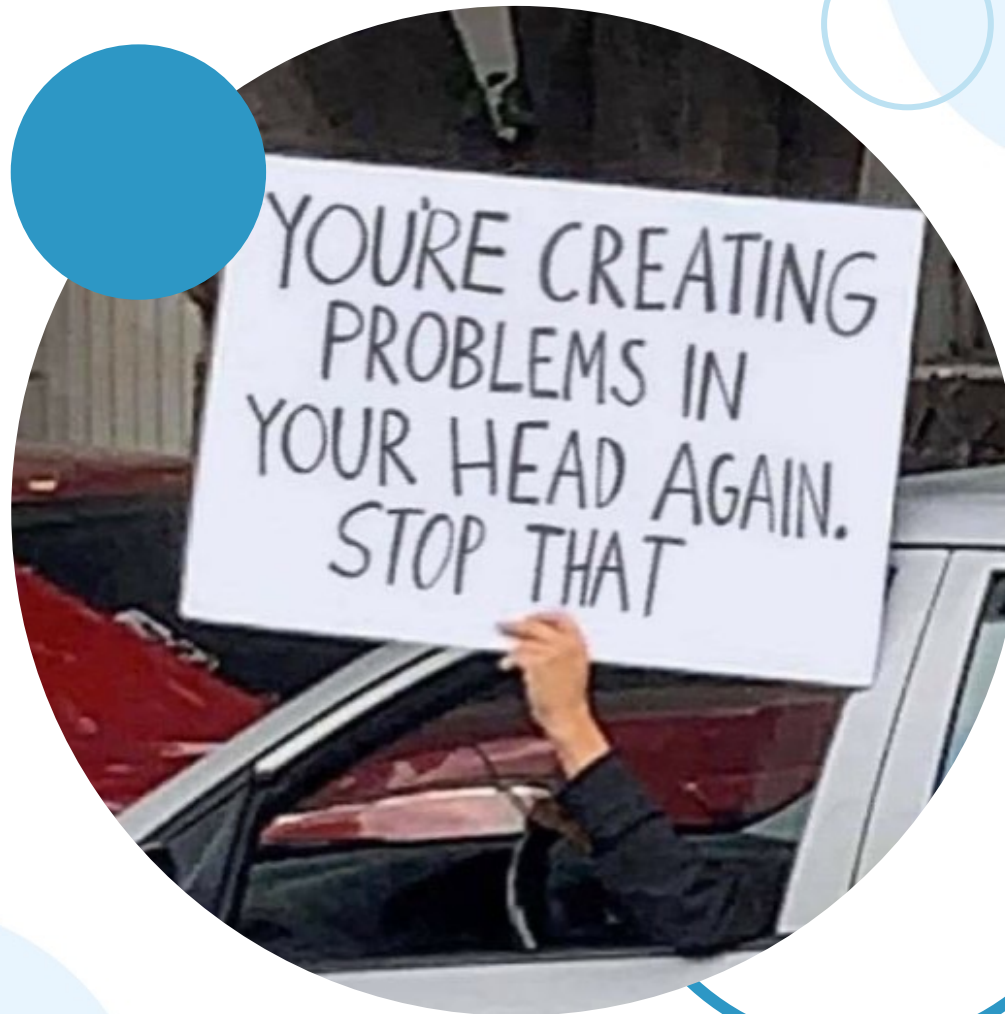
- Not willing to change or look at things differently
- Don't know the how
- Scattered, overwhelmed or confused
- Exhaustion, conflict, rigidity

# I Understand! When I burned out...

- I regularly worked 100+ hours a week.
- I was divorced twice.
- My father and two brothers were extremely successful lawyers.
- I had two lawsuit pending against me.
- My partner share was going down while my gross receipts were going up.
- I won a \$1,000,000 verdict in federal court without any litigation support.
- I was in and out of sobriety.
- Practicing law was no longer fun and was a burden.

What is keeping you  
from enjoying your  
**life and career?**





If you're happy and you know it, overthink.

If you're happy and you know it, overthink.

If you're happy and you know it,

**Give your brain a chance to blow it.**

If you're happy and you know it, overthink.

# What is Burnout?

Burnout is mental, emotional and/or physical exhaustion caused by stress that results in decreased work performance and satisfaction.

# Stages of Burnout

- 1 Honeymoon Phase: high levels of excitement, motivation, satisfaction, commitment, energy and creativity and compulsion to prove oneself.
- 2 Inability to stop focusing on work.

# Stages of Burnout

- 3 Neglecting Needs: sleep, food and social interaction is ignored.
- 4 Conflict Detachment: Problems are denied, constant stress begins feelings of panic.

# Stages of Burnout

- 5 Reordering of values where work is only focus. Health, relationships and relaxation are sacrificed.
- 6 Denial of conflicts: intolerance, blame and judgment affected.

# Stages of Burnout

- 7 Withdrawal: Social interaction diminishes.
- 8 Possible use of drugs and alcohol increases.
- 9 Behavior Changes: Family and friends are concerned.

# Stages of Burnout

- 10 Loss of self: self value and respect disappears.
- 11 Depression: exhaustion, loss of direction, life is meaningless, daily life is purposeless or listless, “going through the motions”.
- 12 Mental, emotional or physical collapse



# Burnout Questions

- On a scale of 1-10, how burnt out are you?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much time do you spend worrying or obsess about work?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much do you self-medicate?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much do you think about quitting?

Burnout

# Causes of Burnout

- Predisposition
- Trauma
- Perfectionism
- Internal Critic

# Predisposition

- Attorneys are highly motivated people driven to achieve justice and equity for others as well as make a living
- Many have witnessed something in their past that they perceived to be unfair or unjust which they wish to correct
- Many perceive that the world needs help
- White knight syndrome
- Motivated by a desire to help
- Defensive mechanisms which do not help

Burnout

# Causes of Burnout

- Predisposition
- **Trauma**
- Perfectionism
- Internal Critic

# Trauma

- Sometimes the drive for justice is caused by childhood trauma or abuse, either suffered or witnessed. The effects of unresolved trauma can eventually lead to burnout, even if you are doing everything “right”.

# Trauma

- In addition, the effects of highly tragic and heart wrenching experiences can affect lawyers, especially if they occur on a regular basis.

# Trauma

- Repeated Exposure to Traumatic Events Can Lead to **Traumatic Exposure Response**.
- Traumatic Exposure Response is the negative transformation that we experience when we are exposed to suffering, either short term or long term.
- It can lead to Vicarious Trauma, Secondary Trauma (PTSD) and Burnout.

# Trauma

- Not only can Traumatic Exposure Response effect lawyers, but it can also affect your support staff as well.



# Traumatic Exposure Response

Lawyers are just as susceptible to traumatic experiences as front-line military, first responders, police, medical personnel, or anyone regularly exposed to the brutality of life. **We suffer from traumatic exposure response because we care.**

# Warning Signs of TER

- Physical and/or emotional Exhaustion
- Tension
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Depleted immunity
- Constant Aches and Pains
- Inappropriate emotions
- Irrational fear
- Anger
- Helplessness
- Resentment/bitterness
- Substance Use Disorder
- Toxic workplaces
- Negativity
- Missing work
- Disassociation/Numbness
- Loss of satisfaction
- Inflated sense of importance and inability to delegate
- Client avoidance
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Cynicism
- Forgetfulness
- Negative self-image
- Problems with personal relationships/intimacy
- Isolation/Inability to Receive

Burnout

# Causes of Burnout

- Predisposition
- Trauma
- **Perfectionism**
- Internal Critic

# Perfectionism

- Lawyers are trained to strive for excellence. The line between a healthy desire for excellence and unhealthy perfectionism is how you feel about perfection.
- Atychiphobia
  - Fear of failure
  - 100% is failure
- Imposter Syndrome
- Inflexible
- Overly self-critical
- Inability to delegate
- Overthinking disorder (resentment)

Burnout

# Causes of Burnout

- Predisposition
- Trauma
- Perfectionism
- **Internal Critic**

# Inner Critic

- Programmed at an early age
- Unforgiving
- Exhausting
- Irrational
- Internalization of outside criticism

# Cortisol Cycle

- Weight gain and obesity
- Stretch marks
- Slow healing of infections
- Bruising
- Acne
- Headaches
- Severe fatigue and weakness
- Depression, anxiety and irritability
- High blood pressure
- Digestive issues
- Mood swings
- Sleep disorders

# Stress Addiction

- For those habituated to high levels of internal stress since early childhood, it is the absence of stress that creates unease, evoking boredom and a sense of meaninglessness.
- People may become addicted to their own stress hormones-adrenaline and cortisol.
- To such persons, stress feels desirable, while its absence feels like something to be avoided.



# Cognitive (Implicit) bias

- Perceived threat (Negative Bias)
- Good vs bad
- Perception is projection

# Coping Mechanisms-Negative

- Disassociate
- Distancing
- Shut down
- Distract
- Medicate

# Ethical Considerations

## RULE 1.1 COMPETENCE

A lawyer shall not handle a legal matter that the lawyer knows or should know he or she is not competent to handle without associating with a lawyer who is competent to handle the matter. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

# Ethical Considerations

## RULE 1.3 DILIGENCE

A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

# Ethical Considerations

## RULE 1.16 DECLINING OR TERMINATING REPRESENTATION

(a) Except as stated in paragraph (c), a lawyer shall not represent a client or, where representation has commenced, shall withdraw from the representation of a client if:

(2) the lawyer's physical or mental condition materially impairs the lawyer's ability to represent the client...

# Ethical Considerations

## RULE 7.1 COMMUNICATIONS CONCERNING A LAWYER'S SERVICES

A lawyer shall not make a false or misleading communication about the lawyer or the lawyer's services. A communication is false or misleading if it contains a material misrepresentation of fact or law, or omits a fact necessary to make the statement considered as a whole not materially misleading. Such communications include but are not limited to a statement that is likely to create an unjustified expectation about results the lawyer can achieve; a statement that states or implies that the lawyer can achieve results by means that violate the Rules of Professional Conduct or other law; or a statement that compares the lawyer's services with other lawyers' services, unless the comparison can be factually substantiated.

# Strategies to **Avoid Burnout**

When would be the best time for you  
**to change your results?**



# Set Your Priorities

- What would you do if you had one day to live?
- What would you do if you had one month to live?
- What would you do if you had one year to live?

# What is your foundation built on?

- What is your definition of success?
- Where are your priorities and behaviors?
- What is your self-image?
- Are you emotionally mature? (emotional maturity is your ability to recognize and heal your predisposition, trauma, perfectionism, and internal critic)

# Strategies-Healthy Foundation

- Takes care of health
- Seeks things that are invigorating (hobbies, nature, fun)
- Get needs met in all areas of life (balance)
- Breath, meditate, connect, know what you want
- Surrounded self with like minded people
- Emotional maturity is your ability to recognize and heal your predisposition, trauma, perfectionism, and internal critic)

# Strategies

Two most important transformational qualities

- Confidence (Pride)
- Gratitude (Acceptance)

# Unhealthy Foundation

- Just after money and control
- Does not want to be flexible (my way or the high way)
- Often feel isolated and rejected
- In survival mechanisms they have inherited
- Want to win every fight (perfectionism)
- Controlling others to avoid hurt and disagreement
- Burnt out, broken down, holding onto trauma

# How is your foundation effecting your different areas of life?

- Career
- Money
- Health
- Relationships - Intimate/ Family/ Social
- Hobbies
- Spirituality

# Area of Life

- What did you say your definition of success was?
- Did you consider all areas of your life?
- When you set goals in only one area of life all your focus goes there, but there may be challenges in another area of life that you are unaware of and it may be affecting your definition of success.

# Prime Directives of Your Unconscious Mind

## Purposes of your Unconscious Mind

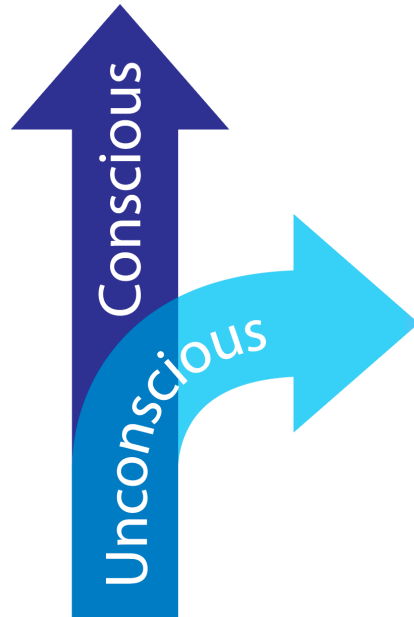
- Store and organize memories
- Represses memories with unresolved negative emotions
- Survival
- Interact with Conscious Mind



# Mindset Shift

- **Shift in Conscious mind:**
- **Short term**, takes too long, yoyo, hamster wheel, exhausting, fighting, struggling, avoiding, hard
- Goal setter
- **Long term**, faster, easier, and more fun
- Goal getter

# Conscious vs. Unconscious



Our unconscious mind can cause us to in ways that do not match our goals.

# Values: toward vs. away from

**Away from:** Going away from what you don't want, negative emotion/experience is motivating you, or you want what you don't have (focusing on lack).

**Toward:** Going toward what you want, positive emotion/experience is motivating you, it adds to your life.

- The brain does not process the word “not”
- What you focus on you will get

# What can you do?

- Self-compassion (raises adaptability)
- Get Curious
- Remember the Big Picture
- Separate Work from Self
- Find your safe space
- Team Building

# Polyvagal Exercises

- Vagus Nerve connects the brain to the body (two way street)
- Three types: Dorsal, Parasympathetic, Ventral
- Where is your stress?

# Reboot

- Reconnect
- Scheduled 5-minute breaks
- Breathe
- Touch lips

# Physical Health

- Good Health Habits
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Meditation
- Blood Test

# Take Action

- Plan your Goals/ Week
- Resolve three issues
- Humor
- Your Happy Thought





If you are suffering,  
don't white knuckle it.  
**GET HELP!**

Text the word CHANGE to  
(458.207.0895) to Receive:

- Copy of “How Big Is Your But?”
- Strategy session to apply learnings

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