

And finally...have a little fun! Teambuilding is foundational for building a reciprocal professional relationship. Look for opportunities for productive socializing. Enter the firm into a 5k for a charity. Collect for a food pantry. Hold a holiday toy donation drive. Schedule a CPR class. These are small but effective gestures that show humanity, lighten the mood, and open lines of communication.

Ultimately, a personal investment in your paralegal translates to a professional investment. Taking the steps to show your paralegal that their needs and opinions matter will foster an environment of mutual respect, and you will build a team that cares about the success of your firm. And let's face it—it's probably not a bad thing to have someone on board that knows CPR for when you run that 5k together!

WORKING WELL

Self-Care: A Holistic Approach to a Lawyer's Well-Being—DO IT NOW

By Lori A. Buza

KSBranigan Law, P.C.

Rutgers Law School Well-Being Professor

How can you take care of anyone else if you haven't taken care of yourself first? It is our jobs as attorneys to model the behaviors our clients should employ as well as to be in as competent and healthy a position as possible to provide the best service to our clients. The same holds true for those who are arbitrators or judges, for in these positions—literally the fate of a case is in their hands. As most of us have heard before: if you are in distress on an airplane, you must take the oxygen first before



helping those around you. As lawyers, we have a heightened duty of care to others; hence it flows that we need to first take care of ourselves.

My approach to self-care is a holistic one—this involves adopting numerous behaviors to maximize my health and well-being. These include good nutritional choices; exercise; adequate sleep and rest; care for skin, hair and teeth; exposure to sunshine; meditation; routine medical and dental checkups, including any necessary annual screening tests (e.g./ lab work) and vaccinations; the avoidance of tobacco; limited use of alcohol; and maintaining good hygiene as well as cleanliness in the home and office. It is critical that we position ourselves in as strong a position as possible so that if faced with an illness, it can be managed properly and expediently. Self-care needs to be routine and not only developed or realized once symptoms of illness are revealed. Self-neglect, on the other hand, leads to a host of physical and mental illnesses, distractions, and negative consequences—some of which could have been prevented or at least significantly mitigated.

It is also important that shareholders encourage self-care for their associates and teams. Outings, adequate vacation and rest days, proper health insurance (including mental health) and dental insurance options, as well as firm-wide community support are all encouraged. Having well-being policies in place and adequate resources (e.g. well-being coaches, dietitians, gym memberships) are important ways to support all members within your firm. Social support within your firms (e.g. mentorships and firm activities) along with an encouragement of self-care maintenance can facilitate the good health and well-being of its members. In turn, those lawyers will meet their maximum capabilities to serve their clients to the literal best of their abilities without distractions of their own self-neglect, or necessary time off when issues arise. Moreover, supporting the health of a firm's members ensures the members are set up in the best position to do outstanding legal work.

Many lawyers report they do not have enough time to take care of themselves. I've heard time and time again from my attorney colleagues: "I am too busy," "I don't have time for me," or "I'll get to that eventually..." Big mistake. Take care of yourself now and before illness or negative consequences appear. Don't wait until, for instance—you need a joint replacement or are diagnosed with a preventable condition and/or when an undetected illness goes untreated/becomes exasperated. Motivation should not come after the fact. Love yourself NOW. Invest in yourself NOW—because your health and well-being is your greatest commodity, and you are useless to your firm or clients when you are not well. The little voice in your head and the voice of this article reminds you—don't wait until it's too late to realize and effectuate proper self-care. DO IT NOW. ■