Attorney health & wellness: 10 tips for lawyers to reduce stress

Stress often goes hand-in-hand with the practice of law. Your clients rely on you for help with their businesses, families, and maybe even their freedom. It can all equate to a lot of stressful days. As explained by the ABA, attorneys work within an adversarial system. The demanding schedules and heavy workloads can result in significantly higher stress levels.

Health experts are constantly telling us about the importance of stress reduction. It not only helps you feel better physically, it also helps to boost your mood and clear your mind for greater focus and concentration. So, how do you go about reducing the strains and tensions of the day when you work in an extremely stressful profession?

Here are 10 tips you can take towards reducing your stress levels:

1. **Plan your day –** Time management is a struggle for many people, and lawyers are no exception. If you wake up each morning anxious about the day ahead, then you may have a time management problem. You know you have a million things to do, but no clue how to handle them all.Take a moment to sit down and plan your day. Make a list of everything that needs to get done and develop a strategy to make it happen. Prioritize your tasks, so you can handle the most important ones first. Some people prefer the strategy of handling their most undesirable duties first, as a tactic for avoiding procrastination. Figure out what works for you and implement it.

2. **Rely on your calendar –** Attorneys live in a constant state of "I forgot something important." It's an extremely stressful way to go through life. So, instead of trying to keep up with client meetings, court dates, and filing deadlines in your head, use a trusted calendaring system to keep track of it all and provide you with timely reminders.There are numerous electronic calendaring apps available. You can sync them

with your support staff, so you are always up-to-date on your long list of responsibilities.

3. **Music calms the savage beast –**The effects of music on your mental health are well-documented. It can influence your physiological functions by slowing the heart rate, lowering your blood pressure, and decreasing your stress hormones levels.Music really can calm the soul… and the mind too. Listen to it in the background while working or take some time out of your day to just sit and decompress. Whatever your preference, find a playlist that calms you, throw on your headphones, and let the music relax you.

4. **Spend time with family and friends –** Your personal relationships can also be stress-busting tools. Several studies have found that positive social relationships have a positive influence on the quality of life. Spending quality time with friends and family reminds you of what is truly important in life. So, when the smaller details of a busy workday start to weigh on you, you have the strength to keep a positive attitude.
5. **Embrace technology –** The marketplace is filled with tech devices and platforms to make your work life easier. From the calendaring apps that keep you on schedule to meditation apps that keep you calm, take advantage of advances in technology.
6. **Seek counseling –** Your clients come to you for your expertise when they need legal counsel. Why don't you rely on the expertise of a therapist or counselor when you need mental health assistance? Lawyers are sometimes characterized as heroes with superhuman powers. These stereotypes can make you feel as though you can handle anything by yourself, but denying the help you need can leave you overly stressed and even in poor health.Don't be afraid to seek assistance when you need it. Counselors are there to help you, just like you are there to help your clients. Remember, there is no shame in counseling. You cannot be what you need for your clients if your mental health is in disarray.

7. **Physically fit –** Strive to get some form of physical exercise most days of the week. Whether it's a full-fledged gym workout or a brisk walk around the parking lot, physical fitness helps reduce the stress that legal work can bring. If you're the kind of person who gets bored with working out, consider dance classes, hiking, or playing a sport.

Whatever exercise you choose, just make sure you get moving a few times a week.

8. **Eat well –** Eating healthily is just as important as physical exercise. Not only can the right foods keep you feeling good physically, they can also promote clarity and thoughtfulness. Make sure your diet includes enough fruit and vegetables, so you can get the vitamins your body needs.
9. **Get your rest –** Stress and lack of sleep often come in pairs. An overly anxious mind can leave you irritable and more easily agitated, resulting in even more stress. Employ nighttime habits that promote better sleep. Turn the lights down low and listen to calming music. Try reading a book or taking a warm bath. Most adults need 7-9 hours, so close that laptop in time to get all of the hours you need. Good sleep hygiene can go a long way to reduce your stress.
10. **Delegate –** Why do you have staff if you are still doing everything yourself? Hopefully, you have hired intelligent, capable people to help you in your law firm's journey. Trust them to handle the tasks that don't absolutely require your specific attention. That way, you can free up some space within your head and make room for more pressing (and hopefully profitable) tasks.

Don't let the stresses of your career keep you from living a healthy life and providing quality legal services to your clients. Employ some of these tips to keep your stress levels down and your productivity up.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a freelance writer with a passion for law. Through her business, Personal Touch Edits, she helps legal professionals deliver effective written messages. Erika is a regular contributor to TimeSolv and a variety of other publications.