

# LAW CAREER FITNESS CHALLENGE



RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICE GUIDE OF LAWYERS MUTUAL

**LAWYERS MUTUAL LIABILITY INSURANCE COMPANY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

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November 2016

# Law Career Fitness Challenge

## RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICE GUIDE OF LAWYERS MUTUAL

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## Introduction

Law Career Fitness Challenge – Take the Law Career Fitness Challenge

Want to whip your law career into top shape?

Take the Law Career Fitness Challenge and get going!

Here's how it works. Included is a series of posts on what it takes to survive – and thrive – in today's legal environment. Each post will present a specific challenge that you'll likely face at some point in your career, along with training tips for meeting it.

Some of the challenges are designed to help you figure out what type of law you want to practice – or whether you even want to practice at all. Others will suggest best practices for job hunting. All of them will offer ways to strengthen existing law muscles and develop new ones.

The goal: a healthy career with a strong heart, sturdy legs and powerful core. At the end, there's a self-test so you can gauge your career fitness level.

And while the Law Career Fitness Challenge was designed with law students in mind, it works just as well for recent graduates, new Bar admittees and even those considering applying to law school.

## The Law Career Fitness Challenge. Here are the 20 challenges:

1. Take Responsibility for Your Law Career
2. Accept Reality
3. Spend Time Each Day Doing Absolutely Nothing
4. Get Started
5. Know the Rules
6. To Thine Own Self Be True
7. When You're Picking Grapes, Pick Grapes
8. Never Misplace Your Keys, Phone or Wallet Again
9. Maintain a Sense of Humor
10. Go The Extra Mile
11. Budget Your Time and Money
12. Learn From Defeats
13. Practice Teamwork
14. Know When to Ask for Help
15. Have Controlled Attention
16. See With Creative Vision
17. Avoid the Deathtrap of Denial
18. Invest Your Energy in What You're Good At
19. Keep Your Mind and Body Strong
20. Stay Positive

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**Some of the challenges are designed to help you figure out what type of law you want to practice – or whether you even want to practice at all. Others will suggest best practices for job hunting. All of them will offer ways to strengthen existing law muscles and develop new ones.**

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And the Law Career Fitness Challenge comes fully guaranteed! No, we can't promise that you'll land your dream job – or any job, for that matter – after completing it. But we do guarantee you won't be any worse off than when you started.

And who knows, you might even end up with a healthier career.

So thanks for being here. Now let's get started!

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 1: Take Responsibility for Your Law Life

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Let's start the Law Career Fitness Challenge with an easy one.

Go to the nearest mirror and take a long, hard look at the face staring back. Say hello. That's the person in charge of your professional well-being.

Sure, other people will influence your career choices. So will outside circumstances. But ultimately, the buck stops with you.

Think of professional fitness the same way you think of physical fitness. Neither just happens. You don't wake up one morning to find you've stopped smoking, dropped ten pounds or developed six-pack abs. And nobody – no mentor, headhunter or guru – can do it for you.

It takes focus, effort and persistence. And it starts with the intention of assuming ownership for whatever happens – good, bad or blah – in your professional life.

### Law Career Challenge Number 1: Own Your Career

This is harder than it sounds. After enduring the whirlwind known as law school, you then face the stress of taking the bar exam and the strain of finding a job. It's easy to feel like a cork bobbing along a raging river of circumstances.

And so we make decisions out of fear, desperation or a desire to please others. We make choices based on financial concerns ("I've got to pay off my student debt") or market conditions ("There are no jobs out there, so I'll take anything I can get").

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**We all want to be the driver, not a passenger, on our life journey. Yet too often we float along, buffeted by outside forces and happenstance, until one day we look up and ask ourselves – like David Byrne in “Once in a Lifetime” – how did I get here?**

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Small wonder, then, that so many lawyers find themselves stuck in jobs they don't like – or even actively hate. In fact, according to this survey, the unhappiest job in America is associate attorney, ranking ahead of even customer service in terms of dissatisfaction.

### Five Training Tips

Avoid this fate by taking control of your professional life. Start right now:

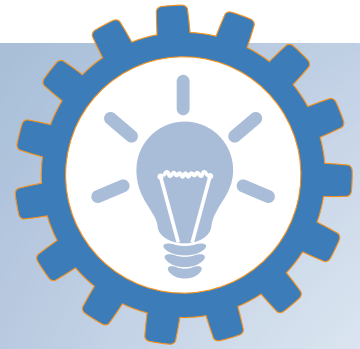
1. Make a list of the top worries keeping you up at night. Next week's torts final? Passing the bar exam? Getting a job? Under each entry, write down what you see as the cause of the problem. Circle every cause that is external – i.e., outside your control. If you end up with a paper filled with circles, you may be suffering from responsibility avoidance.
2. Now take that same list, and for each of your main worries, write down specific, concrete steps you can take to improve the situation.
3. Stop saying “I should” or “I have to” or “I need to.” These words feed a mentality of powerlessness.

4. Don't waste time complaining and blaming. It distracts you from finding solutions and makes you unpleasant to be around.
5. Create new habits. Start riding a bike to class. Take a course that is outside your comfort zone. Smashing through fixed behaviors can open up unimagined new opportunities.

We all want to be the driver, not a passenger, on our life journey. Yet too often we float along, buffeted by outside forces and happenstance, until one day we look up and ask ourselves – like David Byrne in “Once in a Lifetime” – how did I get here?

Taking responsibility for your career – the good and the bad, the ups and the downs – is empowering. It's liberating. You'll believe you can handle whatever comes next.

And that will make you a success by any definition.



## Five Training Tips

1. Avoid information overload
2. Get a grip on the Now
3. Know your limits
4. Take a walk
5. Practice surrender

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**Forbes** <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycapriano/2015/05/10/six-ways-to-take-back-control-of-your-life/2/#2715e4857a0b443d400075d5>

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**How to Live** <http://www.howtolive.com/take-responsibility-for-your-life/#.VqT5VvkrLnA>

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 2: Accept the Reality of the Marketplace

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Okay, let's just come right out and say it: now is not the best time in history to be looking for a law job.

Globalization, technology and the Internet have permanently disrupted the status quo. Living, breathing lawyers are competing for business with self-help sites and do-it-yourself kits. The traditional law firm model – the foundation of the profession since, well, forever – is dead.

Students are graduating from law school with massive debt and bleak prospects.

It's enough to make a new lawyer consider switching to a more promising line of work, like pizza delivery.

But don't worry. There is an alternative to misery and depression, and that is to get in touch with reality. After all, it is wise to study the terrain before heading off on a journey.

### Law Career Challenge Number 3: Accept Reality

In the late '70s, Chief Justice Warren Burger worried that America was turning into "a society overrun by hordes of lawyers, hungry as locusts." At the time, there were around 450,000 attorneys

in the country, and law schools were cranking out 34,000 new ones every year.

Thirty-five years later, the national attorney count had reached 1.22 million – or nearly triple the number that had caused Chief Justice Burger such consternation. In 2010, the number of 1L students reached an all-time high of more than 52,000, and a year later the law school output hit 44,000. These numbers far outpaced the rate of population growth.

But recently, things have been changing. The flood of students entering law school began receding. In the fall of 2013, the number was down to 39,675, a low-water mark not seen since the 1970s.

Some welcome this trend. They say the country is still over-lawyered and that our culture is being corroded by "creeping legalism."

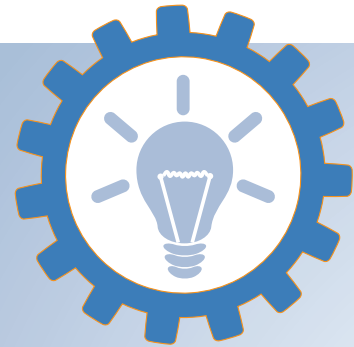
Another key stat: North Carolina ranks 45th among all states in lawyers per capita, with 23 attorneys for every 10,000 residents. The national average is 39 lawyers for every 10,000 people. That doesn't necessarily mean there are more job opportunities in North Carolina and other low-ranking states. It's also a function of the state's population distribution and rural nature.

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**Living, breathing lawyers are competing for business with self-help sites and do-it-yourself kits. The traditional law firm model – the foundation of the profession since, well, forever – is dead**

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## Practice Tip

- North Carolina has 23 attorneys for every 10,000 residents
- NC ranks 45th among all states in lawyers per capita
- The national average is 39 lawyers for every 10,000 people

**BUT CAREFUL:** That doesn't necessarily mean there are more job opportunities in North Carolina and other low-ranking states.

## Five Training Tips

1. **Practice acceptance.** Accepting that the lawyer bubble has burst doesn't mean you have to be happy about it. It simply means you choose to deal with circumstances as they are, rather than as you wish them to be.
2. **Stay informed.** Keep abreast of legal employment and hiring trends. The more you know, the better off you'll be.  
Read this ABA summary of employment and placement data for all U.S. law schools.
3. **Turn change to your advantage.** The same forces that are transforming the legal world – most particularly technology and the web – are also creating exciting new practice possibilities. Virtual law offices are becoming commonplace. New niches – in such disparate areas as cybersecurity and video gaming law – are opening up.
4. **Visit the ABA for Law Students website.** There you'll find study aids, job postings, interviewing tips and other resources. And it's all free.
5. **Acceptance is a powerful tool.** It aligns your inner self with the outer world. Best of all, it puts you on a solid footing to sculpt a career that's buff, toned and built for the long haul.

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**The Last Gen X** <https://lawschooltuitionbubble.wordpress.com/original-research-updated/lawyers-per-capita-by-state/>

**ABA Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar** <http://employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org/>

**National Association of Law Placement** <http://www.nalp.org/>

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 3: Spend Time Doing Absolutely Nothing

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Today's career fitness challenge is to stop.

Stop what, you ask? Stop everything. Do nothing.

It's harder than you think in today's warp-speed world – especially for someone as busy as a law student or new admittee.

"It's much easier to do almost anything incessantly than to spend time doing nothing," says this article in Inc. "Now, more than ever, people fill their schedules to the brim.... You take on a plethora of activities in order to improve your life. What people don't realize is this: Doing nothing gives you the chance to grow. Being alone without obligation – without the nagging feeling that you're doing less than you should – allows you to look inward. Without an activity to distract your mind, you must think about yourself."

The idea is to *be*, not *do*.

And if that sounds a bit too Oprah for you, consider this: financier J.P. Morgan took two months off every year to simply chill. "I can get done in 10 months what I could never do in 12," he famously said.

More and more employers are following Morgan's lead. Companies like Apple, Google, Nike and AOL Time Warner are offering their employees opportunities – through paid leave, flex time, meditation, yoga and the like – to create space in their lives.

### Get Rich by Taking Time Out

Financial guru Porter Stansberry even recommends a money management strategy of doing nothing.

"[T]he most important secret of all is learning to do nothing," he writes here. "Yes, you read that right. I want you to learn how not to buy stocks. How not to trade commodities. How not to sell options or buy corporate bonds.... [N]o one else in finance is going to tell you, the client, to do nothing. It's not in their interest for you to do nothing. We – the professional financial community – need you to do something. Anything. And yes, you can do a lot of powerful things to generate income that will help you weather these storms. But the most powerful thing you can do is nothing."

Obviously, Morgan and Stansberry don't believe the key to success is spending all day watching Netflix on the couch. What they're saying is that when you step back and catch your breath, you will return to your obligations renewed and refreshed. The result: you will be more productive – and creative – than if you had continued slogging along without respite.

And if you protest that you simply don't have the time to do nothing? Well, that should be a tip-off that you might be aboard a runaway train.

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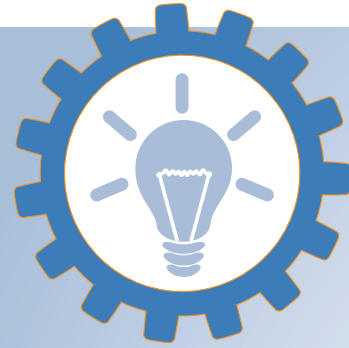
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**Being alone without obligation – without the nagging feeling that you're doing less than you should – allows you to look inward. Without an activity to distract your mind, you must think about yourself.**

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## Five Training Tips

1. **Schedule time for relaxation every day.** It won't happen if you don't carve out space for it. First thing in the morning is a great time. That way, you start the day clear and clean.
2. **Sit silently and breathe.** Feel the cool air coming in and the slightly warmer air going out. Breathe deeply, all the way down to your belly. Doing this will slow your heart rate and relax your body.
3. **Dedicate a "time-out" space in your home or office.** Make sure there are no phones or other devices to distract you.
4. **Start doing yoga, meditation, centering prayer or some other relaxation technique.** Commit to at least 5-10 minutes each day. Increase the time as you go.
5. **Look out the window.** See the clouds in the sky. Watch the trees blowing in the breeze. Observe your thoughts. Are you getting fidgety and anxious? Do you feel compelled to get up and do something?



## Five Training Tips

1. Schedule time for relaxation every day.
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3. Dedicate a "time-out" space in your office or home.
4. Start yoga, meditation, centering prayer or some other relaxation technique.
5. Look out the window.

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Inc <http://www.inc.com/peter-economy/the-remarkable-power-of-doing-absolutely-nothing.html>

Porter Stansberry <http://stansberryresearch.com/investor-education/power-of-doing-nothing/>

St. Louis Health and Wellness Magazine <http://stlhealthandwellness.com/power/>

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 4: Avoid Procrastination and Get Started

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Begin, the rest is easy!

That might sound like fortune cookie advice, but it's actually a key to building a strong and successful practice.

Pick any endeavor – writing a law review article, studying for a torts final, running a marathon – and you'll find the hardest part is taking the first step. After that, everything falls more or less into place.

In fact, getting started is so crucial that three of Stephen Covey's *"Seven Habits of Highly Effective People"* are variations on the same theme:

- Be proactive
- Begin with the end in mind
- Put first things first

### Putting Procrastination in its Place

The big enemy of getting started is procrastination. And make no mistake, this is a formidable foe. It strikes without warning, at all hours of the day or night. It targets people of all ages and occupations. It whispers insidiously in our ear to put off until tomorrow – or better yet, next week or next lifetime – what could and should be done today. Right. This. Minute.

The worst part of procrastination is that we know better. We know we should be studying instead of watching YouTube cat videos. We know we should be updating our resume instead of taking a nap.

We feel guilty about procrastinating, which leads to self-loathing and more procrastination, and on and on the cycle spins.

The way out of this trap is to understand that procrastination is not a sign of weakness or failure. It's a sign of being human.



**Pick any endeavor – writing a law review article, studying for a torts final, running a marathon – and you'll find the hardest part is taking the first step. After that, everything falls more or less into place.**

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The psychologist-authors of *"Procrastination: Why You Do It, What To Do About It"* say the root cause of procrastination is fear. They identify three categories of procrastinators:

- One type puts off completing tasks for fear of being evaluated and criticized.
- A second type is habitually slow in completing assignments for fear of losing control once the job is done.
- A third type tends to put social activities ahead of desk time out of a fear of solitude.

Do you see yourself in any of these descriptions?

### Five Training Tips

1. Read **Rule of Professional Conduct 1.3**. "[3] Perhaps no professional shortcoming is more widely resented than procrastination. A client's interests often can be adversely affected by the

passage of time or the change of conditions. In extreme instances, as when a lawyer overlooks a statute of limitations, the client's legal position may be destroyed. Even when the client's interests are not affected in substance, however, unreasonable delay can cause a client needless anxiety and undermine confidence in the lawyer's trustworthiness."

2. **Follow the three-minute rule.** If during the course of the day you encounter a task that can be accomplished in three minutes or less, stop and do it right then and there. That way, your daily to-do list is not always growing longer.
3. **Clear the decks.** Sweep away the dust and clutter that is preventing you from moving forward. "[G]ather up every single thing that requires action on your part: unopened mail, emails, voicemails, countertop clutter, reading materials, scary catch-all cabinets you can barely open," according to [Getting Things Done](#). "For larger items that don't fit into a desktop inbox (a broken fridge, a leaky faucet) make an individual note and add it to the pile.... [D]evote a separate sheet of paper to each idea or project. A discrete, physical object helps make an idea more concrete, and it lets you track each item individually, increasing its chances of getting done."
4. **Visualize doing something you love.** Ride the wave. Move those positive thoughts and feelings into the procrastinating moment. It might sound goofy, but it works. When you've finished the job, give yourself a reward.
5. **Overcome inertia.** A body at rest tends to stay at rest, and a body in motion tends to stay in motion. Get up off the couch. Do something. Anything. Then keep going.

"What you can do or dream you can do, begin it," says Goethe. "Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

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**The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People** <http://www.amazon.com/The-Habits-Highly-Effective-People/dp/0743269519>

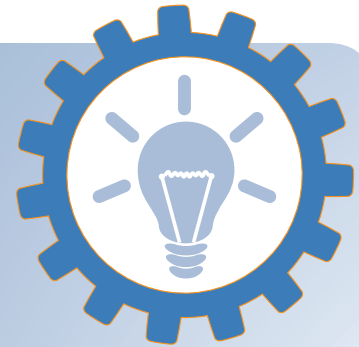
**Procrastination: Why You Do It, What To Do About It Now** <http://www.amazon.com/Procrastination-Why-You-What-About/dp/0738211702>

**N.C. State Bar** <http://www.ncbar.com/rules/rules.asp>

**Power Practice Attorneys** [http://www.powerpracticeattorneys.com/change-anything-you-want-in-10-minutes/?goback=%2Egde\\_2691620\\_member\\_203188607](http://www.powerpracticeattorneys.com/change-anything-you-want-in-10-minutes/?goback=%2Egde_2691620_member_203188607)

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**CBS News** <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-to-get-started-with-getting-things-done/>



## Five Training Tips

1. Read the Rule of Professional Conduct 1.3
2. Follow the 3-minute rule
3. Clear the decks
4. Visualize doing something you love
5. Overcome inertia

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 5: Follow the Rules (of Professional Conduct)

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There's a blueprint for career success that's free, easily and fully guaranteed.

It's called the Rules of Professional Conduct.

Hold on. Don't flee in terror at the prospect of another dry lecture on ethics. The purpose here is not to parse the complexities of conflicts of interest, nor regurgitate the arcana of client trust accounts.

Instead, the point of this challenge is to shift your thinking. It's true that the RPCs outline your ethical obligations. It's also true that if you don't follow them you can face professional discipline.

But the rules are as much carrot as stick. They spell out everything it takes to be a stellar attorney. They exist not just to keep you out of trouble, but to help you take your career to the next level.

### A Brief History of the Rules of Professional Conduct

The American Bar Association enacted the [Model Rules of Professional Conduct](#) in 1983. They evolved from a roughly hundred-year patchwork of ethical canons and professional standards. Within a few years of enactment of the Model Rules, most states had adopted their own ethical guidelines.

North Carolina's Rules of Professional Conduct are found [here](#). In most respects they mirror the Model Rules.

Starting with its Preamble, the rules make it clear that lawyers play different roles. They are members of the legal profession. They are representatives of clients. They are officers of the legal system. They are public citizens with a special responsibility for the quality of

justice. They are third-party neutrals who help parties resolve disputes.

When serving as a representative, lawyers can wear

different hats:

- As advisor, you educate your client about their legal rights and obligations and explain the practical implications of each.
- As advocate, you zealously assert your client's position under the rules of the adversary system.
- As negotiator, you strive to get a great result for your client consistent with the requirement of honest dealings with others.
- As an evaluator, you examine your client's legal affairs and make an assessment of what's what.

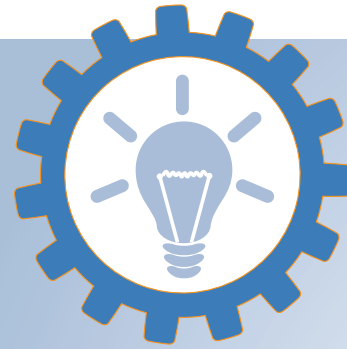
From this basic overview, the Rules go on to tell you what to do in pretty much any imaginable situation – and this is where they become a blueprint for success:

- Rule 1 – Duties to your client
- Rule 2 – Duties as counselor
- Rule 3 – Duties as advocate
- Rule 4 – Dealing with people other than your client
- Rule 5 – Obligations of a law firm
- Rule 6 – Pro bono and public service
- Rule 7 – Advertising and marketing
- Rule 8 – Bar admission, discipline and disbarment

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**Starting with its Preamble, the rules make it  
clear that lawyers play different roles.**”

## Five Training Tips

1. Copy the Table of Contents and post them where you can see them every day.
2. Understand that the rules are just that – rules. They are not lofty aspirations. If you don't follow them you can lose your license.
3. Don't try to be all things to all people. As the rules point out, you can be everything from an advocate to an arbitrator. It all depends on the hat you happen to be wearing at any given time.
4. Remember the Three C's: competence, communication and confidentiality.
5. Remember that ethics opinions interpret and clarify the rules. If you're unsure what to do in a situation, you can contact a State Bar counsel for advice.



## The Rules of Professional Conduct

**RULE 1.** Duties to your client

**RULE 2.** Duties as counselor

**RULE 3.** Duties as advocate

**RULE 4.** Dealing with people other than your client

**RULE 5.** Obligations of a law firm

**RULE 6.** Pro bono and public service

**RULE 7.** Advertising and marketing

**RULE 8.** Bar admission, discipline and disbarment

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**American Bar Association model Rules of Professional Conduct** [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional\\_responsibility/publications/model\\_rules\\_of\\_professional\\_conduct/model\\_rules\\_of\\_professional\\_conduct\\_table\\_of\\_contents.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/model_rules_of_professional_conduct_table_of_contents.html)

**North Carolina State Bar Rules of Professional Conduct** <http://www.ncbar.com/rules/rpcsearch.asp>

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 6: To Thine Ownself Be True

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You might think being yourself is the easiest thing in the world. Actually it's one of the hardest – especially for lawyers.

That's because on any given day a lawyer may be called upon to wear different hats: advocate, counselor, partner, associate, businessperson, bill collector, orator, cajoler, teammate, gofer, researcher, marketer, good cop, bad cop, etc.

Not to mention the off-duty hats: parent, spouse, friend, neighbor, PTA volunteer.

The hat you wear affects what you say and do. How you act in the courtroom is different than when you're at home or out jogging with your pals.

Then there are the twin terrors of competition and expectation. Lawyers are supposed to win. They are expected to have answers. They are not rewarded for losing, admitting weakness or making mistakes.

Over the course of a career, these pressures can cause you to lose sight of the person you were before Torts 101.

"I defined my self-worth by comparing myself with others," writes [this divorce lawyer/life coach](#). "I tried to be perceived as perfect, so I created unattainable standards that left me disconnected. During my mid twenties I became exhausted of worrying about being inconsistent and acting differently around different people. I became disconnected to others and wasn't able to cultivate meaningful relationships."

### Don't Confuse Your Self with Your Business Card

Our society values authenticity. We want the real deal, not some cheap substitute. We distrust phony

people. We are drawn to the true, the unchanging, the authentic.

And yet to succeed in this crazy world, we have to assume different roles. But here's the thing: as long as you understand you are playing a role, no problem. The trouble starts when you confuse your essential self with the words on your letterhead or business card.

This is the wisdom behind the spiritual admonition to "be in the world, but not of it." Play the game – and play to win – but don't lose yourself in the process.

"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." E.E. Cummings

### Five Training Tips

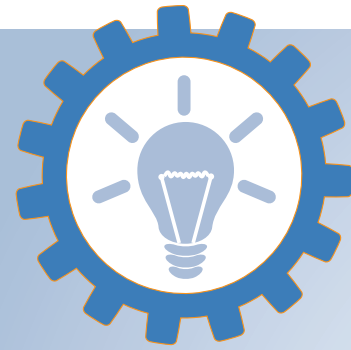
1. **Seek harmony inside and out.** [Psychologists identify](#) two types of authenticity. "First, there is our outer authenticity – how well what we say and do matches what is really going on inside us. Second, there is our inner authenticity – how well we actually know ourselves and are aware of our inner states."
2. **Practice letting things go.** You lose a case. You snap at a co-worker. You are passed over for a promotion. Don't let momentary and fleeting setbacks shake your sense of self. Learn from your mistakes. Then drop it and move on.
3. **Accept your limitations.** You don't need to have the solution to every problem. It's okay to admit you don't know. "The emphasis is always and continually on self-knowledge, knowing oneself and honestly accepting – owning – one's imperfections," says [The Spirituality of Imperfection](#). "For honesty is first and foremost honesty with self, and true honesty



concerns acknowledging and accepting our own imperfection.”

4. **Keep plugging away.** Authenticity requires intention and commitment. Check in with yourself periodically each day to find out what you’re doing, saying, thinking and feeling. Be honest with what you discover.
5. **Read Shakespeare.** “This above all – to thine own self be true,” says Polonius to Hamlet.

Here is how Steve Jobs put it: “Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.”



## Five Training Tips

1. Seek harmony inside and out.
2. Practice letting things go.
3. Accept your limitations.
4. Keep plugging away.
5. Read Shakespeare..

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 7: When You're Picking Grapes, Pick Grapes

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The surest path to career success is to bring your full attention to what you're doing right now – however mundane and trivial the task may be.

That's the meaning behind the Zen saying: "When you're picking grapes, pick grapes."

It's more challenging than you think.

Let's say you start out picking grapes. You're doing great. You're having fun, picking like crazy. Pretty soon you get bored. Your back starts to ache. Your mind wanders. You think about what you're having for dinner. You think of all the unchecked items on your to-do list. It's a beautiful day and here you are stuck picking grapes. You look across the street and see a guy picking apples. You wish you had his job. Apples are way better than grapes. Plus he's probably making twice as much money.

Before you know it, you're boiling with resentment. You hate picking grapes. You deserve better.

You know how this story ends. You will either quit your grape-picking job in frustration, get fired for having a lousy attitude or sink into a life of toil and misery.

### **The Power of Now. But there is an alternate ending:**

"Are you resisting your here and now?" asks Eckhart Tolle in [The Power of Now](#). "The Now, of course, also implies the here. Some people would always rather be somewhere else. Their 'here' is never good enough. Through self-observation, find out if that is the case in your life. Wherever you are, be there totally. If you find your here and now intolerable and it makes you unhappy, you have three options: remove yourself from the situation, change it, or accept it totally. If you want

to take responsibility for your life, you must choose one of those three options, and you must choose now. Then accept the consequences. No excuses. No negativity. No psychic pollution. Keep your inner space clear."

The flip side of denying the Now is trying to fill it with so much activity you delude yourself into thinking you're being super-productive. This is called multitasking. You drive to work while listening to the radio while checking your voicemail while monitoring your GPS while having a sort-of conversation with your passenger.

It might feel like you're clicking on all cylinders. You're not. You're actually getting less done than if you'd simply concentrated on one task at a time.

"[W]hat we have just uncovered in the last couple of years ... is that although we think we're multitasking, we're not," said psychologist and neuroscientist Daniel Levitin on the [Diane Rehm Show](#). "The brain doesn't actually work that way. What we're doing is timesharing our attention. We pay attention to one thing for a second or two and then another thing and then another thing and we come back around to the first. We fracture our attention to little itty-bitty bits without really focusing on any one thing."

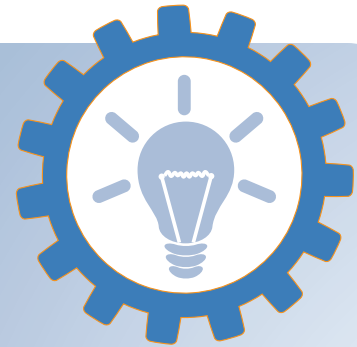
You're also making yourself sick. Literally. Multitasking causes headaches, exhaustion and insomnia. If it becomes your standard mode of operation, it can lead to chronic back pain, stomach troubles, heart disease and depression, [according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#).

### **Five Training Tips**

1. **Avoid information overload.** Today we absorb five times as much information – through

smartphones, social media, tweets, the Internet – than we did in 1986, studies show. That’s the equivalent of reading 176 newspapers from cover to cover.

2. **Get a grip on the Now.** You can do this anywhere, anytime. If you’re driving, be aware of the physical sensations of your body. Feel your hands on the steering wheel. Feel your feet on the floorboards. Breathe. Feel the cool air coming in through your nose and the slightly warmer air going out. Getting in touch with your body is an easy way to bring awareness to the Now.
3. **Know your limits.** Two decades ago, it was thought that the brain could process five to nine things at once. Actually we can only competently do two or three things at a time.
4. **Take a walk.** Or stare out the window and daydream, because guess what? It’s good for you. “[I]f you feel that your mind is wandering, rather than reaching for another cup of coffee, give in to your brain,” says Levitin. “Let your mind wander and you’ll find that after 10 or 15 minutes of that, you’re completely refreshed. You’ve restored some of the glucose that’s been taken up with decision making, calmed the cortisol release, the stress hormone. And people who take breaks like this, 15 minutes every couple hours – although their bosses think that they’re being lazy – at the end of the day, they’ve gotten more work done and their work has been more creative.”
5. **Practice surrender.** “[I]f you can’t remove yourself from the situation, then accept you’re here and now by totally dropping all inner resistance,” says Tolle. “The false, unhappy self that loves feeling miserable, resentful or sorry for itself can then no longer survive. This is called surrender. Surrender is not weakness. There is great strength in it. Through surrender, you will be free internally of the situation.”



## Five Training Tips

1. Avoid information overload
2. Get a grip on the Now
3. Know your limits
4. Take a walk
5. Practice surrender

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 8: Stop Losing Your Car Keys

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How can you expect to have a great career if you keep losing your car keys?

Or your house or office keys? Or your wallet or smartphone or online banking password, for that matter? Or, heaven forbid, a client file?

Chances are you've misplaced at least one of these items in the recent past. So you know the feeling. It throws you off your game. You waste time, energy and, sometimes, money searching for the lost object. You lose your patience and composure. You might also lose your job.

The remedy, of course, is to be organized.

That's not easy for everyone. Decluttering is not taught in law school. And for some people, clutter is a way of life. This is not always a bad thing. Some studies show that certain personality types are more creative and productive in a chaotic work environment. Psychologists call this the "[messy desk](#)" phenomenon.

But if your mess causes you to mess up – by making a mistake, missing an appointment or neglecting an important matter – then you've got a problem.

### Disorganization Leads to Blown Deadlines

Year in and year out, a leading cause of malpractice claims at Lawyers Mutual is missed deadlines like statutes of limitation. Lawyers hit with these claims

are not incompetent or unqualified. They simply lack effective systems and procedures to prevent important dates from slipping through the cracks.

There are lots of time management and office organizing tools that can keep you on track. But you don't need to buy a new app to protect yourself against unforced errors.

Often, you simply need to pay attention. Take the matter of lost keys. Experts advise pausing a second before putting your keys down to snap a mental picture of the location. Is it a desk or a counter? Wood or metal surface? These contextual details will help you recall the spot later.

"You can think of the process our brains use to form a memory as working (roughly) like a camera: the person, place, or thing we remember gets stored, like a snapshot, in [a specific set of brain cells in our hippocampus](#)," says [this source](#). "Misplacing everyday objects is normal, especially when we aren't paying attention to where we put something in the first place. When you put down that pen, for example, were you focused on putting down the pen, or were you thinking of something else, like phone call you were about to answer? If your brain wasn't paying attention to where you were putting the pen, [it didn't get a chance to store, or encode, the memory](#) properly."

**Another tip:** become a creature of habit. Designate stash zones for important items. Keeping things in the same place all the time will cut losses.

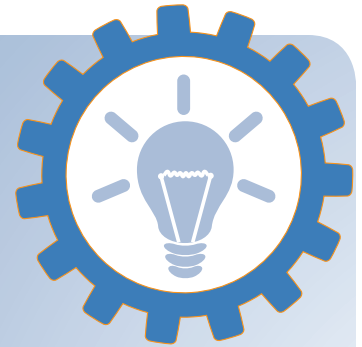


**There are lots of time management and office organizing tools that can keep you on track. But you don't need to buy a new app to protect yourself against unforced errors . . . Often, you simply need to pay attention.**

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## Five Training Tips

1. **Practice uni-tasking.** Doing too many things at once is distracting. You will get more done if you focus on one job at a time, and you will make fewer mistakes. By the same token, avoid distractions by switching off popup notifications on your computer when you're deep into an important project.
2. **Use memory tricks.** Try saying "KEW-P" before leaving home, to remind yourself not to forget your keys, eyeglasses, wallet and phone.
3. **Use checklists.** There's a reason airline pilots use the same checklist before taking off even though they have flown successfully for years. The checklist removes memory from the equation.
4. **Get plenty of rest.** Schedule breaks during the day. Take a nap at lunch. You forget things when you are tired.
5. **Delegate and use backup systems.** Ask your partner or colleague to help remind you of important dates. Set your alarm clock. Enter deadlines on your Google calendar and a backup desk calendar.



## Practice Tip

Year in and year out, a leading cause of malpractice claims at Lawyers Mutual is **MISSED DEADLINES** like statutes of limitation.

Lawyers hit with these claims are not incompetent or unqualified. They simply lack effective systems and procedures to prevent important dates from slipping through the cracks

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 9: Maintain a Sense of Humor

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Want to have a stellar law career?

Tell more jokes.

Laughter is good for the mind and body. It reduces stress by inhibiting the stress-hormone cortisol. It reduces pain by increasing the flow of pleasure-boosting endorphins. It improves your immune system by producing T-cells, interferon and globulin proteins.

These benefits will make you a better lawyer – and that’s no joke.

In his book “Anatomy of an Illness,” Saturday Review editor Norman Cousins tells how humor helped cure his life-threatening disease. His drug of choice: classic Marx Brothers comedies. And though his recovery was not based solely on a few good chuckles (vitamins were also a big part of his regimen), the proof was undeniable. He lived a productive and active life well into his 80s.

“Today we have a better understanding of how laughter affects human physiology,” writes [this expert](#). “[H]umor has a positive impact on intellectual and emotional functioning. It helps put life’s trials and tribulations into healthy perspective by making them seem smaller, aids us in overcoming fear, allows us to take ourselves less seriously and triggers our creativity.”

### Comedy as a Career Strategy

An easy grin will also help you land a job. In [a survey of business executives](#), 84 percent said people with a sense of humor do a better job, and 91 percent said humor is a key to career advancement.

Not only that, but when you get hired, you’ll be the most popular player on the team.

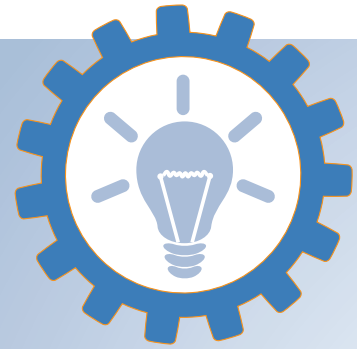
“People want to work with people they like,” says the author of [What Most Successful People Do at Work](#). “Why wouldn’t you?”

You spend huge chunks of your waking hours at work, so you don’t want it to be a death march. You need to be funny, but not snarky (that’s not good for team building) and you can’t offend anyone.”

Humor brings people together and eases stress – creating a work environment where great things happen.

It can also protect and prolong your career. A study of emergency room physicians found that patients were less likely to sue doctors who brought a sense of humor into the examining room. This was true even for dire cases involving fatal diseases. Adding a light touch – despite the gravity of the situation – made the doctor seem more authentic, caring and compassionate.

“  
**Humor brings people together  
and eases stress – creating a work  
environment where great things  
happen . . . It can also protect  
and prolong your career.**



## Practice Tip

### USE HUMOR.

It has a positive impact on intellectual and emotional functioning.

Humor is a key to career advancement, and helping you land a job.

Humor creates a good work environment.

Humor can protect and prolong your career.

## Five Training Tips

1. **Hang around funny people.** They don't have to be standup comics. But surrounding yourself with positive, happy souls will improve your attitude and enhance your productivity.
2. **Turn to laughter when you're feeling stuck.** If you've hit a creative wall and are making no forward progress, try moving sideways. Watch a funny movie. Attend a show at your local comedy/improv theater. Recall a humorous incident that happened recently. It might just get the creative juices flowing.
3. **Lighten up.** The law is serious business, but it's not life or death. You win some and you lose some. Practice letting go. Learn to travel light. Don't burden yourself with a sack filled with professional regrets and resentments. It will only give you a backache.
4. **Include humor in your job search criteria.** When you interview, look around your prospective workplace. Do the employees seem gleeful or glum? Do they smile or sneer? "Employees like to work for and with others who have a sense of humor," according to [this piece](#). "We all prefer to have fun at work. It should not feel like indentured servitude."
5. **Be Like Ike.** "A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done." (Dwight D. Eisenhower)

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge – Number 10: Go The Extra Mile

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Today’s challenge is to go the extra mile in whatever you do.

This is a tough one. It’s easier to do the bare minimum – but no more – to pass the course, or graduate from law school, or land a job, or complete a project. Then you move on to the next thing and again do just enough to get by. And so it goes.

What this produces is mediocrity. Not excellence. Not failure. But a middling, mushy outcome that leaves you more or less right where you started.

Like all clichés, the one about giving 110 percent contains more than a kernel of truth. When we push ourselves, we find we can actually do more than we imagined.

Anyone who has taken up a sport like running knows this. At first you can’t make it around the block. But if you keep lacing on the shoes and plugging away – even when you feel your tank is empty – you will soon be going an extra mile. Literally.

### Smart Career Strategy

This challenge, though, is about more than personal improvement. It’s about career success.

“Developing the habit of going the extra mile and rendering service above and beyond expectations is a smart business decision that pays big dividends,” says [this sales consultant](#). “[It] enhances customer loyalty, increases sales and promotes positive word-of-mouth advertising.”

This sales advice applies to a career in law as well. If a project is due on Friday, turn it in on Thursday. If you’re expected to arrive by 8:00, show up at 7:30. If you’re asked to carry a box up one flight of stairs, go one more.

Your career prospects will blossom. And here’s the best part: you don’t have to become a Type A person to get there. You don’t have to be aggressive. Quite the opposite. People love to work with someone who is cool, relaxed and soft-spoken. In stressful situations, going the extra mile might mean nothing more than holding your tongue, defusing tension with humor or just walking away from a potential confrontation.

### Five Training Tips

1. **Do things the right way.** Don’t shirk, cheat or take shortcuts. Take as long as necessary to do a stellar job. This alone will put you ahead of the pack.



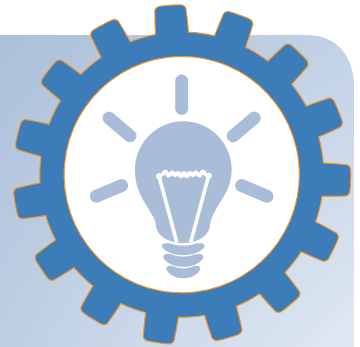
**People love to work with someone who is cool, relaxed and soft-spoken.  
In stressful situations, going the extra mile might mean nothing more  
than holding your tongue, defusing tension with humor or just walking  
away from a potential confrontation.**

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2. **Think outside the box.** Don't sit and complain about problems. Come up with creative solutions. An imaginative, innovative employee will rise quickly.
3. **Develop positive habits.** Thoughts become words. Words become actions. Actions, over time, become habits.
4. **Be a team player.** Build bridges with your colleagues. Pitch in when they need help – with no expectation that they owe you a favor in return. Provide encouragement and constructive feedback. Look for ways to make their work lives easier. Schedule lunch or coffee dates to get to know them better.
5. **Follow up.** Send handwritten thank you notes after interviews. Pass along interesting articles and information. Return phone calls and emails promptly. Try to stay ahead of the game.

## Five Training Tips



1. Do things the right way.
2. Think outside the box.
3. Develop positive habits.
4. Be a team player.
5. Follow up.

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## Law Career Fitness Challenge Number 11: Budget Your Time and Money

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You wouldn't think of taking an important trip without something – a map or an app – to guide you safely to your destination.

Similarly, you can't make important time and money decisions without a budget.

Today's challenge is to budget your time and money. You might already be skilled at this. If so, consider this a refresher course. If not, you'll be surprised at how easy it is.

In its simplest form, a budget is nothing more than a summary of (a) what you've got, and (b) what you want to do with it. Regarding time, we all have the same amount: 24 hours a day, 60 minutes an hour. The question is: how do we choose to spend it?

Money is trickier. We all have different amounts, which can change from day to day. But the ultimate question is the same: how do we choose to spend it?

### Time Management

You can delude yourself into thinking you're managing your time by buying an app or calendar to do it for you. There are many to choose from. But that's not a real solution. The product won't work if you don't use it, or if you use it intermittently or incorrectly.

The real solution is to change your thinking. Realize that there are only a few ways to spend your time: thoughts, conversations, actions. Maybe sleeping, if you don't consider that an activity.

Then take an honest inventory of how you're presently filling your days. [These experts](#) recommend carrying a notebook to log all your thoughts, conversations and

activities for a week: "This will help you understand how much you can get done during the course of a day and where your precious moments are going. You'll see how much time is actually spent producing results and how much time is wasted on unproductive thoughts, conversations and actions."

All that's left to do is prepare a daily and monthly schedule – and then stick to it. See? No big trick.

### Five Training Tips for Budgeting Your Time

1. **Schedule appointments with yourself.** Block out time alone to pay bills, work out or study. Mark it on your calendar. Make these self-appointments as sacred as any other.
2. **Take charge of your day.** It is empowering to arrange your thoughts, conversations and activities in a manner that suits you, not someone else.
3. **Plan on interruptions.** Even the best-laid plans will be disrupted by unforeseen events. This is especially true in a law office. Build extra time into your schedule just in case.
4. **Start each day with a schedule.** Do this first thing every morning.
5. **Minimize distractions.** These will wreck your schedule. If you're on deadline, turn off your phone and email. Disable popup notifications. Tape a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door or work off-site where it's quiet.

### Money Management

Preparing a financial budget is as simple as taking a single sheet of paper and making two lists. On one list, write down all your monthly sources of income (wages, parents, loans, eBay sales, etc.). On the other list, write

down all your expenses.

The first list will be easier. You know where your money comes from. The second list is harder. You will almost certainly underestimate how much you spend. That's why you are so often dismayed at being unable to withdraw ATM money because your account is empty.

To get a handle on your expenses, keep a spreadsheet to track every single penny you spend for one month. Enter expenditures each day.

Once you've got an accurate picture of income and expenses, compare the two lists. If income exceeds expenses, congratulations. You're running a surplus. Open a savings account or take a trip to Miami. If you're running a deficit, cut expenses or figure out how to boost income. Either way, add a cushion for unexpected expenses like car repairs or visits from the in-laws.

### Five Training Tips for Budgeting Your Money

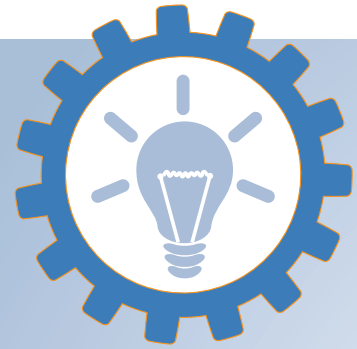
1. **Set financial goals.** What do you want to do with your money? Buy a new car? Pay off debt? Make choices and begin moving forward.
2. **Be SMART.** All financial goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.
3. **Look to the future.** Divide goals into short-term (less than one year), mid-term (one to three years) and long-term (more than five years).
4. **Prioritize expenses.** Some are essential and fixed (rent, car payment). Some are essential but variable (gas, food). Others are nonessential (Netflix, road trips). Cut costs from the third category first.
5. **Eliminate debt.** Borrowing is not a long-term financial strategy.

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## Training Tips

### 5 TIPS FOR BUDGETING YOUR TIME.

1. Schedule appointments with yourself.
2. Take charge of your day.
3. Plan on interruptions.
4. Start each day with a schedule.
5. Minimize distractions.

### 5 TIPS FOR BUDGETING YOUR MONEY.

1. Set financial goals.
2. Be SMART.
3. Look to the future.
4. Prioritize expenses.
5. Eliminate debt.

## **Law Career Challenge 12: Learn From Defeats**

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It's guaranteed that if you practice law long enough, you will suffer defeats.

You'll lose a case. Your client will drop you for another lawyer. Your firm will split up, leaving you without a job.

These things happen every day in the wonderful world of law. And while they certainly look like defeats, when viewed from a different angle they take on a new meaning. They become opportunities for growth.

"Whenever anything negative happens to you, there is a deep lesson concealed in it, although you may not see it at the time," [writes Eckhart Tolle in "The Power of Now."](#) "Even a brief illness or an accident can show you what is real and unreal in your life, what ultimately matters and what doesn't. There have been many people for whom limitation, failure, loss, illness, or pain in whatever form turned out to be their greatest teacher. It gave them depth, humility and compassion. It made them more real."

Today's challenge is to turn setbacks into successes.

### **Lemons and Lemonade**

You've probably heard how Abraham Lincoln failed repeatedly in business and politics before becoming president. You've been told Thomas Edison struggled for years before finding a workable filament for the light-bulb. You know you should make lemonade when life serves you lemons.

But how to go about doing it? How to get back on your feet after being knocked down? How to turn a minus into a plus?

Inspirational stories and locker room slogans won't do

the trick. What you need is practical advice, and that begins by doing nothing. (*This would be a good time to glance back at Challenge Number 3*).

Smart decisions are rarely made in the churning aftermath of a bad experience. Allow some time for the dust to settle (curling in a fetal position is optional). Once you've gained the clarifying perspective of time and distance, sit down to examine what happened.

Don't point fingers. You will end up the loser. It's easy to blame defeats to other people or even bad luck. Don't do it. It saps your time and energy.

Be a tough personal critic, but don't beat yourself up. The point is not to wallow in misery but make an honest accounting of: (a) what you did right, (b) where you went wrong, and (c) and what you can do to improve.

### **Peering Into the Shadow**

Sometimes when you look inward you won't like what you see. You might find there are parts of yourself that are sabotaging your success.

Psychologists call this our shadow self. We all have personality traits that are unflattering and that we would prefer to keep hidden. So we do our best to deny, hide and suppress these darker urges and impulses.

But that doesn't mean they go away. They emerge in behaviors like working too much, drinking too much and buying stuff we don't need. They manifest in acts ranging from the benign – bingeing on doughnuts after dieting for three days – to the malignant – stealing from the trust account when we can't pay the rent.

"The shadow exists within all of us. It is a part of us

and yet we spend most of our life running from it,” according to *“The Shadow Effect”* by Deepak Chopra, Marianne Williamson and Debbie Ford. “But far from being scary, our dark side holds the promise of a better, more fulfilling life.”

The secret is to embrace, not erase your shadow self. Once you drag your self-defeating behaviors into the clear light of awareness, they shrivel and fade like Dracula.

### Five Training Tips

1. **Practice non-judgment.** What’s done is done. Accept it. This doesn’t mean you have to like what happened. It means you choose not to waste time labeling events as “good” or “bad.” Start from where you are and grow from there.
2. **Start a journal or diary.** Write down your thoughts and feelings after a tough experience. What factors contributed to the loss? What might you have done differently? The physical act of putting it down on paper will help you let it go.
3. **Confront your Dark Side, Luke Skywalker.** “We’re often afraid of looking at our shadow because we want to avoid the shame or embarrassment that comes along with admitting mistakes,” [writes Marianne Williamson](#). “We feel that if we take a deep look at ourselves, we’ll be too exposed. But the thing we should actually fear is not looking at it, for our denial of the shadow is exactly what fuels it.”
4. **Don’t compare yourself to others.** You will always find people better and worse off than you are. Look inward, not outward. Celebrate what you do well, and work on areas that need improvement.
5. **Face facts.** “With the acknowledgement and acceptance of the facts also comes a degree of freedom from them,” [writes Tolle](#). “Every crisis represents not only danger but opportunity.”

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## Law Career Challenge 13: Practice Teamwork

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A sure ticket for a great career is to become a team player.

You don't have to be the star – and at the beginning of your career you surely won't be. You don't even have to be in the starting lineup.

You just have to develop the qualities of a good teammate: loyalty, reliability, openness to new ideas, coming through in the clutch. If you do, managers will be stumbling over themselves to recruit you.

It starts by putting the team's needs ahead of your own.

"Everyone in a team has their own needs and their own ideas about what they would like to get out of the experience," says [this commentator](#). "However, it's important to make sure your personal needs do not get in the way of what the team is trying to accomplish. And if you feel like your needs aren't being met, be sure to talk to the team leader about your concerns."

Another key quality is positivity. Team players don't sit on the bench and sulk if they don't get their way. They cheer on their mates. They offer praise and encouragement. They stay positive.

A sense of humor also helps. Every sports team has players who are great in the clubhouse. They keep things light. They bring fun to the ballpark. They are just as valuable as the superstar athletes.

### 12 Core Values of a Stellar Team

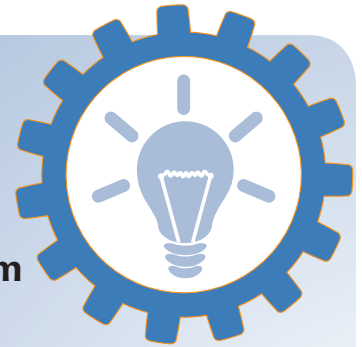
UNC Women's Soccer Coach Anson Dorrance knows a thing or two about winning. His teams have won 22 NCAA national titles and 20 of 27 ACC championships.

Over the years he has developed 12 Core Values for Team Success:

1. We don't whine.
2. The truly extraordinary **do** something every day.
3. Make your experience rich, valuable and deep.
4. We work hard.
5. We don't freak out over ridiculous issues or live in fragile states of emotional catharsis or create crises where none should exist.
6. We choose to be positive.
7. We treat everyone with respect.
8. We care about each other as teammates and human beings.
9. When we don't play as much as we would like we are noble and still support the team and its mission.
10. We play for each other.
11. We are well led.
12. We want our lives to be never-ending ascensions, but for that to happen properly our fundamental attitude about life and our appreciation for it is critical.

### Five Training Tips

1. **Meet your deadlines.** According to a survey of senior corporate executives, the most highly-valued team trait is meeting deadlines. "When you're doing one part of a larger project, as is often the case when you're on a team at work, you can hold up everyone else if you don't get your work done on time," says [this recruiting expert](#). "A good team player is someone other team members know they can depend on."
2. **Be adaptable.** One way to become indispensable: offer to change how you work if the team would benefit.



## Training Tip:

### 12 Core Values for Team Success

3. **Create solutions.** Don't just point out problems. Suggest ways to do things better.
4. **Be cooperative.** Talk to your teammates candidly and respectfully. Ask for help when you need it. Offer to help when you see others need it. Don't work in the shadows. Be inclusive, especially on joint projects. Offer constructive feedback. Don't take things personally.
5. **Venture outside your comfort zone.** A team environment is a great place to grow and develop new skills. Ask to take on new matters. Spend time in other departments. You will become more versatile – and you will become a more valuable contributor to the team.

1. Don't whine.
2. The truly extraordinary do something every day.
3. Make your experience rich, valuable and deep.
4. Work hard.
5. Don't freak out over ridiculous issues or live in fragile states of emotional catharsis or create crises where none should exist.
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12. We want our lives to be never-ending ascensions, but for that to happen properly our fundamental attitude about life and our appreciation for it is critical.

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#### Sources:

**Monster.com** <http://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/5-ways-to-be-a-good-team-player-hot-jobs>

**College Recruiter** <https://www.collegerecruiter.com/blog/2015/07/14/10-qualities-of-an-excellent-team-player-at-any-workplace/>

**College Recruiter** <https://www.collegerecruiter.com/blog/2013/10/03/theres-no-i-in-team-how-to-truly-become-a-team-player/>

**Anson Dorrance Core Values** <https://jpoletti.files.wordpress.com/2007/08/core-values.pdf>

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## Law Career Challenge Number 14: Practice Asking For Help

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Do you find it hard to ask for help?

Do you prefer to keep your business private and try to fix problems yourself when they arise?

That's fine. Autonomy is a good thing. But what if you can't fix the problem? What if it only gets worse? Maybe it's a difficult case or client. Or a larger issue involving sex, money, food, relationships, drugs or alcohol.

You come up with one great idea after another, but nothing works. The problem grows worse. You keep running into walls. You feel yourself sinking.

### Try asking for help.

This is a challenge for some of us. We were raised to be self-sufficient. We were taught to be strong and independent. We come from cultural and religious backgrounds that preach the virtues of suffering in silence and sucking it up.

### Reach Out and Find Relief

But we don't have to stay this way. We can choose to ask for help. We can choose to see this as an act of empowerment and strength, not weakness. It can lead us out of some dark and dismal places.

Lawyers could certainly use it. Alcohol and drug abuse

is higher among our profession than others. Suicide rates are higher. Stress, depression, anxiety and other health problems are higher.

The law is a big deal, and pressure goes with the territory. What lawyers do every day – the decisions they make, the actions they take – has a direct impact on people's lives. This is a heavy burden.

Asking for help is a way to lighten the load.

“  
**True leaders – in sports,  
business and the military – are  
inclusive. They know when and  
how to ask for help.**

### Take it From Top Coaches

Some people are naturally comfortable reaching out to others. They do it instinctively. Others are more tucked-in.

If you are a lone ranger, take heart. The more you practice asking for help, the better you will get at it. It's easy. Start by practicing self-awareness. Every now and then take a mental step back and see how you are doing. If you find you've dug yourself into a hole, have the sense to stop digging and put the shovel down. Then go get some help.

We get by with a little help from our friends.

You will be pleasantly surprised to find most people will welcome the opportunity.

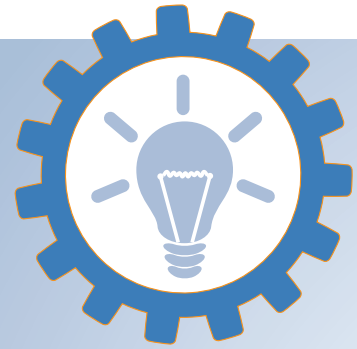
Remember to go to the right place, though. Solicit help only from sources you feel are professional and trustworthy.



A final note: asking others for help is a smart career strategy. True leaders – in sports, business and the military – are inclusive. They know when and how to ask for help. They recruit top talent, and they ask that talent to go out and execute – the key word being “ask.”

### Five Training Tips

1. **Know where to go if you’re feeling low.** A great North Carolina resource is [BarCARES](#). This group offers free mental health counseling to lawyers, law students and families across the state. Its confidential, short-term services cover depression and anxiety, alcohol and substance use, marriage and parenting, financial concerns, work stressors and time management.
2. **Consider the Lawyers Assistance Program.** The [NC State Bar helps lawyers](#) struggling with alcohol, drugs or mental health issues through its Lawyer Assistance Program. The LAP has a trained staff and network of lawyer-volunteers.
3. **Recognize the warning signs. Pay attention.** Watch for red flags that mean you are sinking into a sad place. You lose your sense of humor. You stop jogging or listening to music or going to the movies. You lose interest in things that usually bring you pleasure.
4. **Call Lawyers Mutual.** If you are stressed about a case or worried you might have made a mistake, call the claims department at [Lawyers Mutual](#). Their lawyers have been where you are. They can help.
5. Remember this adage. **A problem shared is a problem halved.**



### Training Tips

1. Know where to go if you are feeling low.
2. Consider the Lawyers Assistance Program.
3. Recognize the warning signs.
4. Call Lawyers Mutual.
5. Don’t be afraid to share your problem(s).

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### Sources:

NC BarCARES <http://www.ncbar.org/members/barcares/>

NC Lawyers Assistance Program <http://www.nclap.org/>

Lawyers Mutual <http://www.lawyersmutualinc.com/>

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## Law Career Challenge Number 15: Have Controlled Attention

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When you face a challenging situation – something lawyers do every day – you want to bring full attention to the task.

We get in trouble when we allow our attention to hop up and wander about like an unsupervised toddler.

This is sometimes hard to do.

Our lives are so busy. We are pulled in different directions. Our phones are blowing up, our devices beeping.

Often our bodies are here, but our thoughts are elsewhere.

“Turns out, human brains are in the moment for just over half of our waking hours—a sad 53 percent – according to a [study](#) from Harvard University,” says [this source](#). “The other 47 percent of the time we’re zoned out, thinking of something else. Unfortunately, mind wandering can happen at the wrong moment – like when your boss is giving a presentation and asks you a question.”

### Turning Intent into Action

Riches await those who control their attention. We’re not talking here about a flitting, casual sort of attention, but one that is deliberate and sustained. Full attention that draws a bead on the target and does not waver.

Attention keeps us focused. We hit the bulls-eye, ace the exam, nail the winning shot. We are able to proof-read and edit a complicated legal document so that it does exactly what you want it to do.



**. . . human brains are in the moment for just over half of our waking hours – a sad 53 percent – according to a study from Harvard University**

### Feed Your Brain by Sitting Down

One way to improve your attention span is to meditate.

A [study](#) at UCal-Santa Barbara showed that students who took a mindfulness class and meditated for 10 to 20 minutes four times a week for two weeks scored higher on

attention tests than students who changed their diet and focused on healthy eating.

Another tip: start taking notes manually, using paper and pen (preferably Uni-Ball black, medium-tip, just saying).

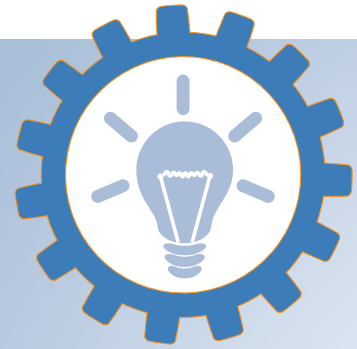
Here are some other tips, courtesy of [FastCompany](#):

- Exercise
- Stay hydrated
- Ask questions
- Listen to music
- Drink tea

Even chewing gum can help. “Chewing itself is arousing because it tells the body that nutrients are on their way to the brain, and gum can reduce hunger pangs. So grab a stick of Doublemint and improve your breath and focus.”

## Five Training Tips

1. **Vision first, then action.** Come up with a mental picture of what you want to do or where you want to go. Focus your attention on the steps required to get there. Come up with a plan – to-do lists, calendar items – and get going.
2. **Get adequate sleep.** We live in a sleep-deprived society. We walk around like zombies, functioning at half-speed. Our brains don't work well when we're tired. Our attention wanes. Practice creating time and space for restful, undisturbed sleep. Your attention will sharpen as your energy grows.
3. **Turn off machines.** These distractions are easily avoided. Just hit the off button.
4. **Practice uni-tasking.** According to the latest research, multi-tasking not only causes stress, insomnia and other health problems, it also doesn't work. Take a kinder, gentler and more effective approach by sticking to one thing at a time, doing that well and then moving on to the next item.
5. **Remember this adage.** Keep your eye on the sparrow.



## Practice Tip

### WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR ATTENTION

- Meditate
- Mindfulness
- Take notes manually
- Exercise
- Stay hydrated
- Ask questions
- Listen to music
- Drink tea
- Chew Gum

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## Sources:

**Harvard Gazette** "A Wandering Mind not a Happy Mind" <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2010/11/wandering-mind-not-a-happy-mind/>

**Fast Company** <http://www.fastcompany.com/3052830/8-quick-ways-to-improve-your-attention-span>

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## Law Career Challenge Number 16: See With Creative Vision

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Take your career to the next level by unleashing your power of creativity.

That is not always encouraged in a profession that places a high value on precedent, routine and uniformity.

But creativity is a resource that will always be there. It will never run out and works in almost every situation. By using it wisely, you will become a better lawyer.

You might think creativity means painting a picture or writing a sonnet. But it can be expressed in all sorts of ways. It takes creativity to be able to build a bridge, design software or plant a garden. It takes creativity to draft an elegant brief or a persuasive resume. It takes enormous creativity to change the diaper on a screaming one-year-old while dinner is cooking and the phone is ringing.

### Life is Creation

Creativity infuses whatever you are doing with vibrancy and energy.

Our formal education system doesn't always do a good job of teaching this. In law school we are trained to memorize and regurgitate. We are taught to banter socratically.

But too often 1L students are instructed to approach legal problems in a formulaic manner rather than come

at them from wild, creative angles. Their creative energy is stifled, not sparked.

Sometimes creativity means looking at a situation a different way. Once at a seminar we were told to stretch out flat on our backs on the floor. Stay like that awhile. Take a look around. From down there, things looked different: the underside of the table, the stained ceiling tiles, the prone people to the right and left.

The takeaway: when you change your perspective, familiar things in new, creative looks.

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“

**. . . creativity is a resource that will always be there. It will never run out and works in almost every situation. By using it wisely, you will become a better lawyer.**

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### Write it Down

One way to harness and grow your creativity is through daily journaling. Call it mind mapping, offloading, spitballing, brainstorming. Whatever. A daily practice of writing down your thoughts can work wonders.

Julia Cameron, author of *The Artists Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*, recommends a technique she calls Morning Pages – writing three pages upon rising each day – to promote what she calls “lasting creative awakening.”

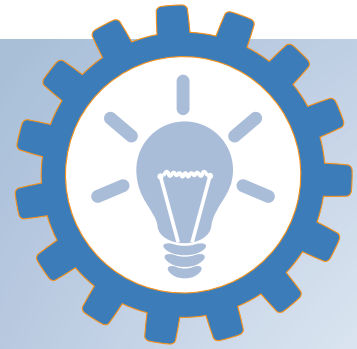
Here is how one source describes the idea:

“These three pages of longhand writing, as Cameron says, are strictly a stream-of-consciousness, whatever crosses the mind. She explains that the pages must be done in the morning because they prioritize the day

you are about to have instead of reviewing the day that's already past. Cameron says there is no wrong way of doing the morning pages and nothing written is too petty, silly, stupid, negative, or weird. The purpose of this brain dumping, she explains, is to get all that 'angry, whiny, petty stuff' written down so that it miniaturizes our censor, calming us down, cheering us up, inspiring us, consoling us and emptying ourselves of disturbing distractions. Consequently, our minds and hearts open up to deeper reflections."

### Five Training Tips

1. **Get into nature.** When you go for a walk in the woods, you experience creativity in action. The natural world is in a constant cycle of creation, decay, destruction and new creation.
2. **Play with holograms.** Picture the problem or dilemma you face as a three-dimensional hologram. Walk around it slowly. Inspect it from all directions. Don't make snap judgments or jump to hasty conclusions. Let the solution emerge organically, before your watchful eyes.
3. **Rearrange the furniture.** Our physical surroundings affect how we feel. This is the power of feng shui. Changing your office layout – perhaps moving your desk closer to the window – might be the spark to ignite your creative fire.
4. **Embrace creative practices.** Paint, sculpt, doodle, make a mudpie. Write a poem, strum a ukulele. Once you get the juices flowing, you can make magic.
5. **Read The Artist's Way.** Since its release 20 years ago, [Cameron's book](#) has helped millions discover and recover their creativity.



### Five Training Tips for unleashing your creative vision.

1. Get into nature.
2. Play with holograms.
3. Rearrange the furniture.
4. Embrace creative practices.
5. Read the Artist's Way.

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### Sources:

Julia Cameron, "The Artist's Way" <http://juliacameronlive.com/>

Virtues for Life <http://www.virtuesforlife.com/10-ways-to-spark-creative-thinking/>

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## Law Career Challenge Number 17: Don't Fall Into the Denial Trap

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Don't sabotage your career by falling into the denial trap.

Denial is such an insidious force. It can wreck relationships, derail careers and damage lives.

It sneaks up behind us when we are weak and burrows deep in our subconscious, where it is not easily rooted out. The longer it stays there, the more powerful it grows.

Think of a cartoon character that is being chased. It sticks its head in the sand like an ostrich or attempts to hide in a similarly futile manner. The pursued thinks it has concealed itself, thinks it has avoided danger. Actually, it has made itself even more vulnerable.

Such is the Power of Denial.

### **Ignoring a State Bar Letter Will Not Make It Disappear**

Back when I was in private practice, I represented attorneys in disciplinary actions before the State Bar.

Early in my practice, I noticed a pattern. A lawyer would call me after being notified by the State Bar of alleged ethical misconduct. Often the lawyer had practiced for years and had a solid reputation. But

something had happened in a case and they had been reported to the Bar.

And here was the frustrating part. Often the underlying complaint was no big deal. It could have easily been cleared up, provided it was done so early on. Now the problem had grown worse because the attorney failed to respond to the State Bar. They had simply ignored the Bar's letters.

More than one lawyer – capable, caring counselors – walked into my office bearing a stack of unopened letters. They wouldn't even bother to open them before seeing me. They would just dump them forlornly on my

desk: unopened envelopes from the Office of Counsel, certified letters that had been signed for but never read, mail postmarked two years earlier but still sealed.

In all these cases, the lawyer was charged not only with the misconduct as originally alleged, but also with an additional offense of failure to cooperate with the State Bar.

Yet another example of the terrible Power of Denial.

### **Rolling Away the Rock**

Denial is like a huge boulder that has been placed between us and reality. It has what [Dr. George Simon](#) calls "obstructive power."

“  
... **hiding our heads in the sand  
doesn't protect us from the  
monsters. It puts us at greater risk.  
A healthier choice is to turn on the  
light. We might not like what we  
see, but at least we'll know what  
we're facing.**”

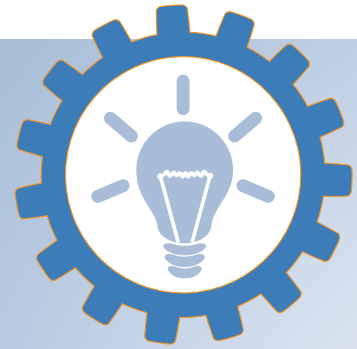
Nobody likes getting bad news. Nobody likes making mistakes and accepting consequences.

Such unpleasanties make life a drag. Much easier to forget them, toss them away or put them high on a shelf and move on to other, more enjoyable pursuits.

Except that hiding our heads in the sand doesn't protect us from the monsters. It puts us at greater risk. A healthier choice is to turn on the light. We might not like what we see, but at least we'll know what we're facing.

### Five Training Tips

1. **If you make a mistake, admit it.** Don't try to cover it up. It only makes things worse.
2. **Listen to friends.** If people who love you are saying things you'd rather not hear – and if their stories match up – you should probably unplug your ears and listen.
3. **Deal with problems when they arise.** The longer they sit and fester, the more you will suffer.
4. **Ask for help.** See Law Career Fitness Challenge #14.
5. **Listen to Oscar Wilde.** "To deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life."



### Five Training Tips

1. Admit mistakes
2. Listen to friends
3. Deal with problems when they arise
4. Ask for help
5. Don't deny problems/ mistakes

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### Source:

Counseling Resource <http://counselingresource.com/features/2015/06/09/obstructive-power-of-denial/>

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## Law Career Challenge Number 18: Invest Your Energy in What you're Good At

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Today's challenge is to practice spending your days doing things you enjoy.

The flip side: work on eliminating the time spent on things you're not particularly good at and which you don't enjoy.

It will make you a happier, efficient and more successful lawyer.

"Doing things you do well" means doing things that match your skillset and come easily to you. Tasks you can do in a breeze – and which move you forward in your professional journey.

It sounds like such obvious advice.

But it is often surprising when we take a close look at how we actually spend our day. We find we waste precious moments on inconsequential matters, fritter away chunks of time on things we'd rather not be doing, and never get around to those things that rank high on our bucket list.

This is partly because we are not always wise time managers.

We wonder why we're not where we want to be in life, why we haven't reached our professional goals. Maybe one reason is we're investing our time, energy and attention – our best parts – on jobs, activities and relationships that aren't improving the quality of our lives. They're not getting us anywhere.

### Daily Time Diary

The first step for improving time management skills – from a medical site, no less – is to start keeping a Daily Time Diary.



**Become more selfish – in the sense of making self-care a priority – and learn to say no. Do it without guilt. Turn off cell phones and devices and exit the grid.**

"This is a painful awakening for most people," says productivity expert and author of *Take Back Your Time* Jana Jasper [on web.md](http://onweb.md). "You have to include everything – gym time, eating, driving, weekly meetings, all of it. It can be upsetting to see how little unstructured time we allow ourselves. But it's difficult to make intelligent decisions about using your time more effectively if you don't know

what you're doing with your time now."

Once you've got a better handle on how you're actually spending your time, you can come up with a daily schedule, supported by to-do lists, to make sure your time is invested like blue-chip stock.

(Now would be a good time to review Law Career Fitness Challenge #11 – Budget Your Time and Money.)

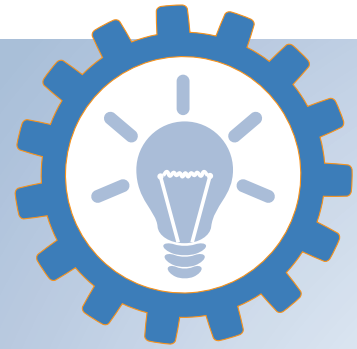
Place more time in pursuits that bring a high yield – marketing new clients, settling cases, going camping with the family – and less in those that yield little or nothing – trying to fix the printer, talking sports for hours, Angry Birds.

Become more selfish – in the sense of making self-care a priority – and learn to say no. Do it without guilt. Turn off cell phones and devices and exit the grid.



## Five Training Tips

1. **Start Your Daily Time Diary.** Do it for a week. List what you do every day. Be honest. If you binge-watch TV, write it down.
2. **Don't be a perfectionist.** Good enough is good enough.
3. **Delegate and outsource.** See Law Career Fitness Challenge #14.
4. **Realize your computer is your friend.** Let it help you with redundant tasks like time-keeping and scheduling
5. **Listen to this song.** "Time Is On My Side" by the Rolling Stones



## Practice Tip

### KEEP A DAILY TIME DIARY

#### include everything

- gym time
- eating
- driving
- weekly meetings, etc.

It can be upsetting to see how little unstructured time we allow ourselves. But it's difficult to make intelligent decisions about using your time more effectively if you don't know what you're doing with your time now."

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#### Source:

<http://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/features/time-management-tips>

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## Law Career Challenge Number 19: Maintain Good Physical and Mental Health

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To achieve your career goals, you will need to keep yourself in good physical and mental shape.

This is fitness in the most literal sense.

You want to maintain sound health so you can best enjoy the fruits of your hard labor, and so you will be better able to withstand the obstacles life in the law will surely throw your way.

The challenge is to practice healthy thoughts, actions and habits on a daily basis.

### Make a Self-Assessment

Step one is to stop and take a personal inventory of your physical and mental condition. Make an honest assessment of your overall health.

You can start with vital signs. How's your weight? Has it been fluctuating, and if so, why? How about blood pressure, muscle strength, stamina?

What about the old brain? Are you sharp and alert or stressed, with headaches?

Spend some time examining yourself as if you were an interested onlooker: wandering outside your body, taking notes. Obviously if you see something wrong, consult a professional immediately.

But a patient, honest self-assessment of our health can reveal little tendencies that we can easily correct before they grow into big problems.

### Keep the Wheel Rolling

Here's an easy way to remember to keep your life in proper balance. Take a pen and a blank sheet of paper. Draw a circle. Draw two intersecting lines so the circle is divided into four equal pie wedges.

In one wedge write "Mental," in another "Physical," and in the other two "Emotional" and "Spiritual."

Make a goal of creating space in each quadrant daily. As long as all four quadrants are well-nourished and healthy, your wheel will roll along just fine. But if one begins to atrophy or goes flat, the ride can get bumpy indeed.

### Five Training Tips

1. **Keep a sharp look-out.** Be aware of subtle changes in your mood or behavior. Unhealthy cycles can set in before you know it. Strive for a regular, poised lifestyle.
2. **When you leave the office, be sure to leave work behind.** Go to the gym or go for a walk. Play with the kids or joke with your spouse. Whatever you do, don't drag work into it. Be fully present when you are at home and enjoying recreational time.
3. **Post the wheel where you can see it every day.** Try to spend at least a little time each day doing something to nourish each of your four areas of need: Mental, Physical, Emotional and Spiritual.
4. **Get an accountability partner.** Ask a friend to team up and improve health. It's more fun to have someone to work with and hold your feet to the fire.
5. **Hear Buddha.** To keep the body in good shape is our duty. Otherwise, we shall not be able to keep our minds strong and clear.

## Law Career Challenge Number 20: Have a Positive Mental Attitude

Our final challenge might be the most important one of all – and the only one you really need.

To wit: maintain a positive mental attitude.

Some people just naturally see the glass half-full. They don't have to work at being optimistic. Others have more difficulty.

But the truth is that positivity is essential to getting what you want in life. Nobody's journey is a perfectly smooth downhill ride. Everyone suffers struggles and setbacks.

Staying positive is the surest way to overcome obstacles and not get dragged down by pessimism and defeat.

### The Power of Positive Thinking

Positive thinking is not Pollyanna thinking. It is not walking around in la-la-land. It does not mean you stick your head in the sand and deny a problem exists. It means you accept what is and believe if you give an honest effort you can make it better.

A positive mental attitude thinks the best is going to happen, not the worst. This, remarkably enough, works wonders for physical health as well.

In a famous study, men who were by nature pessimistic had 50 percent more heart attacks than optimistic men. Other health benefits, as reported by the Mayo Clinic:

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower stress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships

One study even showed optimism improved vision. In a series of neurological tests, people with positive attitudes had more information flowing through their visual cortexes than negative people.

### Five Training Tips

1. **Visualize success.** If you are starting a new case or project, picture a successful outcome. The law of attraction will bring you the people and circumstances you need to make it a reality.
2. **Read positive quotes, words and mantras.** Thoughts determine perceptions. Fill your head with positive thoughts, and the world instantly becomes a more positive place.
3. **Don't hang around negative people.** They will drain your positive energy.
4. **Do things that make you happy.** Duh.
5. **Stand up straight.** Turns out mom was right. Good posture is important. Walking with a straight spine and shoulders back generates positive, optimistic energy.

### Source:

Mayo Clinic <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/positive-thinking/art-20043950>

## **Law Career Fitness Challenge Self-Test**

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Congratulations! You've made it through the Law Career Fitness Challenge.

We hope along the way you picked up some pointers, insights and nuggets to inspire you on the next step of your journey.

We leave you with a final self-test. Below are the 20 Law Career Fitness Challenges. Make a mark next to each one you think you need to work on.

There is no passing or failing this test. You can pull it out periodically and re-take it, to monitor your progress. Best of luck in your career!

### **Law Career Fitness Challenge**

- Take Responsibility for Your Law Career
- Accept Reality
- Spend Time Each Day Doing Absolutely Nothing
- Get Started
- Know the Rules
- To Thine Own Self Be True
- When You're Picking Grapes, Pick Grapes
- Never Misplace Your Keys, Phone or Wallet Again
- Maintain a Sense of Humor
- Go The Extra Mile
- Budget Your Time and Money
- Learn From Defeats
- Practice Teamwork
- Know When to Ask for Help
- Have Controlled Attention
- See With Creative Vision
- Avoid the Deathtrap of Denial
- Invest Your Energy in What You're Good At
- Keep Your Mind and Body Strong
- Stay Positive