

Mental Health Series – Destressing your workplace

Attorneys spend many hours in their offices, so much so that it may feel like a second home. Your work environment can greatly affect your level of stress. A cluttered, uncomfortable environment can limit the flow of creative ideas and affect your concentration. The following are steps you can take to destress your workplace and transform it into a space that invites productivity, while closing the door on stress.

1. Put some effort into [decorating](#). Research shows that your office environment affects your mood and the way you work. When establishing the aesthetic of your office, give some consideration to the color of the walls of the most appropriate type of lighting. It may seem trivial, but experts have spent numerous hours analyzing which colors promote productivity. Use their expertise to benefit your law practice and employees.

It's also useful to allow your attorneys a staff members some leeway in decorating their individual spaces within the office. Permit them to bring in knick-knacks and pictures to personalize their spaces. Individuals take comfort in items that mean something to them, which helps reduce stress levels and anxiety.

2. Create a firm culture that doesn't add to the already stressful practice of law. Remember that the values of your practice start at the top. If you create an environment that centers on long hours and unreasonable requirements, your staff members will feel the stress of trying to comply with your expectations. Stressed out lawyers are not productive lawyers. They often suffer from poor physical health and sleep deprivation. From a mental health standpoint, the stress may manifest as depression or severe anxiety.

A stress free (or at least stress less) law firm sends a message to staff members that self care is just as important as profits. Promote physical exercise by networking with a local health club to offer an employee discount. Switch out the soda machine for water and natural beverages. Create a relaxation space within the office. This is an area with comfy chairs, magazines and no computers in sight. It provides a place for employees to walk away from their desks and decompress when needed.

3. They say music soothes the savage beast. Well, it also soothes the savage attorney. Use your phone or computer to create relaxing background noise within your workspace. Music is a proven stress reliever, relaxing our minds as well as our bodies. If your workspace exists in an open concept, break out the earbuds. Just remember to set the volume for your personal enjoyment and ensure that you can still hear what's going on around you.

Remember that a stressful workspace is a non-productive workspace. Invest a small amount of time and effort into creating an environment that promotes a mentally healthy staff. You staff will benefit, along with the firm.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.