

Come One, Come All: The Plate Balancing Act of the Young Lawyer

By Amanda G. Schreiber

Sometimes a young lawyer's life feels a little like keeping 100 spinning plates in the air.

I recently went to a circus themed show in Hartford. As always, it proved to be an incredible visual spectacle. But one performer in particular caught my attention: the plate spinner. This man somewhat miraculously managed to spin plates on top of individual sticks. He effortlessly flipped them into the air all while adding more and more plates.

I was jealous. The plate spinner seemed to know his routine. He had obviously had time to practice and was probably using inexpensive plates he could break until he perfected his craft. Then there was the timing aspect. The careful balancing where everything needs to happen at a certain time.

Metaphorically, the world of being a young lawyer is a gigantic plate spinning act. But unlike the circus plate spinner, if I dropped a plate, my client's financial well-being or physical safety could be at risk. If I didn't maintain poise, I couldn't answer work e-mails while attending swimming lessons with my daughter. If I didn't add a plate, I wouldn't get that promotion.

Despite my many spinning plates, I am honored to serve as chair of the Young Lawyers Section for the 2019-2020 bar year. Over the last six years, the section has afforded me countless opportunities that I could not have otherwise achieved. During my tenure, I have moderated and

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served as a speaker in CLEs. I have served my legal and greater community by participating in Habitat for Humanity, food drives, and clothing collections for charity. I have met and connected with senior bar members who have turned into tremendous mentors, guiding me through my career. Most importantly, I have made connections and friends that will support me in the years to come. I have found the other members of the Young Lawyers Section to be some of the most dedicated, hardworking individuals I know, and I am thrilled to be their leader this year.

I have found, however, that amongst this group my plate balancing concerns are not unique. Every day I talk to young lawyers who are juggling their job, house, marriage, finances, kids, health, and well-being. So many spiraling, spinning plates that they must balance at once, with so much resting on each one.

They all want to know the answer to the same question: "How do you balance it all?"

For that reason, I have decided to dedicate my column this year to exploring the juggling act of the present-day young lawyer.

First, I hope these articles will support our newest members. Young lawyers often feel isolated in their struggles. But they are not the only ones digging themselves out of crushing student loan debt or sneaking out of the office to attend a kindergarten play. Sharing experience and practical advice with colleagues is supportive and lends to a healthier overall bar.

Second, I hope to assist the bar as a whole to better understand the perspective this generation brings to the table. I have found that some aspects of a young lawyer's life are misunderstood by senior colleagues. In some instances, memories are fleeting. They recall caring for a young child, but the last 18 years have made sleepless nights a distant memory. In other instances, the world around us has drastically changed. With the rise of seamless technology, young lawyers can never truly distance themselves from their professional roles in the way letter writing and rotary phones allowed. The purpose is not to highlight the disparities, but to find common ground in perceived differences.

And who knows, maybe we'll figure out how to balance it all—together. ■