

# Legal Well-Being Week Highlights: Desk Yoga, Ergonomics, Sleep Education, and Sound Healing



By TANYEE CHEUNG

**T**he legal profession, known for its high demands and relentless pace, significantly benefits from focused initiatives on well-being. Lawyer Well-Being Week, an annual effort to introduce lawyers to a variety of wellness practices, is a step toward informing legal professionals about ways they can help address the challenges they face and lead a healthier and more productive life. This year, the Connecticut Bar Association again hosted a series of free events for CBA members with a variety of programming, ranging from more traditional topics such as positive psychology to new modalities such as sound healing. For those who might not have had the opportunity to participate in the activities, here are a couple of highlights of Lawyer Well-Being Week.

## Dangers of a Sedentary Life

Recent studies highlighting the dangers of a sedentary lifestyle do not bode well for the legal profession as more and more offices follow the trend of being back in the office... and back at your desk for hours on end. Dr. Diana Gailles, one of our in-person speakers at the CBA Lawyer Well-Being Summit at Indian Harbor Yacht Club, informed us that “for people who sit most of the day their risk of heart attack is about the same as smoking.”<sup>1</sup> According to a study published in the journal, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, prolonged sedentary behavior is associated with a 24 percent increased risk of colon cancer, a 32 percent increased risk of endometrial cancer, and a 21 percent increased risk of lung cancer. This study also found that sitting for more than eight hours a day is associated with a 15 percent increase in the risk of premature death from all causes, and a 40 percent increase in the risk of death from cardiovascular disease.<sup>2</sup> Not only affecting your physical health, sedentary behaviors, particularly those involving excessive screen time, have been associated with increased anxiety, depression, and reduced cognitive function. Physical inactivity limits the release of mood-enhancing chemicals like endorphins and

serotonin, which are crucial for mental health.<sup>3</sup> What’s a lawyer to do in the face of these statistics?

## Desk Yoga

Desk yoga! We kicked off Well-Being Week with a desk yoga session given by Siena Loprinzi, a certified RYT, and Ayurvedic Yoga Therapist, Herbalist, and

Yin Yoga and meditation teacher. Showing how we can do yoga sitting at our desk or with minimal movement, Siena provided some great tips for us to move our bodies even if we aren’t able to leave our desk. By performing simple yoga exercises at your desk, you can reduce muscle tension, increase circulation, and boost your mental clarity—all without needing to leave your chair. Here are a few easy desk yoga exercises you can try:

**Seated Crescent Moon Pose:** Lift your arms overhead, interlace your fingers, and extend the index fingers. Lean gently to one side, hold for a few breaths, then switch to the other side. This stretch helps reduce neck and shoulder tension and improves spinal flexibility.





**Chair Pigeon Pose:** While seated, place one foot on the opposite thigh, keeping the knee in line with your ankle. Gently lean forward to deepen the stretch in your hip. This is excellent for opening up the hips and lower back, areas that can become tight from prolonged sitting.

**Seated Cat-Cow Stretch:** Place your hands on your knees. As you inhale, arch your back and look up, stretching your abdomen; as you exhale, round your back and tuck your chin to your chest. This move increases flexibility in your spine and can help relieve back pain.

**Wrist and Finger Stretches:** Extend your arms forward and rotate your wrists in circular motions, then stretch your fingers wide and close them into fists. This helps to alleviate wrist strain from typing.

**Neck Rolls:** Drop your chin to your chest and slowly rotate your head around your neck, first clockwise, then counter-clockwise. This exercise reduces tension in the neck and shoulders.

These exercises can be done right at your desk and only take a few minutes, making them a perfect break during a busy workday. Integrating desk yoga into your routine can help keep you physically relaxed and mentally focused, leading to a more productive and enjoyable day.

### Ergonomic Work Station Tips

During our in-person summit, Dr. Gailes provided some tips to ensure that when we are sitting, we are limiting some of the negative effects by considering ergonomics. She provided these tips:

1. Top of monitor at or below eye level
2. Monitor and keyboard centered in front of you
3. No glare on screen
4. Documents in line with keyboard and monitor
5. Negative tilt keyboard support
6. Wrists flat and straight
7. Arms and Elbows close to body
8. Change postures often
9. Work in a reclined position
10. Take frequent short breaks (Desk yoga!)
11. CPU off desk

These practical tips on workspace setup can help you minimize the physical strain of sitting at work and help prevent injury. Since the summit, I have used the telephone as a trigger to stand up and if I am able to, I will take the call standing up and marching in place at my desk! The long-term side effects that Dr. Gailes presented was enough to get me to re-think how I work!

### Sleep Education

Another great in-person speaker at our summit was Dr. John Cline with the Sleep Disorders Center of Connecticut. Dr. Cline provided invaluable insights into the structure, architecture and role of sleep not only to our physical well-being but also to cognitive functioning and overall health. The presentation provided crucial insights into achieving restorative sleep, leading to better decision-making and increased stamina. Giving us insights to the dangers of relying on pharmaceuticals to get good sleep, Dr. Cline provided these tips for better sleep hygiene:



**Stick to a Schedule:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Consistency reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle.

**Create a Bedtime Ritual:** Engage in a relaxing routine before bed to signal to your body that it's time to wind down. This could include reading, stretching, or meditating.

**Optimize Your Bedroom Environment:** Make your bedroom conducive to sleep—cool, dark, and quiet. Consider using blackout curtains, eye masks, ear-plugs, or white noise machines.

**Choose a Comfortable Mattress and Pillows:** Ensure your mattress and pillows are comfortable and supportive. The

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quality of your bedding can significantly impact your sleep.

**Limit Exposure to Light:** Avoid bright screens within 1-2 hours of your bedtime. The blue light emitted by phone, tablet, and computer screens can disrupt your circadian rhythm. If you have to use electronics, consider downloading blue light filtering apps or use blue light glasses.

**Be Mindful of Eating and Drinking:** Avoid heavy or large meals within a couple of hours of bedtime. Also, limit caffeine and alcohol as they can disrupt sleep.

**Seek Professional Help if Needed:** If you continue to have trouble sleeping, you might want to consider talking to a doctor or sleep specialist.

### Sound Healing

Trying something a little more untested, we invited Sam and Luci Williams to lead us through a sound healing journey. This unique session utilized the therapeutic power of sound vibrations to calm the mind and alleviate stress, giving participants a front row seat to see how sound can help transform our mental state. There is a growing body of scientific research exploring the effectiveness of sound healing, and while it's still an emerging field, many studies suggest that sound therapy can have beneficial effects on both mental and physical health.

Sound therapy works through mechanisms such as brainwave entrainment, where the brain's electrical patterns, or brainwaves, synchronize to the frequencies of the sound. This can help induce states of deep relaxation or heightened focus depending on the frequencies used. We learned about binaural beats and their impact on brain activity and potential benefits in areas like pain perception, mood regulation, and cognitive performance. One systematic review analyzed the influence of binaural beats on cognition, anxiety, and pain, highlighting the potential benefits these auditory illusions can have on reducing anxiety and improving mood states.<sup>4</sup>

Binaural beats are often used in meditation music and sound therapy for stress reduction, promoting relaxation, and aid-



ing in meditation practices. Looking to try it out for yourself? Head over to Spotify or search on the web for binaural beats. Just remember to use headphones for binaural beats to be effective, as each ear should only receive the intended frequency.

### Conclusion

For those who attended the well-being week sessions, Bravo and congratulations for recognizing that well-being isn't a nice to have, it's a must have for being the best you can be! For those who haven't yet prioritize well-being, why not start today? Put into practice some of the wonderful tips our speakers provided us and commit to yourself that you will attend future presentations and next year's activities. Drop me a line if you would like us to host any of our speakers again during the year and let's focus on well-being throughout the year! ■

### NOTES

- 1 Quoting Marth Grogan, cardiologist at the Mayo Clinic
- 2 Biswas, A., Oh, P. I., Faulkner, G. E., Bajaj, R. R., Silver, M. A., Mitchell, M. S., & Alter, D. A. (2015). Sedentary time and its association with risk for disease incidence, mortality, and hospitalization in adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 162(2), 123-132. <https://doi.org/10.7326/M14-1651>
- 3 Hanna, F., You, E., & El-Sherif, M. (2023). Editorial: The impact of sedentary behavior and virtual lifestyle on physical and mental wellbeing: Social distancing from healthy living. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1265814>
- 4 Does brain entrainment using binaural auditory beats affect pain perception in acute and chronic pain?: a systematic review. *BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies*. Retrieved from <https://bmccomplementmedtherapies.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12906-020-03060-2>

## Annual Meeting Speech

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courts and our judges, because as I just said, the rule of law only matters if it is borne of justice and when that justice is politically manipulated through either appointment processes or by attacks on the judiciary, our society suffers. As individuals, and as an association, we cannot let the charged political climate in which we live dismantle the third branch of government. To remain silent renders us complicit in that effort. We must speak at community groups of which we are members, the synagogues, mosques, churches we attend, neighborhood parties, political conventions, wherever and whenever we can. They are all opportunities for us to remind people that the court plays a vital role, perhaps the most vital role, in maintaining our democracy. As your Association, we must and will carry that flag as well.

These are my goals for this Association. To speak when the rule of law is divorced from the role of justice and to speak when the honor and integrity of our judicial system is undermined. I hope you will join with me in this effort.

Thank you. ■

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