Maintaining Work-Life Balance

Amidst a challenging work environment

IMLA 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 29, 2023

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Overview

- **What Mental & Physical Problems are Employees** (& Attorneys) **Facing & Why?**
- **Signs of a Toxic Work Environment**
- **What is Quiet Firing?**
  - And strategies for managing it!
- **Why is Work-Life Balance Important?**
- **Practical Tips for Improving Wellness & Work-Life Balance**



What work used to look like...

("disconnected")





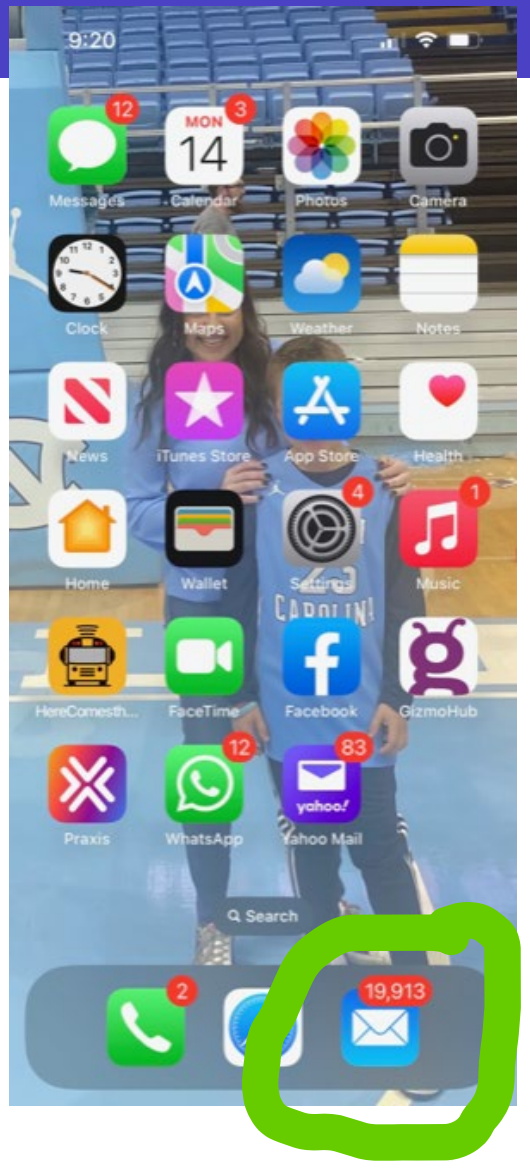


What life looks like now…



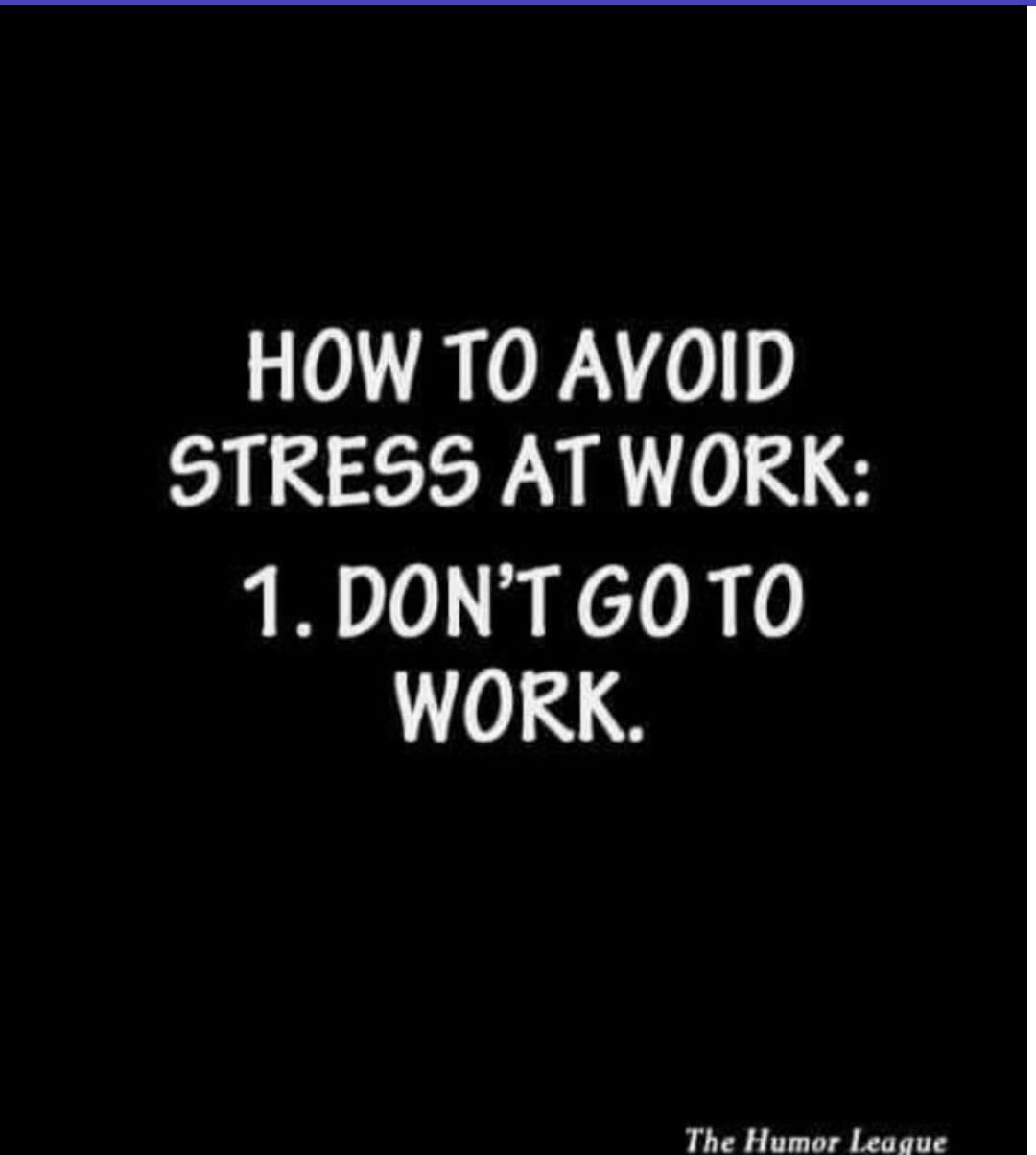


We are always accessible!



communication

What's the Problem?



- **Americans work more than people in any other country and take less vacation, work longer days, and retire later in life.**

(Source: Brain and Behavior Research)



According to the American Institute of Stress:

- **40% of workers** reported their job was very or extremely stressful
- **25% view their jobs** as the #1 stressor in their lives

What's the problem in the Legal profession?



- ***2016 ABA Poll (13,000 lawyers polled)***
  - 28% of lawyers suffer from depression
  - 19% of lawyers had severe anxiety
  - 11.4% of lawyers had suicidal thoughts

A CHALLENGING WORK ENVIRONMENT?

- https://www.google.com/search?q=devil+wears+prada+toxic+worplace+clips&rlz=1C1GCEB_enUS1017US1017&oq=devil+wears+prada+toxic+worplace+clips&aqs=chrome..69i57.7525j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:1233f59d,vid:2PjZAeiU7uM

LANDSCAPE OF A CHALLENGING WORKPLACE

- ***December 2022 Poll***[1]:
  - 64.2% (out of 1300 Respondents) have faced toxic situations at work.
    - For respondents 25-40 group-74% faced toxic environment
    - For Respondents 41-56 years old, 79% faced toxic environment
  - Female Respondents (68%) were more likely to report having toxic experiences than male respondents (64%) or nonbinary (59%) respondents.
  - The most common adjectives used by Respondents to describe the nature of their toxic work experiences were:
    - Disrespectful (55%)
    - Abusive (34%)
    - Non-Inclusive (30%)
    - Cutthroat (21%)

1We're All More "Toxic Aware" in 2023, 1/25/2023 (The Muse)

WHY IT IS VITAL TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF A TOXIC WORKPLACE

- Negative employee well-being will spread to other workers.
- A toxic workplace will adversely impact the quality of work performed.
- Increased stress and depression as a result of poor work life:
  - ❑will impact day-to-day life outside of work: will strain interpersonal relationships, family and home-life.
  - ❑Employees may turn to drugs, alcohol or other harmful addictions to cope with the extreme stress of a challenging work environment.
- Healthy workplace-increases work performance across an organization.





WHAT IS A TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT?

TOXIC WORKPLACE	HEALTHY WORKPLACE
High employee turnover	Low absenteeism rates
Low employee morale	Increased teamwork
Lack of Open Communication	Acknowledgement for good work
Employees are micromanaged	Employees are inspired
Disregard for employees' personal life	Employer promotes healthy lifestyle practices
Unrealistic Expectations and Demands	Reasonable workload





QUIET FIRING
The ‘dark side’ of a toxic workplace



DEFINITION

- An employee is pushed out of their job without being formally fired.
- Management creates non-ideal work conditions to make an underperforming employee quit.
- Employer intentionally creates a hostile work environment that encourages people to leave voluntarily.
- Passive-aggressive approach to performance management.

REASONS FOR QUIET FIRING

CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

- Circumvent legal issues (retaliation).
- Avoid having to provide feedback to employee or develop a performance plan.
- Avoid Damage to the Employer's reputation.

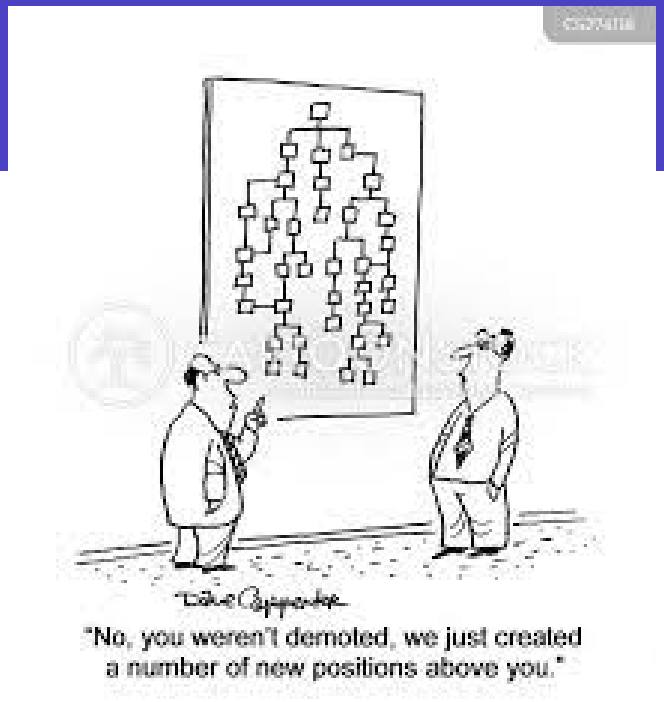
COST SAVING

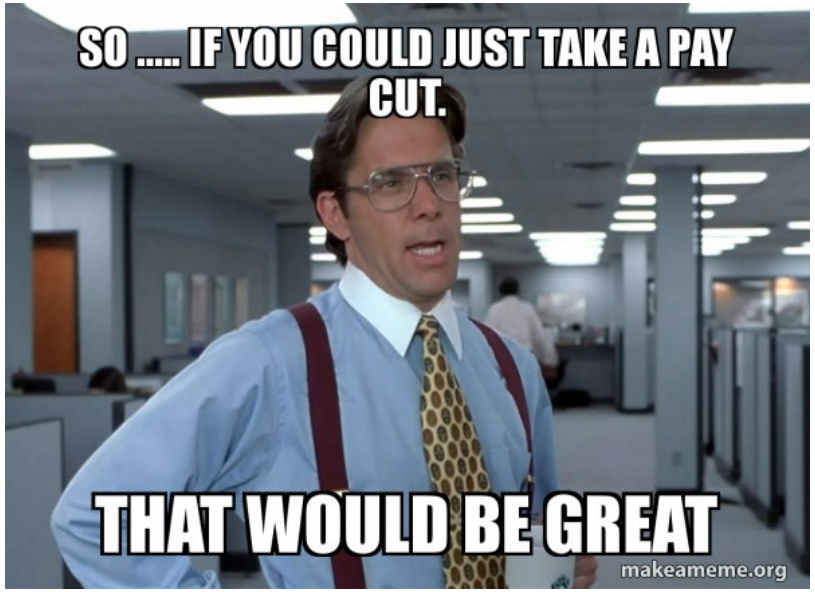
- Evade offering severance packages.
- Reduce unemployment claims.
- Quietly fire higher-paid employees to cut costs.

MISMANAGEMENT

- Lack of managerial experience
- Personality conflicts

Quiet Firing Warning Signs





Work Responsibilities

- Reassigning important job responsibilities to other employees.
- Demoting an employee or giving responsibilities that are misaligned with employee's role.
- Setting up unattainable performance targets.
- No upward movement or opportunities for growth.

Compensation

- Pay cuts.
- Preventing employee from earning overtime.
- No yearly bonuses or raises.

Quiet Firing Warning Signs



Working Conditions

- Unmanageable workload.
- Forcing employee to relocate.
- Removing perks (office, parking spot).
- Changing work hours.

Supervisor Communication

- No feedback on performance.
- Extreme Micromanagement.
- "Ghosting," or repeatedly cancelling meetings.
- No acknowledgement or credit for positive work performance (giving credit to others).
- Withholding critical information related to employee's responsibilities.

CONSEQUENCE OF QUIET FIRING: THE GREAT RESIGNATION

- ***Top Predictors of Attrition during Great Resignation***
    - Toxic Corporate Culture.
    - Job Security and reorganization.
    - Failure to recognize employee performance.
    - Poor response to COVID-19.
- ***Short Term Actions to Boost Retention***
    - Lateral career opportunities.
    - Remote work arrangements.
    - Company-sponsored social events.
    - Offering predictable schedules.



Strategies for Managing Quiet Firing



- Review your situation.
- Knowledge is power.
- Document the good AND the bad.
- Communicate openly and proactively.
- If necessary, seek legal help.
- Quietly quit.
- **PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH!**

What is Work-Life Balance & Why Do Attorneys Need It??



In-house lawyers (2022 survey):

- Approx. 78% report feeling stressed or burned out
  - (Nearly 50% report being very or extremely stressed or burned out) *Source: Legal Dive*



Working Conditions *(ABA: The Profile of the Profession 2021)*:

- Nearly 51% of lawyers work long hours
- 32% feel pressure not to use vacation time
- 1 in 4 do not take adequate breaks throughout day

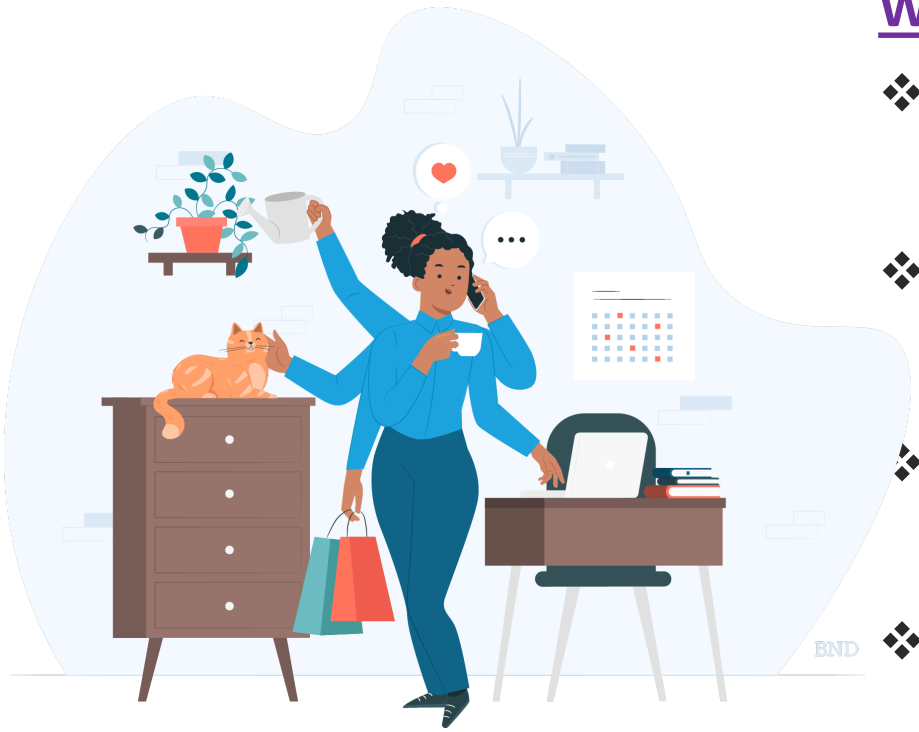
Mental Health (3000 respondents)

- 66% said their time in the legal profession had been detrimental to their mental health
- 46% were considering leaving the profession due to stress/burnout
- Attorneys are 2x as likely as other working adults to have suicidal thoughts

Source: ***Healthcare*** journal

What is Work-Life Balance & Why Do We Need It??

Work-life balance is the state of equilibrium where a person equally prioritizes the demands of one's career and the demands of one's personal life.



Work-life balance affects:

- Your mental health
  - 76% of employees indicated workplace stress negatively impacts their mental health, leading to challenges like depression & anxiety (Source: *Mental Health America and Flexjobs)*
- Your physical health
  - CDC: stress can result in cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal & psychological disorders
  - (ulcers, cancer & impaired immune function?)
- Your job performance
  - Employer efforts to reduce stress & increase employee psychological well-being led to higher performance (Source: *Kansas Journal of Medicine,* 2021)
- Your personal relationships
  - 62% respondents said work stress negatively impacts their relationships. (Source: *UKG)*

Improving Your Work/Life Balance

❖ Set Boundaries

- ✓ Have dedicated work time & dedicated time to recharge
- ✓ Communicate boundaries to avoid unrealistic expectations
- ✓ Don't overextend yourself

❖ Prioritize Your Health





❖ Take a Break

✓Don't be afraid to unplug

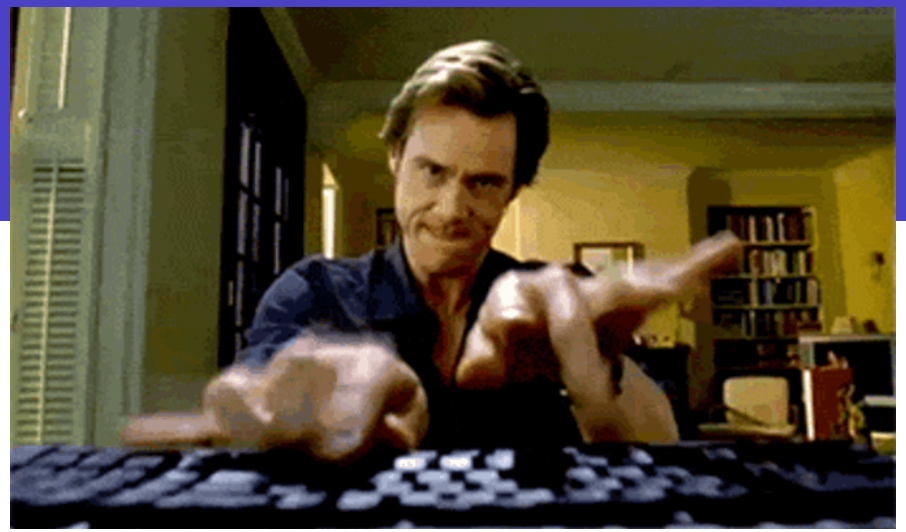
❖ Work Smarter, not Harder

✓Examine you time management

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	**Quadrant I** ***Urgent and Important*** Crises/emergencies Pressing Problems Projects with Deadlines **DO**	**Quadrant II** ***Not Urgent But Important*** Relationship Building Planning Recreation **PLAN**
NOT IMPORTANT	**Quadrant III** ***Urgent But Not Important*** Interruptions/Distractions Many phone calls/emails Some Reports Dealing w/others' requests **DELEGATE**	**Quadrant IV** ***Not Urgent & Not Important*** Busy Work Some Phone Calls Some Emails Time Wasters **ELIMINATE**



Source: Steven Covey, *First Things First*



Managing Technology

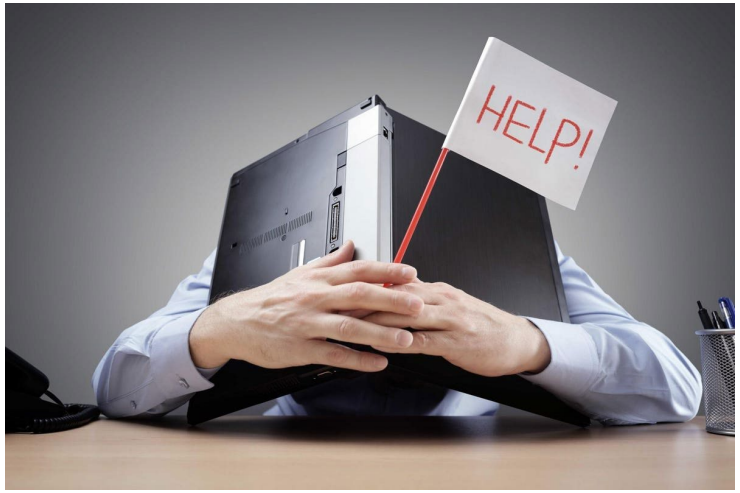
During work hours *[time management]*

- Avoid constantly checking emails
- Schedule time to read/write/respond to emails
- Turn off email notifications

After work hours *[unplugging/setting boundaries]*

- Silence email notifications on your phone
- Set limitations for checking email/phone & stick to them

You're not a Superhero…Ask for Help



- **Work with a paralegal**
- **Use the latest legal technology**
- **Communicate with your supervisor**
- **Use your employer's wellness benefits & community resources**

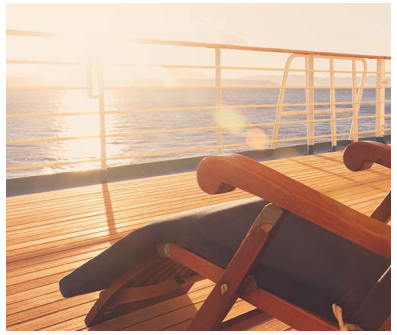
Make time for yourself (including a vacation!)

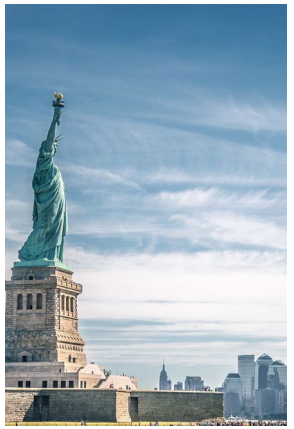




Improves heart health

Improves sleep





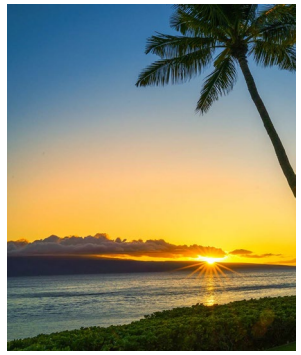
Fewer sick days

Decreased turnover

Reduces stress

Increases mindfulness





Boosts brainpower

Improved productivity





Tips for Taking an Effective Vacation…

- Plan ahead





- Unplug!

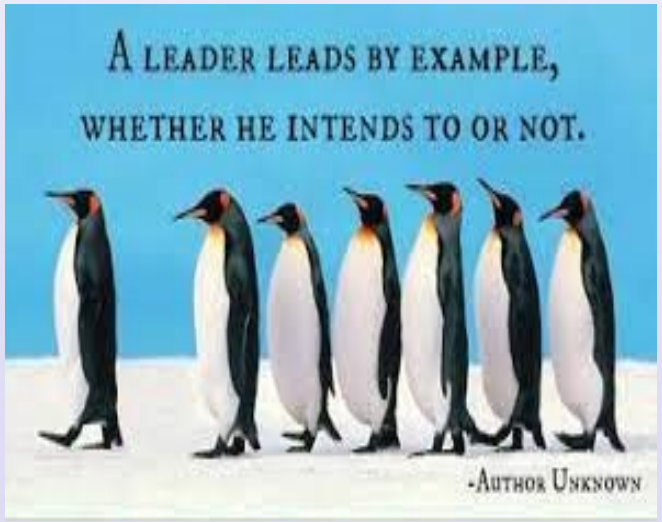
- Have a back-up





- Be present

Tips for Leadership



Lead by Example



Avoid Communicating After Hours



Openly Discuss Attorney Well-Being

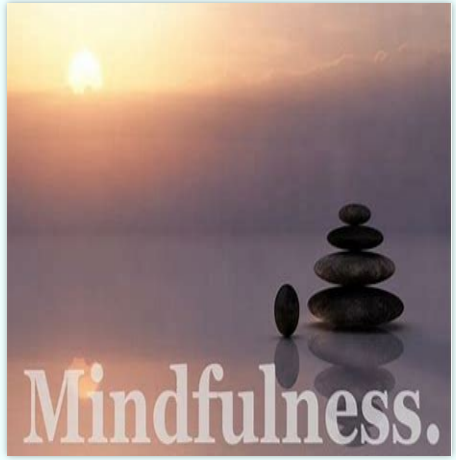


Offer Flexibility



Invest in Ways to Help your Attorneys

National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being





"The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change" focuses on 5 general areas:

(1) Identifying stakeholders and the role each plays in reducing toxicity in law practice,

(2) Ending the stigma on trying to improve well-being,

(3) Emphasizing that an attorney's well-being is vital to their ability to work,

(4) Educating attorneys, judges, and law students on mental health & substance use disorders, and

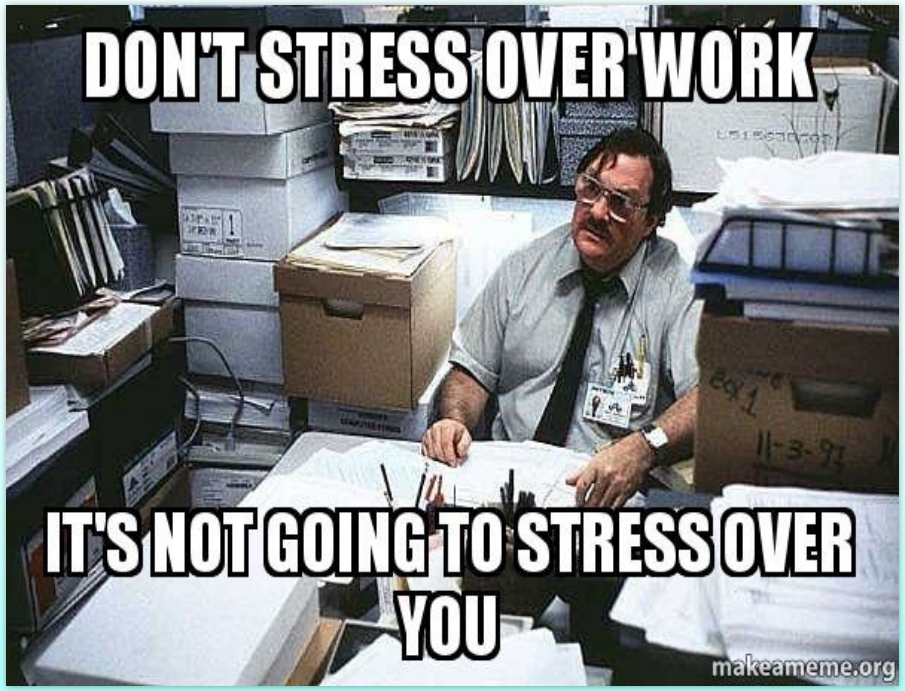
(5) Creating a culture that prioritizes self-care & helping others.

Visit the new dedicated website at lawyerwellbeing.net









Thank you!

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