



Reaching the NEXT LEVEL

WHILE I LOVE THE HOLIDAY SEASON, I was raised in a Palestinian immigrant and Islamic household that made this time of the year bittersweet for me. From an early age, I recall the excitement of my classmates who were traveling, spending time with family, or otherwise receiving enviable gifts during this season of the year. Not partaking in the same festivities felt isolating as my family traditions did not usually align with those here. Today, I consider how other lawyers may also feel isolated based on their lived experiences, geography, practice, or any other reason that they may feel that way.

The holiday season, like a well-designed game, has its unique challenges and rewards. But for lawyers, particularly those feeling isolated, it can sometimes feel like we're playing through a difficult level without a cooperative partner. However, managing isolation is essential to our mental health and our ability to practice law, and viewing it through a gaming mindset can be helpful.

Imagine approaching isolation like a game, where each step to care for your mental well-being is part of leveling up. In the same way that in-game avatars have health bars, our mental health requires constant monitoring, healing, and attention. Feeling isolated is like running low on health, but there are power-ups and allies around if we know where to look. Just as in a game, where players replenish energy or find safe zones to recover, lawyers can implement strategies to rebuild and strengthen their mental resilience over the holidays and maintain their fitness to practice. The Texas Young Lawyers Association provides some of those resources on its Attorney Wellness Hub.

One important power-up is connections. For many legal professionals, the demands of the job mean long hours and high expectations, making it easy to fall out of sync with personal obligations. Like a character in a quest who gathers allies to help, we can connect with people who remind us of who we are outside of our work. These interactions help to refill our emotional energy. Joining holiday gatherings hosted by local bar associations and similar associations can also add to our network of allies and fellow professionals who understand the unique challenges we face and can offer companionship and encouragement.

Then there's the importance of taking breaks, akin to finding save points in a game. Lawyers are often conditioned to keep pushing through stress, believing that stepping away could lead to missed opportunities or unmet obligations. But, just as a well-timed save point offers a breather before tackling the next level, scheduling intentional breaks and setting boundaries is crucial. A short walk, an hour dedicated to a personal hobby, or even time spent gaming can act as a small checkpoint, letting you recharge before the next legal task.

For some, seeking professional support during the holiday season can also feel like finding a guide in a game that provides strategies to conquer difficult challenges. As Texas lawyers, we have access to confidential help and guidance through the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program and to qualified mental health professionals through the BetterHelp member benefit. These resources can help us better navigate isolation and other mental health challenges. This assistance is like being equipped with the right gear to face what lies ahead.

Finally, it's essential to remember the game's big picture: finding meaning and fulfillment beyond each holiday season's obstacles. Taking time to reflect on your own goals and values can provide a sense of purpose, like the overarching mission in a game. Perhaps it's cultivating gratitude, volunteering, or even setting personal resolutions—each step adds to a sense of accomplishment and resilience. By reframing isolation as part of the larger journey, we can move forward feeling more empowered and connected in our profession.

Just like a difficult game level, isolation is not insurmountable. By seeking out connections, establishing boundaries, finding professional support, and keeping our eyes on the mission ahead, we can build a network of resilience that sustains us not only through the holidays but also throughout the year. And like any good quest, these tools and experiences serve as reminders that we're never truly playing solo—you're part of a team that's ready to help you reach the next level.

HISHAM MASRI

2024-2025 President, Texas Young Lawyers Association

Texas Young Lawyers Association

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TEXAS LAWYERS' ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TLAP)

ATTORNEY WELLNESS HUB

BETTERHELP