

# Practical Tips for Well-being

The life of a lawyer, especially a solo or small firm practitioner, is often stressful. Stress itself is not necessarily a bad thing; our body's reaction to stress actually helps us to meet the sudden demands that we face as busy lawyers. However, too much stress too often becomes chronic stress, and takes its toll on our physical, mental and emotional well-being. That, in turn, affects our personal lives and our ability to serve our clients. The trick is to eliminate some of the stressors in life and build our resiliency for the stresses we cannot change. Try to incorporate several of the following practical tips into your daily routine in an effort to help you reduce your stress and enhance your performance in the practice of law.

- Take a **REAL** lunch break: Make time at midday for exercise or invite an old friend to lunch. Catch up on business, but don't make that your primary focus. Laugh. Enjoy the time. Time away from work pays stress-reduction dividends.
- Read a good book: Find and read a book, fiction or non-fiction, on a subject that really interests you and that – this is the important part – is not connected to the law. Reading helps renew the mind and spirit!
- Get help if you need it: The fine line between “ordinary” stress and a mental health problem or addiction can be easy to miss, so it's important to tune in to how you feel. Prolonged feelings of hopelessness or unusual anger; complaints by others about your mood or behavior; and making mistakes because of stress or addiction symptoms are just a few clues that you may not be able to manage your stress on your own. There are many places you can turn for help, including to a family physician or trusted confidante. Know when to reach out.
- Make time for exercise: Exercise is one of the most effective ways to combat the effects of stress on the human body. Commit to making exercise a regular part of your schedule. You are most likely to succeed if you start with short exercise sessions three times per week, then build to longer more frequent sessions. (Since I am addressing lawyers, I have to add: “Consult your doctor before beginning a new exercise regime.”)
- Go outside: Mounting evidence suggests that exposure to the natural world improves mental health and cognition for many people. Need to brainstorm ideas for an article or an argument? Try thinking on your feet as you walk around a local park; or park farther away so that you can walk a few blocks before and after work. Spend a few hours every weekend outdoors.
- **DO SOMETHING FUN** that doesn't include alcohol, drugs or risky behavior.