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PRIORITIZE WELLNESS: Lawyers Can Be Healthy Too

BY RICH LOMBINO, ESQUIRE, LCSW



“I have to get this work done. I’ll exercise tomorrow.” It’s likely most lawyers have said this or something similar many times. Whether it’s exercise, eating healthy, or other activities to promote good mental and physical health, they are often pushed aside for “more important” things. I have an idea: prioritize wellness.

The Reality of the Profession

We all know that practicing law can be an incredibly challenging and stressful profession. There are billable hours, complex work, deadlines, expectations of clients and supervisors, difficult opposing counsel, and many other factors. With technology, you can be connected all the time and in many cases are expected to respond to emails, messages and calls immediately, even if it’s late at night or on weekends. Plus you’re constantly checking your phone for them so even when there’s no activity, your mind is still plugged in to work.

All these and many other factors can create a highly fast-paced and intense environment. And if you couple work responsibilities with a busy personal life, it can be difficult or nearly impossible to balance and manage

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everything. Hey, I get it. When I was practicing law, there were times I prioritized work over other things. Now as a therapist specializing in helping lawyers, it’s a common theme I often hear.

Of course there’s nothing inherently wrong with working hard for long hours in pursuit of developing and maintaining a successful career. Most lawyers have been driven to achieve for many years and in some cases beginning at a young age. But at what cost? There are many possible sacrifices, including less time with significant others, children, other family, and friends. And also what I want to focus on in this article: the sacrifices to mental and physical health.

A New Perspective

When we’re on a flight, before we take off, we get a presentation of how to put on our seat belts, where the emergency exits are, and also what to do if the



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ficiently. The time you spend doing the wellness activities will be more than made up in productivity. By the way, you'll also be better significant others, parents, friends, and colleagues if you're healthy.

Tips For Prioritizing Wellness

You don't need to make drastic changes in your work schedule or lifestyle to be productive and feel better. Here's some tips to improve the way you care for yourself:

Reset your perspective. Create that mind shift that your health is important too. Prioritize yourself. If you're healthy, both in mind and body, you'll be more productive. Instead of grabbing your phone to check email right when you wake up, consider spending a couple of minutes taking some deep breaths, getting in a positive mindset and focusing on wellness for the day.

Do what has been helpful in the past. Reconnect with those activities and coping skills that worked for you to maintain good mental and physical health. Go for walks after dinner. Meditate in the morning. Journal some thoughts of gratitude. Pick up that guitar. Spend time in nature.

Try new things. You've taken stock of what you've done in the past. Now it's time to try some new ones as well. Maybe you considered a cooking class in the past and decided against it, but that was years ago. It might be helpful for you now. Give yoga another try. Create art.

Set easily achievable goals. It's taken time and effort to make the deci-

sion to change. Setting easily achievable goals and accomplishing them, rather than falling short on unrealistic ones, can result in improving your mood and building confidence. You can then make your goals more ambitious over time at a reasonable pace. For example, you used to exercise for an hour every day, but that was years ago. Maybe start out with a less rigorous workout a few times a week for 15 minutes.

Be consistent to build momentum.

If you get into a consistent groove with these activities and coping skills, you'll build momentum and have a greater chance of sustained success. You're trying to achieve long-lasting positive change. Consider using apps to track progress such as step counters or more advanced options that show and reward your progress.

Conclusion

Change can be difficult. Especially if you've been doing things a certain way for years or even decades. But it is possible. Prioritize wellness and your mental and physical health today. You can feel better and be a great lawyer. 🌱

oxygen mask deploys and we're traveling with a child. As a parent, the instinct likely would be to put the mask on the child first, and then yourself. But that's not the instructions we're given. They say to put on your mask first because if you're healthy, you're able to help those around you. Use this as an analogy when considering decisions of self-care and wellness.

It is possible to find a balance where the work gets done well while maintaining good health. Productivity can be the same and maybe even higher. Here's the key to remember: When you're healthy, you're a better and more productive lawyer. Think about the quality of your work product at 9:00 a.m. verses 9:00 p.m. Something that takes you 15 minutes in the morning may take you twice as long or longer at night. If you consistently take care of yourself, you'll be feeling better and working more ef-



Rich Lombino is a therapist and lawyer. He provides therapy to adult individuals, couples and groups regarding stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, alcohol/drug use, couples concerns, career decisions and other related issues, with a speciality of helping lawyers. You can contact him at (302) 273-0700 and info@richlombino.com and learn more at richlombino.com.

2022 Law Day Luncheon

Monday, May 2, 2022

The DSBA held its annual Law Day Luncheon on May 2 at the Hotel du Pont. Members of the Delaware Bench and Bar gathered to celebrate the 2022 Law Day Awardees: Maria Paris Newill, Esquire, recipient of the Community Service Award; Tracy Walls-Pulling, recipient of the Myrna L. Rubenstein Professional Support Recognition Award; and Dr. Sarah Falgowski, MD, Rich Lombino, Esquire, LCSW, and Alice R. O'Brien, MS, NCC, LPCMH, recipients of the Liberty Bell Award.

At the event, keynote speaker Kermit Roosevelt III, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, a former clerk for Supreme Court Justice David Souter, a member of the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court, and an award-winning author, discussed the topic of his new book *The Nation that Never Was: The Source of American Constitutional Values*. 📖



DSBA President Kathleen M. Miller, Esquire, welcomed guests to the 2022 Law Day Luncheon.



Attendees at the 2022 Law Day Luncheon, the first live Law Day event since 2019.



Rodney A. Smolla, Esquire, Dean, Professor of Law Widener University Delaware Law School introduced the keynote speaker.



Professor Kermit Roosevelt III gave the Keynote Address.



Community Service Award recipient Tracy Walls-Pulling of the Superior Court of the State of Delaware (L) with presenter The Honorable William C. Carpenter, Jr. of the Superior Court of the State of Delaware (R).



Myrna L. Rubenstein Professional Support Recognition Award recipient Maria Paris Newill, Esquire, of Heckler & Frabizzio, P.A. (R) with presenter Miranda D. Clifton, Esquire, of Heckler & Frabizzio, P.A. (L).



Liberty Bell Award recipients Alice R. O'Brien, MS, NCC, LPCMH, (L) and Rich Lombino, Esquire, LCSW (R) with presenter Carol P. Waldhauser, Executive Director Delaware Lawyers Assistance Program (C).
Not pictured: Awardee Dr. Sarah Falgowski, MD.