

# And for the Final Act: Thriving through Balance

By AMANDA G. SCHREIBER

I truly believe that balance enables productivity. Results oriented people, as lawyers tend to be, will best perform when given the opportunity to thrive. Thriving includes both personal and professional prosperity and success. This includes having a healthy, happy, and satisfying life—however you define it.

I have dedicated my column this year to exploring the plate-balancing act of the young lawyer. Many months ago, I saw a circus themed show in Hartford and likened my experience as a young lawyer to that of the performer known as the plate spinner. I admired the craft—his ability to miraculously spin plates on top of individual sticks, effortlessly flipping them into the air all while adding more and more plates. At the same time, I was jealous. The plate spinner seemed to know his routine and had clearly had time to practice. He was likely using inexpensive plates he could afford to break. And then there was the timing aspect, the careful harmony required to have everything happen at a precise time. I was in awe.

As chair of the Young Lawyers Section for the 2019-2020 bar year, I have had the opportunity to lead a group of extraordinary young lawyers. I am profoundly grateful for their support and dedication this year. If this is the high-quality, insightful work we can anticipate from this group, then I wholeheartedly believe the State of Connecticut will be in good legal hands for years to come. I have found, however, that even amongst this group of high-achieving individuals, my plate balancing concerns are not unique. Every day I talk to young lawyers who are juggling their job,

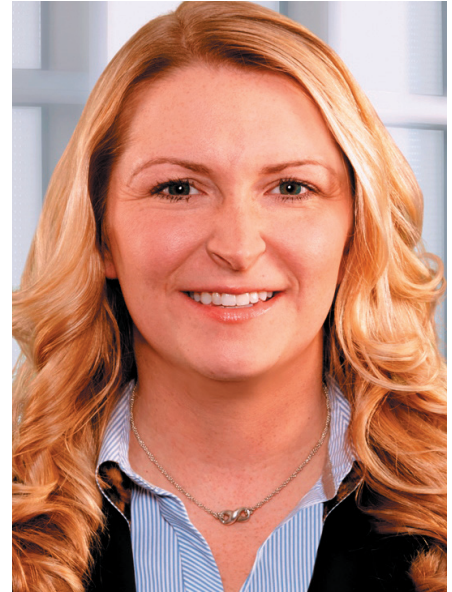
house, marriage, finances, kids, health, and well-being. So many spiraling, spinning plates that they must balance at once, with so much resting on each one.

In my first article I posed the question: “How do you balance it all?” To those young lawyers in the midst of metaphorical plate spinning, I hope that these articles have supported you in your struggles and reminded you that you’re not alone. To our senior colleagues, I hope these articles have helped to bring this generation’s perspective to the table with transparency and enlightenment. The focus of these articles has never been to highlight disparities but to find commonality in perceived differences. Balance is not something that comes easy to the type-A, dedicated individuals that lawyers of any age tend to be.

With that in mind, through my explorations this year, I offer the following suggestions to legal leaders, employers, and individuals to help them find and support balance that enables productivity.

First, embrace flexibility. Telecommuting options, alternative work schedules, and

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flextime are opportunities to allow all lawyers, not just young lawyers, to balance their daily lives in a meaningful but productive way. Recent requirements due to COVID-19 have forced many to explore these options out of necessity rather than choice. I encourage those that have found it to be a reasonable option to consider ways to continue these arrangements beyond the timeframe of the pandemic. By shifting focus away from traditional, billable-hour-driven, process-focused environments to efficiency and results, we can increase productivity and help our lawyers balance a few more plates. With some exception, generally where and when the work is done is far secondary to delivering optimal results for the client.

Second, promote awareness. There are serious repercussions to neglecting personal needs. Sadly, many lawyers have experienced great loss, regret, or adverse consequences due to this neglect. I encourage those individuals, to the extent they are comfortable, to share those stories with other lawyers. There is nothing shameful in admitting that your heart attack could have been avoided with daily physical

## Supreme Deliberations

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was “compelled to conclude” that Burke was not entitled to a new trial. See *Dinda v. Sirois*, 166 Conn. 68, 75 (1974) (“When two or more separate and distinct defenses...are present in a case, an error in the charge as to one normally cannot upset” the judgment). Though Justice D’Auria seemed open to reconsidering this standard, he was constrained by Burke’s failure to argue that the Court should overrule its precedent, or to argue that this was not a “normal[ ]” case to which the standard set forth in *Dinda* should apply.

Justice D’Auria’s concurrence got us thinking: should the Court revisit *Dinda*? It makes sense that an appellant faces an uphill fight when asserting that a defect in the instruction on one special defense entitles her to a new trial, even though the jury found in favor of the appellee on a legally and factually distinct special defense. But recognizing a factually distinct special defense is not always easy. As explained by Justice D’Auria, if a reviewing court were permitted to consider evidence that the “assault had occurred farther from the house than some of the testimony indicated,” he “would have a much harder time concluding that there was no taint from the improper trespass charge.”

Then again, if *Dinda* is to be overruled—or at least modified—what should the new rule look like? We’ll leave the answer to that difficult question to you. ■

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exercise or that stress drove you to see a therapist to explore your mental well-being. Support others in ensuring that they make better choices. Don’t insist they live the same life, inclusive of mistakes, as you. Empower them to do better.

Last, to my struggling young lawyers and to my senior colleagues I give the same message: lead by example. The legal culture in our state starts at the top and spreads by example. Prioritize your family time. Illustrate that you and your significant other have found a groove that works for you. Talk about your life and the most cherished parts of it. Your example will be a roadmap for generations to come. Don’t squander the opportunity to make that road smoother. Smoother doesn’t mean easier, it’s simply a shift

away from unnecessary pressures and a focus on productivity. You’ll be surprised what most lawyers can achieve with more aspects of their life in balance.

I end this year amid great uncertainty as to the current state of our nation and state. If a global pandemic and social unrest following a horrific racial injustice has taught us anything, it is to support one another. Perhaps the answer to the balance we are all seeking depends not just on ourselves, but on the collective. Balance can only truly be achieved with support from colleagues, family, and friends—it’s the allowance we give to one another to thrive. May we accept and champion balance to achieve a thriving bar community. ■