KEEPPING YOUR BALANCE

As vacations end and as the fall nears (yes, despite the 113 degree temperatures, fall will get here eventually), it’s a good time to reflect on maintaining a positive work-life balance.

The practice of law entails working with clients with problems – sometimes, or even frequently, life-changing or life-threatening. These situations are not only inherently stressful for the client, they may also be incredibly stressful for the lawyer. I’d like to think that most lawyers entered into this profession out of a desire to help. We are, as a profession, problem-solvers and crisis resolvers. Add to that the pressure to “be there” for clients at all hours of the day and night, and the need to make a living, and you have the perfect recipe for work-life imbalance. So here are some tips for keeping your balance:

Set boundaries between your practice and your personal life. The pressure is on for lawyers to be always available to their clients. Technology has made this possible – mobile technology lets you take your practice wherever you go. But stop! You need time for yourself. How you accomplish this may differ depending on your practice area, but you cannot be available 24/7 and maintain a personal life as well.

Decide what’s really important to you. Yes, your practice is important and your clients are important, but what is important to you – as a person? Maybe it’s going to your child’s ball games or dance recitals; maybe it’s a hobby that you find both fulfilling and relaxing. Maybe it’s your involvement in an organization outside of your practice. Be sure you make time for that one or two things.

Admit to yourself that you don’t have time to do everything. It’s just not physically possible to be in multiple places at the same time, or fit in every activity you might want to undertake. This is why deciding what’s really important to you is so vital. Trying to be all things to all people is a great aspirational goal – if there are 48 hours in a day and 14 days a week.

Plan to be fulfilled. Spending your precious free hours on something that only induces more stress is counterproductive. Your wellness is vital not only to you but to your clients. A stressed out/burned out lawyer cannot provide the best possible service to clients. Stress is antithetical to clear and rational thinking – and it’s detrimental to your mental and physical health. When you take on a project, task, activity or hobby outside of your practice – whether it’s running, crafting, reading, volunteering – be sure that you find it fulfilling.

The practice of law is challenging, demanding and intense. Your career isn’t a sprint, it’s a marathon. Be sure that you give yourself the ability to go the distance. If are having difficulties and you need someone to talk to, check out our Peer Support Network at www.azbar.org/peersupport.