

Legal Abuse Syndrome



Karin Huffer

LEGAL ABUSE SYNDROME (LAS) is a form of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is a psychic injury, not a mental illness. It is a personal injury that develops in individuals assaulted by ethical violations, legal abuses, betrayals, and fraud. Abuse of power and authority and a profound lack of accountability in our courts have become rampant.

The book, *Legal Abuse Syndrome* written by Karin Huffer is the result of her experiences for over twenty years as a marriage and family counsellor in private practice. What is unique about this book is that it addresses the victims of legal abuse from a psychological therapeutic perspective. The objective is to move the victim beyond their predicament into positive action and thinking. Ms. Huffer illustrates the abuses with the cases of seven victims of Legal Abuse Syndrome, detailing their pain and suffering and the various stages of the therapy they have undergone for recovery of their emotional health.

Ms. Huffer found that many victims of the legal system suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. She identified this as Legal Abuse Syndrome, brought on by the abusive and protracted litigation, prevalent in our courts. According to Ms. Huffer you may be suffering from Legal Abuse Syndrome if you feel deeply disillusioned and oppressed as a result of your experience with the legal system; if you feel you were frustrated in obtaining justice; if you feel your dreams and plans for your life were torn from you by a system that is supposedly there to protect your rights and property; if you fear that the system will defeat you at every turn and there is nothing you can do about it, and if you feel that you have been victimized several times over, by the perpetrators, by lawyers, judges, bailiffs and other court personnel. As a consequence you may suffer from tension and anxiety, recurring nightmares you may feel emotionally an physically exhausted, numb, disconnected and vulnerable.

A central point of Ms. Huffer's book is that the victims in America are not only assaulted by crime, but also by the abuses of power and authority administered by tax dollars intended to provide due process of law for the protection of civil rights. Ms. Huffer observes that not only does the justice system move slowly, but delays are used as strategy by attorneys to weaken their opposition economically and emotionally and to provide hefty fees for attorneys. Ms. Huffer notes that when courts fail as a consequence of officially sanctioned wrongdoing it leaves victims and vigilantes in its trail. The rage of these victims accumulates when they are not provided a satisfying place to turn to. She concludes that the enormous betrayals and inefficiencies that make up bureaucratic post-crime experiences are literally attacking the emotional health of the nation. She recommends that the community of American citizens adopt the following:

1. Oppression and abuse of power are injurious to the health of the victims. Domination by abusers of bureaucratic power threatens the very functionality of the public and private sections in our country.
2. Victims are not self interested, narcissistic folks who sit around and wallow in their losses. They are courageous individuals who face their pain and care to right the wrongs. They participate in the collision of evil and good as it is classically intended in order to achieve balance. Denial is popular, but far less responsible.
3. Trust is a social staple that must be protected just as earth and water must be protected to provide for survival. When trust is damaged the community suffers and society as a whole will eventually falter and collapse (Bok). Veterans of crime must exude zero tolerance for lying in courtrooms, lying in political campaigns,

lying to cover-up, and deceptions through omission and non-performance by public officials and public servants

A new cause of action that is a new basis for lawsuits is being accepted by the courts allowing cases to proceed on claims of "organic brain injury" caused by traumatic stress. An article appeared on this on November 11, 2002 in the National Law Journal.

Harassment related emotional distress is being recognized in the work field upon which lawyers are now suing. To read the article by Joni Johnston, Psy.D. There is no reason why the same facts and reasoning should not apply to the harassment inflicted on victims in a lawsuit.