

# Year-End Tips and Actions Items from the Lawyer Well-Being Committee

By JOAN REED WILSON AND SARA BONAIUTO

**A**s the holiday season approaches, many lawyers in Connecticut find themselves juggling end-of-year deadlines, family obligations, and the general hustle and bustle of the season. It can be a time of joy and celebration, but it can also be a period of immense stress, particularly for legal professionals who are often caught in the whirlwind of both work and personal commitments. To thrive during the holidays and set the stage for a healthier and more balanced New Year, here are some practical well-being tips tailored specifically for busy lawyers.

## 1. Prioritize Self-Care, Even in Small Doses

For many lawyers, self-care is often the first thing that slips when the pressure mounts. Taking even small steps to nurture your mental and physical health can make a significant difference.

- **Mindful Breathing:** One of the quickest ways to calm your nervous system in the middle of a busy day is to practice mindful breathing. Take a minute or two to focus on deep, controlled breaths. Inhale deeply for a count of four, hold for four, and exhale slowly. Doing this for just five minutes can significantly reduce stress and improve focus.
- **Micro-Meditations:** Download a mindfulness or meditation app, such as Headspace or Calm, and try to incorporate brief meditation sessions into your day. These micro-meditations, as short as three-to-five minutes, can help reset your mental clarity during particularly busy periods.
- **Stay Hydrate:** It may sound simple, but staying hydrated can greatly influence your energy levels and focus. Keep a

water bottle nearby and set reminders to take sips throughout the day.

## 2. Set Boundaries with Work

It's easy for lawyers to feel as though they need to be constantly available, but during the holiday season, setting clear boundaries can be crucial to maintaining your well-being.

- **Communicate Early:** Let clients and colleagues know your holiday availability well in advance. By setting expectations early, you can reduce the likelihood of last-minute work requests or interruptions during family gatherings.
- **Use Technology to Your Advantage:** Automate your email responses with an out-of-office message or a delayed-response notification. For non-urgent matters, schedule follow-up times post-holidays. Tools like these can help you maintain control over your time while still ensuring clients feel acknowledged.

- **Delegate:** If possible, delegate tasks to junior attorneys or support staff. This will not only lighten your workload but also help develop your team's skills and confidence.
- **Stay Tuned for Our Boundary-Setting Workshop in January:** If you find boundary-setting difficult, be sure to join us on January 16, when the Well-Being Committee will host boundaries coach, Barb Nangle, in a 1-hour virtual presentation about boundary-setting.

## 3. Exercise and Move, Even When Time Is Tight

While it can be challenging to maintain a consistent exercise routine during the holiday season, incorporating physical movement into your day can significantly improve your mental health and resilience to stress.

- **Schedule Exercise as an Appointment:** Treat exercise like a non-negotiable appointment in your cal-



Image credit: Joe Klementovich / Aurora Photos/Getty Images

endar. Whether it's a brisk walk, a short yoga session, or a full workout, scheduling it makes you more likely to follow through.

- **Work Movement into Your Routine:** If your schedule is particularly packed, try to integrate movement into your workday. Take walking meetings, use the stairs instead of the elevator, or do a few stretches at your desk. Small bursts of movement can keep you energized and focused.
- **Get Outside:** Natural light and fresh air can boost your mood, especially during the shorter, darker winter days. Even a 10-minute walk outside during a break can lift your spirits.

#### 4. Be Mindful of Holiday Indulgences

The holiday season often involves gatherings that revolve around rich food and alcohol. While indulging now and then is part of the celebration, overdoing it can leave you feeling sluggish and mentally foggy.

- **Practice Moderation:** Rather than completely abstaining from holiday treats, focus on moderation. Mindful eating, where you slow down and savor each bite, can help you enjoy the food without overindulging.
- **Watch Alcohol Consumption:** It can be tempting to unwind with a few drinks at holiday parties, but excessive alcohol consumption can disrupt sleep and lead to poor decision-making. Try alternating alcoholic drinks with water, and know your limits.

#### 5. Carve Out Time for Loved Ones

The holidays are about connection and celebration, but busy work schedules can sometimes crowd out family time. Make an effort to prioritize meaningful interactions with those closest to you.

- **Schedule Time for Family and Friends:** Just as you schedule work appointments, carve out specific times for family and friends. Make those times sacred and free from work interruptions.
- **Be Present:** When you are with your loved ones, be fully present. Set aside your phone, refrain from checking emails, and focus on enjoying the

moment. Presence is a gift both to yourself and to those around you.

#### 6. Don't Overcommit

It's easy to fall into the trap of trying to please everyone, whether that's at work or in your personal life. However, overcommitting can lead to burnout.

- **Learn to Say No:** While it's natural to want to participate in every holiday event or take on extra work responsibilities, don't be afraid to say no when your plate is already full. Protecting your time and energy is critical to maintaining your well-being.
- **Prioritize:** Determine which commitments are most important to you. Focus on what aligns with your values and let go of obligations that are more about pleasing others than bringing you joy or fulfillment.

#### 7. Get Enough Rest

Sleep is one of the most vital components of your overall well-being, yet it's often the first thing sacrificed during busy periods.

- **Set a Sleep Routine:** Create a consistent bedtime routine that allows your body and mind to wind down. Avoid screens at least an hour before bed and consider relaxing activities such as reading or meditating to help you unwind.
- **Naps Are Okay:** If you find yourself running low on sleep due to late nights or early mornings, don't shy away from a quick power nap during the day. Even 15-20 minutes of rest can rejuvenate your focus and energy levels.

#### New Year Resolutions for Long-Term Well-Being

As the New Year approaches, consider setting resolutions that can enhance your well-being not just during the holidays, but throughout the year. Here are a few that are particularly beneficial for lawyers:

1. **Commit to Work-Life Balance:** Make it a priority to maintain a healthier balance between your personal life and work. Set clear boundaries for work hours and stick to them as much as possible.

2. **Prioritize Mental Health:** The legal profession is notoriously stressful. In 2025, consider integrating regular therapy, coaching, or mindfulness practices into your routine to support your mental health.

3. **Create Time for Personal Development:** Lawyers are often so focused on their careers that they neglect personal growth. Whether it's learning a new skill, picking up a hobby, or investing in a creative outlet, make personal development a part of your New Year's plan.

4. **Set Fitness Goals:** Establishing regular exercise goals can help keep your energy up and reduce stress levels. Whether it's aiming to walk 10,000 steps a day, running a race, or just hitting the gym regularly, fitness resolutions can have long-term benefits for your physical and mental well-being.

5. **Practice Gratitude:** Start a gratitude journal or find a way to regularly reflect on the positive aspects of your life. Practicing gratitude has been shown to reduce stress and increase feelings of happiness and contentment, helping to maintain a positive outlook even during difficult times.

#### Conclusion

The holiday season can be a demanding time for everyone, but it can also be an opportunity to reset and refocus on well-being. By taking small steps to care for yourself now and setting intentional New Year's resolutions, you can reduce stress, enhance your overall health, and set the foundation for a more balanced, fulfilling 2025. □



**Joan Reed Wilson** is the managing partner of RWC, LLC, Attorneys and Counselors at Law, where she practices estate planning, elder law, probate, and real estate closings. She holds a Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology from Penn and is a Certified Adult Chair® Coach.



**Sara Bonaiuto** is an associate at Shipman & Goodwin LLP, where she is a member of the firm's Commercial Finance and Business and Corporate practice groups and the Cannabis Industry Team. Her practice is focused on assisting businesses and individuals with equity and debt financings, term and revolving credit facilities, entity formations, mergers and acquisitions, construction financing, real estate joint ventures and general contract matters.