

# Finding Happiness in the Practice of Law

By Mitchell Reichman

The start of summer vacations is a perfect time to reflect on the things we can do to optimize our performance and make the practice of law more enjoyable. There are dynamics unique to the practice of family law, which make it particularly challenging.

- Our clients are often highly reactionary, anxious, distraught and lack self-awareness.
- Opposing counsel may not be focused on resolving problems.
- We operate in an over-burdened judicial system that struggles to provide a forum for litigating complex disputes.
- Often the judicial officers assigned to our cases are learning on the job, having only 24-month rotations in family law.

These dynamics can often trap family law attorneys in daily crises management, constant interruptions and crushing deadlines. With this type of unrelenting pressure, it is not uncommon for lawyers to start missing important details and to lose objectivity in the pursuit of “victory” or “vindication” for their aggrieved clients.

What can family law attorneys do to optimize their performance and make the practice of law more enjoyable? We can pay more attention to our own health, fitness and well-being. In order to perform optimally, we need to stay inspired, energetic and strong. Improving and maintaining physical health is a critical component of building resilience. Start with small steps, literally, get up and walk around. Schedule time on your calendar to exercise and treat it just like any other client appointment or court appearance. The time should be inviolate. Ensure that you do not have any health-related challenges that create some risk before you embark on your exercise program.

There are many ways to become more resilient – and to think clearly and differently – when experiencing stress-producing events. There are many scientific studies that explain the chemistry of stress. We are better prepared to avoid the harmful physical deterioration that enduring prolonged stress can cause when we are more thoughtful about our nutrition. One of the

negative side effects of prolonged stress is the increased intake of high calorie and low nutrition foods. Take the time to read about and develop a smart nutrition plan which should include reducing refined sugars intake to a minimum, no smoking, moderate alcohol intake and avoiding trans fats. The old adage of shopping the perimeter of the grocery store where the fresh fruits, vegetables and meats are located is a proactive first step to better nutrition.

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Maintain high quality connections with other people in your workplace, supportive friends and your family to build a compassionate and empathetic network to help increase your resiliency.

Recognize and plan time to engage in reflective thought. Many aspects of the family law practice require us to be reactive to provide answers and responses instantaneously. The sheer volume of daily emails not only promotes this behavior but also compels us to respond and answer to meet client expectations. However, to optimize our performance – and results for our client – we need to be clear thinking, have perspective, develop strategies to achieve specific results and create action plans built

around those strategies.

Invest time contemplating how to create an environment or process where you can engage in reflective thinking without consistent interruptions. For some, mindfulness meditation has become a path to more creative thought. For others, it may happen when they are listening to music, journaling, walking the dog, or even in a shower! Pay attention to when you have your most creative thoughts. Allow yourself the opportunity to unplug from the endless stream of communications and digital bombardment to create a clear space for reflective thinking.

Taking time off from work is an important component to restore your perspective and to recharge. Invest in yourself. Take steps and make changes that could optimize your performance and make the practice of law more satisfying. Hopefully, some of these thoughts will be a catalyst to make changes so family law practice is more enjoyable and allow you to stay inspired, energetic and strong.

Mitchell Reichman is an Arizona State Bar board certified family law specialist and attorney at the Phoenix law firm of Jaburg Wilk. He is a board member of the executive council of the Arizona State Bar family law section and rated AV Preeminent by Martindale-Hubbell. Mitch has been named a Best Lawyer in America by Best Lawyers continuously since 2013, Arizona Top 10 Family Law Lawyer by Arizona Business Magazine and a Southwest Super Lawyer continuously since 2009. For more information, visit [www.jaburgwilk.com](http://www.jaburgwilk.com).

