

Self Assessment for Medical Malpractice Stress Syndrome

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I am involved as a defendant in litigation and I am experiencing or feeling

- Anger or irritability which is affecting my satisfaction with life
- Sense of reduction or loss of control in aspects of my work or life
- Singled out, isolation or tendency towards distancing from my peers
- Over- or under-activity relative to my usual pattern
- Anxiety or depressive symptoms
- Changes in appetite or eating habits
- Insomnia or poor quality sleep
- Changes in libido (particularly reduction)
- Emotional distancing from patients or office staff
- Tendency towards withdrawal from family, friends, group activities
- Concerns about my competence or ability to make decisions
- Hesitation to take on difficult problems or demanding patients
- Compulsion to order more testing of patients
- Less willingness to take on administrative decisions or activities
- Thoughts about changing careers or limiting practice
- Physical symptoms which are different or worse from normal
- Fatigue, or reduced energy levels
- Loss of enjoyment in practice
- Loss of interest in recreation
- Drawn towards mindless pursuits, e.g. television, internet
- Frustration that no end is in sight
- Stymied by the system from dealing directly with the problem
- Questions about value of persisting in medicine
- Intrusive thoughts or compulsions
- Alone in efforts to vindicate myself from an unfair accusation
- Helpless or hopeless to change the course of events
- Impulse to do something drastic or dangerous
- Thoughts about benefit of ending it all

Although it is normal to feel some of these things in the face of a malpractice claim, if you are experiencing as many as 5 of them, then the stress of litigation may be starting to impact your professional as well as your personal life. It is highly advisable to discuss your feelings about what is happening to you with an experienced professional, who may recommend supportive intervention. This is one of the most stressful events in the life of any physician. **If you have felt any one of the last five items, you must seek professional help immediately.**