

Lawyers ASSISTANCE

By Dr. Angela White-Bazile, Esq.

OFF-BALANCE?

Glance at this to-do list:

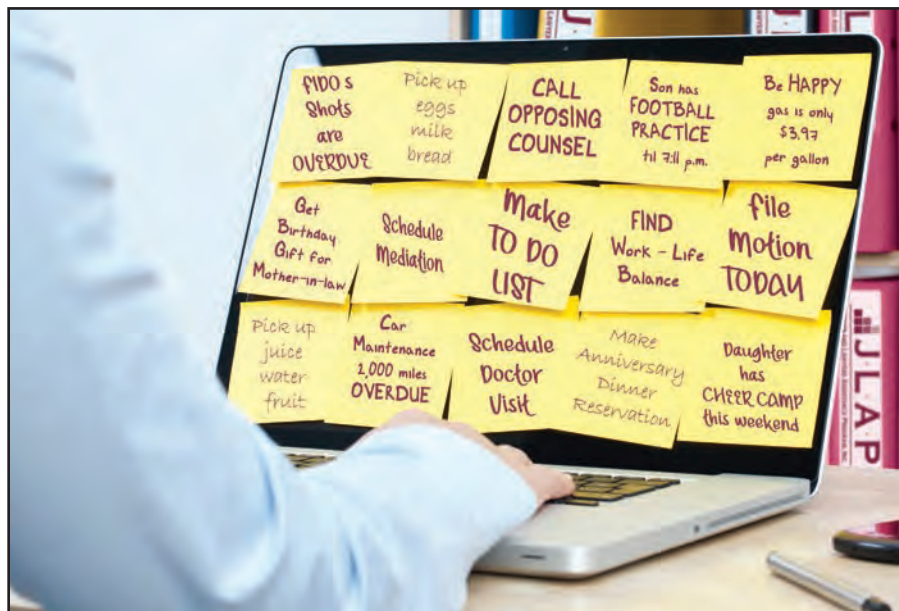
- ▶ Pick up eggs, milk, juice, bread, water, fruit
- ▶ My son has football practice until 6 p.m.
- ▶ My daughter has cheer camp this weekend
- ▶ Pet's shots are overdue
- ▶ Maintenance of car was required 2,000 miles ago
- ▶ Call opposing counsel re:
- ▶ File motion(s)
- ▶ Make anniversary dinner reservation
- ▶ Buy mother-in-law a birthday gift
- ▶ Be happy that gas is only \$3.97/gallon
- ▶ Schedule mediation and doctor's visit

Does this list look familiar?

As judges, lawyers, spouses, parents, caregivers, employers or employees, team parents, chairs or members of an organization, we wear many hats and have a never-ending to-do list. We are pulled in various directions and sometimes feel that we are not in control of our lives.

Think about how you juggle family duties, job stresses and relationship expectations? How do you feel when you do not finish what is on your to-do list? Is it even possible to have a fulfilling career and a great personal and family life?

Long hours and a demanding workload are synonymous with being a lawyer and often take precedence over everything else in our lives.¹ Even our well-being takes a back seat. Not surprisingly, time outside of work is usually spent commuting, caring for children or other dependents, preparing for a trial, waiting to receive notice of the next motion hearing, fulfilling community organizational obligations, and more that has to do with others.² You may feel



like personal time is a foreign concept or a thing of the past, but creating a work-life balance will lead to a healthier and happier you. Balance reduces stress and prevents burnout in the workplace.³

The National Institute of Mental Health defines stress as how the brain and body respond to any demand.⁴ According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, job stress is the harmful physical and emotional response when job requirements do not match the employee's capabilities, resources or needs.⁵

Numerous studies have determined that stress negatively impacts physical health and mental health; affects concentration and work productivity, and weakens our immune systems, making us susceptible to various ailments from colds to backaches to heart disease.⁶

Do you know that prolonged stress or chronic stress is one of the most common health issues in the workplace and is linked to a higher risk of depression, anxiety and insomnia?⁷ Additional research shows that chronic stress can

also double the risk of a heart attack.⁸

Furthermore, stressful work situations can lead to burnout — a specific type of work-related stress defined as a state of physical or emotional exhaustion involving a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity.⁹ Employees who consistently work overtime, whether at home or the office, are at an elevated risk of burnout.¹⁰

Research proves that burnout can cause fatigue, mood swings and a decrease in work performance.¹¹

Many of us want to feel strong on the outside and be perceived as put together and perfect. We strive to protect how others perceive us instead of being honest and admitting when we need a break to relax and recover.

Remember, we are human, and we cannot always do everything for everyone. Also remember when you say "yes" to everyone, you may be saying "no" to yourself. Steve Jobs once said, "It's only by saying 'no' that you can concentrate on things that are really important."¹² Tim Ferriss, author of "4-Hour" self-

help books, explains, “What you don’t do determines what you can do.”¹³

The first step towards better managing stress and avoiding burnout is creating a healthy work-life balance that works for you.¹⁴ Work-life balance means different things for different people because the demands of our days vary based on practice area, law firm culture, the structure of our families, and the personal and professional support we have.¹⁵

Work-life balance will not happen overnight but is a continuous process.¹⁶ We must decide our priorities to figure out what balance means to us individually.¹⁷ Stephen Covey, business professor and author of “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” stated, “The key is not to prioritize what is on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.”¹⁸ He also opined that too much time is spent on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important.¹⁹ Dr. Myles Munroe offered, “Don’t be pushed by your problems. Be led by your dreams. Govern your life by priorities not your pressures.”²⁰

Here are some tips to start making more time for yourself and your family.

1. Unplug. Mute your notifications and disconnect. Shift your full attention to your family and home life.

2. Take care of yourself. Health and happiness are the foundation for work-life balance. Make sure you are eating well, exercising, relaxing and having fun. Regular exercise reduces stress, depression and anxiety.

3. Do not overcommit and overschedule activities. Learn to say “no” and protect your personal and family time.²¹

4. When working:

- ▶ Create a designated space at home.
- ▶ Be realistic about workloads and deadlines. Ask for help when necessary.
- ▶ Take five. Small breaks at work — or on any project — will help clear your head.²²
- ▶ Tune in. Listen to your favorite music to foster concentration, reduce stress and anxiety, and stimulate creativity.²³



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While our jobs are important, our jobs should not be our entire lives, and we should prioritize the activities or hobbies that make us happy.²⁴ Work-life balance is about not allowing stress, anxiety, burnout or dissatisfaction to stand in the way of health and happiness.²⁵

Make your mental health a priority. Making time for self-care is necessary for prolonged success in your personal and professional lives. Self-care is not selfish, a waste of time or a luxury.

As lawyers, we are accustomed to advocating for others. Now is the time to advocate for ourselves and our well-being to achieve our visions of a balanced, well-lived life.²⁶

If you are struggling with stress, anxiety or burnout, I encourage you to speak with a professional. Reach out to JLAP for resources and to find the help you need. JLAP is here to serve and support you.

To learn more or seek confidential, non-disciplinary, meaningful assistance with any chemical dependency or mental, emotional or physical health issue, contact our professional clinical staff at JLAP at (985)778-0571, email jlap@louisianajlap.com, or visit our website at www.louisianajlap.com.

We are a Safe Haven of Healing.

FOOTNOTES

1. Nefra MacDonald, “Work-Life Balance for Lawyers,” Clio (July 2020), www.clio.com/blog/lawyer-work-life-balance; Marisa Sanfilippo, “How to Improve Your Work-Life Balance Today,” Business News Daily (March 3, 2020), www.businessnewsdaily.com/5244-improve-work-life-balance-today.html.

2. MacDonald, *supra* note 1.

3. Alan Kohll, “The Evolving Definition of

Work-Life Balance,” Forbes (March 27, 2018), www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2018/03/27/the-evolving-definition-of-work-life-balance/?sh=51d1e2c99ed3.

4. “5 Things You Should Know About Stress,” National Institute of Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress.

5. “Stress . . . At Work,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/99-101/default.html.

6. “Lawyer Work-Life Balance,” Lawyerist, <https://lawyerist.com/career-goals/work-life-balance>; “Work Life Balance,” Mental Health America, www.mhanational.org/work-life-balance.

7. Kohll *supra* note 3.

8. “Work Life Balance,” Mental Health America, *supra* note 6.

9. “Lawyer Work-Life Balance,” *supra* note 6; “Job burnout: How to spot it and take action,” Mayo Clinic (June 5, 2021), www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642.

10. Kohll *supra* note 3.

11. *Id.*

12. FCS, “When to say ‘no,’” FCS, Inc. (Feb. 24, 2020), www.fcspysy.com/2020/02/when-to-say-no/.

13. Tim Ferriss, “The Not-To-Do List: 9 Habits to Stop Now,” The Tim Ferriss Show (Aug. 16, 2007), <https://tim.blog/2007/08/16/the-not-to-do-list-9-habits-to-stop-now/>.

14. “Lawyer Work-Life Balance,” Lawyerist, *supra* note 6.

15. MacDonald, *supra* note 1.

16. “Lawyer Work-Life Balance,” Lawyerist, *supra* note 6.

17. MacDonald, *supra* note 1; “Lawyer Work-Life Balance,” *supra* note 6.

18. Kevin Kruse, “Stephen Covey: 10 Quotes That Can Change Your Life,” Forbes (July 16, 2012), www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2012/07/16/the-7-habits/?sh=72710c4639c6.

19. *Id.*

20. “Inspirational Quotes by Dr. Myles Munroe,” Wealth Is a Decision, <https://wealthisa-decision.com/blog/inspirational-quotes-dr-myles-munroe/>.

21. MacDonald, *supra* note 1; “Lawyer Work-Life Balance,” *supra* note 6.

22. “Lawyer Work-Life Balance,” *supra* note 6.

23. “Work Life Balance,” Mental Health America, *supra* note 6.

24. Sanfilippo, *supra* note 1.

25. “Work Life Balance,” Mental Health America, *supra* note 6.

26. MacDonald, *supra* note 1.

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