

OSB Professional Liability Fund presents

What You Water Will Grow: Nurturing Your Productivity Habits

Wednesday, February 23rd
10:00 am – 12:00 pm

MCLE ID 85757
1 Practical Skills Credit
1 Mental Health Credit

Speakers: **Monica Logan**
 PLF Practice Management Attorney

Bryan Welch
 OAAP Attorney Counselor



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CLE Materials

- PowerPoint Slides
- Presentation References and Resources
- InPractice Blog: Back to Basics - Time Management Tips for Busy Lawyers
- InSight Article: Developing Healthy Habits
- InSight Article: Procrastination
- American Bar Association General Practice Solo Article: Rituals are not Routine

**WHAT YOU WATER
WILL GROW:
NURTURE YOUR
PRODUCTIVITY HABITS**

Presented By:
Monica Logan, Practice Management Attorney
Bryan Welch, OAAP Attorney Counselor



1

AGENDA

- Productivity
- Effects on Legal Practice
- Well-Being and Productivity
- Specific Challenges
- General Organization Tips
- General Personal Tips
- Tools and Resources



2

PRODUCTIVITY




- Definition
- Challenges
- Wasted Time = Wasted Money
- Work Environment
- Water What You Want to Grow

3

EFFECTS ON LEGAL PRACTICE

- Calendar Error
- Lack of Communication
- Neglect of a Matter
- Mailing and Filing Issues



4



WELL-BEING AND PRODUCTIVITY

- Executive Function, Executive Skills, And Productivity
- Physical and emotional well-being
- Disengagement/Burnout
- Unhealthy Coping Strategies

5



SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

- Focus and Attention Challenges
- Lost Time
- Procrastination
- Project Management

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➤ **FOCUS AND ATTENTION CHALLENGES**

- Attention Regulation
- Challenges
 - Distractions
 - Executive Function Challenges like ADD/ADHD
 - Boundaries

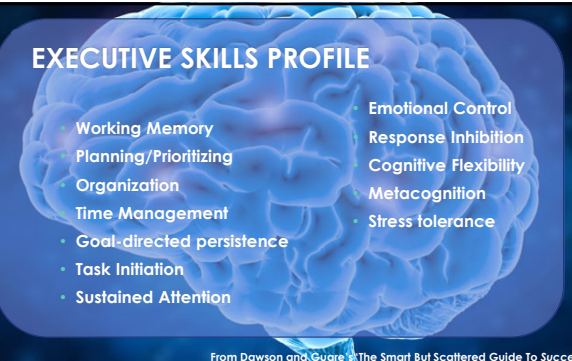


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EXECUTIVE SKILLS PROFILE

- Working Memory
- Planning/Prioritizing
- Organization
- Time Management
- Goal-directed persistence
- Task Initiation
- Sustained Attention
- Emotional Control
- Response Inhibition
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Metacognition
- Stress tolerance

From Dawson and Guare's "The Smart But Scattered Guide To Success"




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• **BOUNDARIES**

- Clear Client Management
- Effective Staff Management

Focus and Attention Challenges



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PERSONAL AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Routine
 - Externalize Attention Regulation
 - Write down a Consistent Procedure
 - Focus Cues/Rituals/Tricks
- Boundaries
 - Modify Your Environment to Focus
 - Use your Calendar
 - Communicate



Focus and Attention Challenges

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➤ LOST TIME

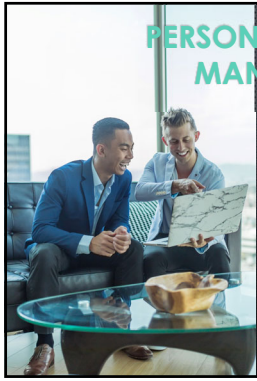
- Challenges:
 - Chronic Stress/Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Disengagement



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PERSONAL AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Managing Anxiety
- Making Stress Your Friend
- Finding Motivation with Depression
- Connection, Values, Positivity, and Control



Lost Time

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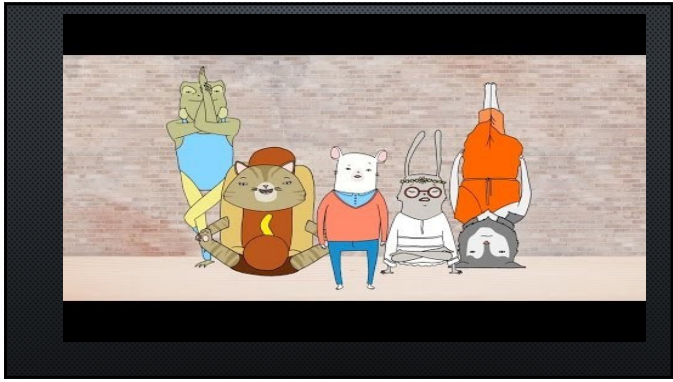
Breathe To Activate Relaxation Response

4 – 7 – 8 Breathing

Box Breathing

- "Belly" breathing - about ten times more air
- Deep breathing stimulates Vagus nerve – activating PNS

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PERSONAL AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIPS CONT.

- Track Everything
 - PLF Example Sheet
- Use Blocking to Identify Work
- Clearly Specify and Plan tasks

Lost Time

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DAILY TIME SHEETS **EXAMPLES OF WORKFLOW STEPS**

Sample 1
Date: _____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
CLIENT	10	11	12	13	14
8 ^{AM}			Smith: estate plan due		Hearing
9	Jones: Research & draft complaint	Meet with cl Lee	Burr: do probate accounting	Minor: Draft estate plans	Client Z: Perform legal work
10	Smith: Prioritize estate plans	Bookkeeping	Class: Draft pleading	Shark: Prepare dissolution petition	calls
11					Research Project #3
12 ^{PM}					Admin Tasks
1	Calls and emails	Meet w/ client Matt	Calls and emails	Client X: Perform legal work	Writing Project #3
2				Plan 1 case review / return calls/emails	Writing Project #4
					Admin Tasks
					Research Project #4
					Phone Calls


*Image provided by PMAAP Director Hong Dao *Last Time*

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➤ PROCRASTINATION

- Challenges
 - Perfection Paralysis
 - Fear/Anxiety
 - Time Blindness
- "Procrastination is about being more focused on 'the immediate urgency of managing negative moods' than getting on with the task."

- Dr. Fuschia Sirois



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PERSONAL AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Self-Awareness: Identifying Fears
- Social Support
- Self-Compassion
- Positive and Negative Visualization
- Adjust your Focus

Procrastination



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PERSONAL AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIPS CONT.

- 2 minute rule
- 50/10 (or 25/5 Pomodoro Method)
- Eat the Frog
- Eat the Elephant



Procrastination

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Challenges
 - Executive Functioning
 - Inadequate Knowledge
 - Competing Demands



Project Management

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PERSONAL AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIPS


- Project Management uses ALL the Executive Skills
- Give Yourself Time to Plan and Organize
- Ask Questions and Research
- Prioritize Tasks, not Projects



Project Management

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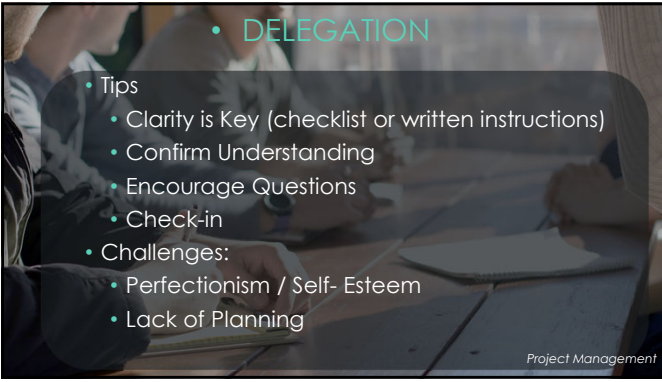
PERSONAL AND PRACTICE MANAGEMENT TIPS CONT.



- Time Management Matrix
- Pareto Principle
- 15 minutes a Day Keeps the Anxiety Away

Project Management

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- DELEGATION
- Tips
 - Clarity is Key (checklist or written instructions)
 - Confirm Understanding
 - Encourage Questions
 - Check-in
- Challenges:
 - Perfectionism / Self- Esteem
 - Lack of Planning

Project Management

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ORGANIZATION TIPS

- General Workflow
 - Capture
 - Process
 - Do
- Email
 - Automation
 - Folders

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ORGANIZATION TIPS CONT.


- Office Space
 - Desk messiness and Productivity
 - Electronic Organization
 - Regular Maintenance



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ORGANIZATION TIPS CONT.

- Files And Notes
 - Clarity
 - Consistency
 - Process



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GENERAL PERSONAL TIPS

- Attend to the Basics:
 - Mindfulness/meditation
 - Exercise
 - Diet
 - Sleep
- Creating Healthy Habits



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TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- Technology
 - Tracking Paperweight
 - Phone Apps
 - Automatic Capture
 - Reminder Apps
- Books


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TOOLS AND RESOURCES CONT.

- Technology
- Books
- Other Resources

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CONCLUSION

- Know Thyself
- Keep It Simple, Silly
- Take It One Step at a Time
- We are Here to Support You

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- InBrief
- InPractice Blog
- Practice Aids and Forms



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Additional Resources

1. Books
 - a. 7 Habits of Successful People by Steven Covey
 - b. Atomic Habits by James Clear
 - c. Eat that Frog by Brian Tracy
 - d. Time Management for Entrepreneurs by Dan Kennedy
 - e. Deep Work by Cal Newport
2. Specific Apps
 - a. Headspace
 - b. Calm

- c. Insight Timer
 - d. [23 Productivity Apps for ADHD Brains](#), ADDitude.com
 - e. Time Tracker: Timely, TimeBro, WiseTime, Chrometa
 - f. TimeSparrow
 - g. [A Guide to the 10 Best Lawyer Time Tracking Tools | Clio](#)
3. Podcasts
- a. “10% Happier”, Dan Harris
 - b. “The Science of Happiness”, UC Berkeley’s Greater Good Science Center
 - c. “Rituals to Transform your Home & Your Life”, Lawyerist podcast
 - d. “How to Use Time Management and Mindfulness to Improve Your Law Practice”, The Florida Bar Podcast



11

APR
2018

BACK TO BASICS - TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR BUSY LAWYERS

Lawyers are busy. You are busy. When you hear expressions like “time management,” you probably think, “I don’t have time for that.” More accurately, you don’t have time for complex technology or complicated strategies that involve extra steps in your workflow. What you need are simple solutions that will help you organize your work and accomplish it without delay. We’re here to help. Here are some straightforward suggestions to help you manage your time and complete your work.

Avoid Multitasking

Multitasking is sometimes touted as a desirable skill. Research has shown, however, that this admiration may be misplaced. As it turns out, we are not really multitasking. In fact, when we think we are doing several tasks at once, we are actually moving back and forth between those tasks. As a result, our attempt to check email, document a file, and listen to voicemail all at once actually leaves us

switching from one task to the other. Some research shows we spend on average 20-25 minutes before transitioning back to our original task. This stop and start is not effective and is often a secret strategy for procrastination. The solution? Stop trying to multitask. Prioritize tasks, and then allow yourself to focus on them one at a time, seeing them through to completion.

Prioritize Your MITs

One strategy to prioritize your work is to pinpoint your Most Important Tasks (MITs). Spend five to ten minutes each day planning and identifying the few crucial things you must accomplish that day. Listing the two to three tasks you must complete is simpler than creating a lengthy list of every outstanding task or project, most of which you’re unlikely to finish. A short list improves the likelihood that you will accomplish something, despite unplanned client calls, court hearings that run late, or other emergencies.

The key to carrying out this system is to limit your list to two to three straightforward MITs. Distinguish between tasks and projects, identifying pieces of work to do each day, rather than a larger assignment that includes many pieces. Identify the components of critical projects, and place the components on your list of MITs. This helps move you forward by completing doable portions of a project until you reach completion, rather than failing to begin an assignment until you can devote a larger chunk of time to accomplishing the entire thing in one sitting.

Reduce Technological Distractions

Our constant connection to technology can mean constant interruptions. Even when you aren’t looking, your smartphone is pushing notifications to you about news, emails, and instant messages. Its flashing lights and chirping tones are unrelenting, pleading with you to take just a small peek at your phone. Before you know it, you’re reading an internet news article or sharing something via social media. Maybe you’re reading work emails while trying to download a document via your practice management app. Either way, you’ve been diverted from what you were originally working on, and your attention is now focused on your device.

To avoid the temptation of your smartphone while working, consider changing the settings of your applications. You can choose to allow an application to alert you with a sound or an LED alert, or to turn off notifications altogether. You can also log out of certain applications so that you only see alerts when you log in, as opposed to every time you glance at your phone. Lastly, you can change your phone’s appearance to combat the colorful appeal of the screen and all its apps. Changing your phone to grayscale can reduce its interest, as well as your inclination to look to it for distraction or entertainment.

Want to Learn More?

- Skeptical about how much time multitasking really costs you? Read more: <http://www.businessinsider.com/you-lose-up-to-25-minutes-every-time-you-respond-to-an-email-2014-12>
- Learn to identify your Most Important Tasks: <https://lawyerist.com/personal-productivity/most-important-tasks/>.
- Get instructions to change your phone to grayscale: <https://lifehacker.com/change-your-screen-to-grayscale-to-combat-phone-addicti-1795821843>
- Manage notifications from your apps:
 - For Android: <https://www.addictivetips.com/android/how-to-enable-or-disable-notification-badges-for-apps-on-android/>
 - For iPhone and iPad: <https://www.imore.com/how-customize-notification-center-iphone-and-ipad>

Categories: [Time Management](#) / [InPractice](#) / by [Jennifer Meisberger](#)

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*Developing Healthy Habits:
Strategies for Success*
Page 1

**OREGON
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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

DEVELOPING HEALTHY HABITS: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

I wish I exercised more regularly. I wish I did not snack between meals. I wish I spent less time surfing the Web. I wish I could stop procrastinating. I wish I could stop smoking. I wish. I wish. I wish. The list can seem endless. At times, the human condition seems to be a constant struggle between what we would like to do, what we need to do, and what, in fact, we do. It can often feel as if we are in a perpetual state of New Year's resolutions.

Social psychologists, neuroscientists, and other researchers are arriving at new understandings about how people successfully manage to change their behaviors. They have identified a variety of physiological and psychological factors that affect our ability to harness our willpower to break bad habits and develop new and healthy ones. Two of the leading authorities in this area are Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D., and Roy Baumeister, Ph.D. Both are authors of best-selling books and articles on the science of willpower, self-control, and the formation of healthy habits. Below are some of their observations, research findings, and recommendations.

● **Willpower is like a muscle.** We have a finite supply of willpower on any given day. It is a limited resource; the more we use our willpower, the less of it remains as the day goes on. According to Baumeister, current research indicates that most of us spend three or more hours every day resisting desires. This is a normal part of living. Additionally, we routinely use our self-control resources for many other activities, such as managing our thoughts, focusing our thinking, and regulating our emotions. In short, we are constantly exercising willpower throughout our day.

● **Stress diminishes willpower.** According to McGonigal, our bodies naturally prioritize our use of the energy resources we have. We use our willpower resources every time we make decisions, control our thoughts and emotions, and exercise personal restraint in our behavior. When stressed, however, our bodies automatically divert energy from those areas of the brain responsible for these healthy activities; we instead focus on immediate, short-term, and sometimes unwise thoughts and activities.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

For example, it is more likely that we will make poor decisions, utter a sarcastic remark, or procrastinate on a work project when we are stressed and our self-control resources are depleted. Managing our stress is thus essential to preserving our willpower. Going for a short walk, connecting with a friend, or playing with a pet are examples of stress-reducers that help us replenish our willpower reserves.

- **Sleep affects willpower.** Research demonstrates that when we are well rested, we are more likely to resist unhealthy temptations and make healthy decisions. Many of us know all too well that, when we are sleep-deprived, our decision-making suffers and we are more likely to engage in the unhealthy habits we are trying to avoid.

- **Nutrition affects willpower.** Baumeister and McGonigal both emphasize the importance of a healthy diet and sufficient blood glucose levels in maintaining willpower energy reserves. Baumeister's research confirms that self-control tends to be noticeably impaired when glucose levels are low; for example, difficulty regulating emotions, resisting impulsivity, and engaging in aggressive behavior is more common when these levels are low. According to McGonigal, "Eating a more plant-based, less-processed diet makes energy more available to the brain and can improve every aspect of willpower from overcoming procrastination to sticking with a New Year's resolution."

- **Carefully choose a goal.** When seeking to develop new habits, McGonigal advises us to choose a goal that we really want, not a goal that someone else desires for us, and also to give thought to the steps needed to accomplish our goal. However, she adds, "Leave room to revise these steps if they turn out to be unsustainable or don't lead to the benefits you expected." Better to revise the plan than to give up the goal.

- **Pay attention.** According to McGonigal, "One study found that the average person thinks they make 14 food choices a day; they actually make over 200. When you aren't aware that you're making a choice, you'll almost always default to habit/temptation." It's important to be alert to those times when we have opportunities to make choices consistent with our goals.

- **Start small.** When embarking on a new habit or behavior, it helps, says McGonigal, to start with small feats of willpower before trying to tackle more difficult ones. Ideally, we should seek to identify the smallest

change that is consistent with our larger goal and start there. For example, walking or jogging for 10 minutes may be a better way to begin an aerobic program than starting off at 60 minutes.

- **Willpower is contagious.** Find a willpower role model – someone who has accomplished what you want to do. Also, we should try to surround ourselves with family members and friends who can support us in our efforts. We are much more likely to achieve the behavior change we seek if we have role models and a support system.

- **Mornings are best.** We generally have more willpower earlier in the day; thereafter, our willpower steadily declines throughout the day as we fatigue. We should try to accomplish what we need – for example, exercise – earlier in the day. Watch out for the evenings, when we have less willpower to resist the habits we are trying to break.

- **Give yourself healthy rewards.** It's okay to give ourselves small, healthy rewards along the way. Research shows this is effective when undertaking new habits. The reward, of course, should generally not be an excessive indulgence in the very habit we are trying to break.

- **Seize today.** We need to avoid thinking that "things will be different tomorrow." McGonigal notes that we have a tendency to think that we will have more willpower, energy, time, and motivation in the future. We tend to tell ourselves that tomorrow, next week, or next month will be a better time to start our diet, exercise program, and so on. The problem is that "if we think we have the opportunity to make a different choice tomorrow, we almost always 'give in' to temptation or habit today."

- **Monitor and keep records.** It's difficult to manage what we don't monitor. Baumeister's research clearly confirms that the more frequently and consistently we monitor and record our efforts, the more successful we will be in changing or developing new habits. The person who weighs daily and records his or her weight, for example, is statistically more likely to lose weight than the person who does so weekly, monthly, or only sporadically. In addition, having a supportive friend as an accountability partner also increases the likelihood of success. Whatever the behavior, consistent monitoring is invaluable, and innumerable smart phone apps are available to assist us in these efforts.

- **Guilt and shame don't work.** Science today clearly indicates that self-compassion, not self-criticism, is a

more effective way to stay on track when seeking to form new, healthy habits; self-compassion tends to encourage one to better achieve his or her goals. Although it seems counterintuitive, studies show that people who experience shame or guilt are much more likely to break their resolutions than those who cut themselves some slack.

Developing new, healthy habits or eliminating unhealthy ones sometimes requires more than simply the exercise of willpower alone. Professional assistance is sometimes necessary. For example, the most effective way to change unhealthy substance use or other problematic behaviors is to obtain the advice of a trained professional. Making the decision to seek assistance and following through is, in itself, the healthy exercise of willpower. The confidential Oregon Attorney Assistance Program can be a valuable resource when seeking to develop healthy habits.

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Resources:

Baumeister, R. F., & Tierney, J. (2012). *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*. New York: Penguin Books.

McGonigal, K. (2012). *The Willpower Instinct: How Self-control Works, Why It Matters, and What You Can Do to Get More of It*. New York: Avery.

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Procrastination and the Allure of Tomorrow

Procrastination has few advocates but many followers. It has been the subject of philosophical wisdom, comedic humor, academic study, psychological research, and therapeutic advice for centuries. It is part of the human condition, though it affects some considerably more than others. The legal profession, with its deadlines, obligations, and responsibilities, can be quicksand for those most vulnerable to putting off today that which can be delayed until tomorrow.

The inevitable questions about procrastination have always been much the same: 1) what exactly is it, 2) why do we do it, and, perhaps most importantly, 3) how do we avoid or overcome it?

The What Question

To understand procrastination, it is helpful to understand what it is not. Procrastination in the legal profession is not:

- **Strategic delay:** Deliberately delaying a decision or action because the issue appears likely to resolve itself and thus make further action or decision-making unnecessary (e.g., holding off preparing discovery, a brief, or jury instructions in reasonable anticipation the case will resolve).
- **Intentional delay:** Deliberately delaying a decision or action because the consequences are uncertain and/or potentially problematic without first obtaining additional information (e.g., delay in accepting a settlement offer or taking on a new client until more information is made available).
- **Necessary delay:** Deliberately delaying a decision or action because work load and/or time constraints necessarily require attending first to other matters that are more urgent (e.g., delay caused by an upcoming court appearance or significant client meeting).
- **Accidental delay:** Delay caused by miscalculating the amount of time needed to finish a project (e.g., belatedly realizing a legal issue to be briefed is more complex than first thought) or genuinely forgetting to act on an intended goal (e.g., not remembering to timely file discovery requests or send a settlement demand letter). This type of delay may be professionally problematic for a lawyer, but it is not procrastination.

Procrastination in the legal profession (i.e., of the kind that chronically interferes with one's professional responsibilities) occurs when a lawyer:

- Recognizes the need to achieve a particular goal (e.g., getting a brief or discovery filed on time),
- Has the time and opportunity to achieve the goal (e.g., 60 days to file a brief),
- Knows that delay will harm the prospect of achieving the goal, and
- Nevertheless, intentionally delays taking the action necessary to successfully achieve the goal (e.g., the lawyer does not complete a brief or discovery requests or waits until the last minute to undertake the project).

In short, procrastination is intentionally postponing necessary action, fully knowing that delay will probably impede one's ability to accomplish a necessary task or, at least, impair the ability to produce a quality work product. It is acting against one's own best interests and likely the best interests of the lawyer's clients. It tends to affect both one's personal and professional life.

While there are no known empirical studies of procrastination within the legal profession, statistics about the general population suggest:

- Almost everyone (95%) reports procrastinating sometimes, and
- Nearly 50% of Americans self-identify as chronic procrastinators.

The Why Question

The further away in time a task needs to be completed, the more inclined people are to delay attending to it, particularly when it is unpleasant or stress-producing. To some extent, this is human nature. When the behavior repeatedly occurs and risks significant adverse personal and professional consequences, it amounts to chronic procrastination. In the legal profession, an example of serious procrastination is seen when lawyers unreasonably delay for months or years the filing of a lawsuit. Fear, anxiety, uncertainty, or any number of other emotional responses may cause the lawyer to defer filing until the imminent expiration of the statute of limitations compels a last-minute scramble to get the matter filed.

Procrastination is not a time-management problem. Keeping meticulous to-do lists and time sched-

ules are typically not the solution. Most researchers today consider that mood, emotions, and emotional regulation issues are causally at the heart of chronic procrastination. People generally learn from their mistakes and make changes so as not to repeat them (e.g., filing discovery late can have consequences). The chronic procrastinator, however, constantly repeats the very behavior that experience has taught will likely be harmful and self-defeating. Moreover, studies have found that procrastinators often carry with them anxiety, shame, and guilt about their decision to delay. Why then do they continue to procrastinate?

When faced with the decision to undertake an unpleasant task today, the chronic procrastinator seeks to avoid the negative emotions associated with it and instead opts to delay action until tomorrow. The fear, uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety, embarrassment, or other emotion associated with the task is put off to a later time, with the hope that the emotional angst it produces will be more easily coped with in the future. Delaying action thus functions as a form of emotional self-regulation, despite the procrastinator's conscious or unconscious knowledge that in doing so the task being delayed will itself likely now be prejudiced.

The How Question

Behavioral scientists and psychologists have for years sought to identify techniques helpful to those struggling with chronic procrastination. Many of their research-based recommendations, often simple in application, have proved valuable in helping many to successfully mitigate the challenges of procrastination. Their recommendations include:

- **Introspection:** Seek to honestly identify the reason(s) for the procrastination; if change is to be made, some candid self-understanding is a necessary starting point.
- **Awareness:** Recognize that, at its core, serious procrastination is often about emotions – feeling good in the short term by delaying decisions or actions that may be unpleasant.
- **Social interaction:** Many lawyers and others challenged by chronic procrastination are isolated in their struggle. They often feel embarrassed, anxious, and/or depressed by their delaying behavior. Talking openly with a spouse/partner or a trusted friend or colleague about their challenges

is very therapeutic and a valuable first step in making needed changes.

- **Small steps:** When faced with a disagreeable or daunting task, studies have demonstrated that breaking the project up into smaller pieces and completing them piecemeal is often a very effective practice toward ultimate task completion (e.g., opening a blank Word document is the first step in drafting a brief). Success in the small steps psychologically encourages confidence and forward momentum.
- **Social support:** Making a verbal commitment to another person about steps (even small steps) intended to be taken on a project reinforces that commitment and the likelihood of success.
- **Setting aside time:** Commit to yourself (and someone else, if possible) to do a defined portion of a delayed task at a defined time; set aside an hour or two (repeating, if necessary) to work solely on that item, and only that item. Some caveats:
 - Mornings tend to be best because people's energy levels generally are greatest at that time;
 - Energy levels are strongly influenced by how rested and well-nourished one is; when energy levels are low, one's physiological ability to stay on task and motivated is also low;
 - Make distractions less likely: take no calls, turn off your cell phone, close your door, clear your desk, and stay off your computer (except as needed for the task at hand).
- **Monitoring:** Research clearly shows that monitoring progress helps assure success. It creates a visible record of effort and reinforces the positive behavior.
- **Setting deadlines:** Procrastinators who set meaningful deadlines for themselves are much more likely to achieve task completion. This is especially true if the deadline date and time are written.
- **Rewards:** The procrastinator who is rewarded for task completion (again, even for small steps) is more likely to be successful; regularly rewarding oneself for progress made psychologically reinforces the positive behavior.
- **Be realistic:** (1) Many procrastinators tell themselves they work best and are most effective

when they are under last-minute time pressure. Studies show that the work-product of the procrastinator is typically inferior to that of the non-procrastinator. (2) Plan a realistic amount of time for the task. Studies show that people are reasonably accurate in estimating how long it will take others to perform a task, but notoriously optimistic in making such estimates for themselves.

- **Counseling and therapy:** As noted above, chronic procrastination is often about emotions. Counselors can help address the underlying issues and help you change your behavior.

The Oregon Attorney Assistance Program offers counseling assistance and referral resources for all Oregon lawyers, judges, and law students. If you are interested in a procrastination workshop, contact the OAAP.

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RITUALS ARE NOT ROUTINE

By Benjamin K. Sanchez

If you are a regular reader of this column, then you know that I try to help you with your mental practice as much as I do with your law practice. For the mind is where everything begins and ends. If your mind-set is not right, your law practice will falter. Your mind controls your thoughts, beliefs, and actions and thus is the greatest determining factor in your success in any area of your life.

To this end, it is important to develop habits that will ensure mental awareness and strength because you will call on your mind in times of stress, fatigue, and fear. Anyone who has a solo practice or is a member of a small firm faces these mental difficulties. It is the nature of our practice, especially given that we don't have a large firm and staff to support us. To overcome such mental obstacles, we must have a strong mind that can control our thoughts and behavior when positive thoughts and actions are needed. One great way of growing mental fortitude is by developing and engaging in rituals.

RITUALS ARE NOT JUST SPIRITUAL

Whenever we come across the word "ritual," many of us think of religion or spirituality. Ritual is so much more than that, but because organized religion is built around rituals, it is hard to think of ritual in any other context.

In the world of personal and professional development, rituals are important and encouraged



if done in a positive way and for health reasons. We really do reap what we sow, and what we sow begins with what we think. If we can train our brain to be a positive force for good and control our actions in a way that develops discipline, then we will have a superpower that most people lack.

Many personal development and business practice coaches preach the importance of rituals. Rituals can be developed for just about any aspect of your life, and if done right and for the right reasons, rituals will positively affect your business and lifestyle.

RITUALS BECOME HABITS

Rituals are used by many successful people from all walks of life. Personal and business trainers and coaches such as Tony Robbins, Michael Hyatt, and Hal Elrod all teach rituals. Rituals done regularly and consistently become habits, and good habits result in great success. Whatever area of your life you want to improve can be the subject of a ritual. Whether you want

to improve your physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual health, rituals can get you there because they will lead to habits. Once habits are installed, successes will flow and build on themselves exponentially.

Habits are both intentional and unintentional and can lead to varying degrees of success. Many times, we are unaware of the unintentional habits we have developed over time just by watching and learning from our family and friends. We grew up watching our parents and developed their habits because that's what was shown to us. If we can train our brain to recognize the unintentional bad habits we have and reprogram ourselves to install intentional good habits, our families, friends, colleagues, and clients will be better off. I encourage you to study your actions for a month and figure out what your unintentional habits are and whether they are helping you or hurting you. At the same time, start creating new rituals and engage in them consistently so that you can form good habits.

FOUR DAILY RITUALS

A ritual can be as simple as doing one thing consistently to improve one area of your life, but real growth occurs when combining multiple rituals to improve all aspects of your daily living and long-term achievement. Even better is having rituals throughout the day that you can rely on for consistent discipline to achieve the success you see for yourself. The easiest way to break down the daily rituals is to have a morning ritual, beginning-of-workday ritual, end-of-workday ritual, and evening ritual. For each ritual, determine what you will be doing on a regular basis and when you will do it.

In determining my morning ritual, I took the following steps. I determined everything that I wanted to accomplish each morning. There wasn't anything that was left off the list of things I wanted to accomplish. I included drinking a full glass of water, brushing my teeth, putting on my exercise clothes and shoes, exercising, showering, getting dressed for the day, eating breakfast, and commuting to my office. I then figured out how much time each task would take me on average. I next determined what time I wanted to be at the office each morning. Finally, I took the total time of the morning ritual and counted the time backward to arrive at my morning wake-up time. Notice that I did not leave any time to check my e-mails or social media. I did this intentionally because I know either will distract me and lead me down a rabbit hole that will throw off my morning ritual. I save my e-mail and social media for my arrival at the office.

My beginning-of-workday ritual consists of a period of calm breathing and meditation, followed

by e-mail, social media, and posting on a blog or social media. I conclude with a review of my planner to determine what my Daily Big Three are and what else is on my plate for the day. I give myself about one hour for this ritual.

My end-of-workday ritual is shorter and basically consists of e-mail review to catch any last-minute fires that can't wait until the next day and writing in my planner to plan the next day. This ritual takes anywhere from 20 to 30 minutes.

My evening ritual starts when I get home. I plan for dinner, reading, journaling, quality time with my girlfriend, exercising, showering, and any special projects I'm working on, such as writing this column. Not every evening is the same, especially because my special projects vary, but the tasks I listed are consistently present in my evening ritual. Planning for the evening from when I get home until I get to sleep allows me to stay focused on what's important and not get too distracted. I also allow for live sporting events (I live across the street from Minute Maid Park, home of the Houston Astros) and concerts (I live a few blocks from the Houston Toyota Center, home of the Houston Rockets and major concerts in Houston). My evening ritual doesn't have to be so rigid that I can't allow for different things to happen in the evening, but at least it gives me a guideline and budget of my time.

The four daily rituals help

ensure that I accomplish the important things each day while still being flexible enough to allow for variety in my schedule.

PLAN AND EXECUTE YOUR RITUALS

To be successful as we come out of the pandemic, now is the time to get ahead of the game in your business and at home. Start determining how each of your courts will be proceeding in the future. Ensure you and your clients are proficient in technology used for virtual appearances. Hire part-time help if needed and start having technology practice sessions with your clients and witnesses. Finally, take time to think about the toll this pandemic has had on all of us and be prepared to be kind and forgiving when dealing with opposing counsels. Develop personal, daily rituals that will allow you to stay energized and focused on what's most important to you. We live in a world of distraction. Rituals will help keep you focused, so be sure to plan and execute your rituals.

I encourage you to try the four daily rituals I described above for a month. Determine if the rituals allow you to be better at work and at home. Tweak the rituals if necessary but commit to them. Even if you fall off the wagon, get back on as soon as you can. The point is not perfection but rather consistent effort over time. If you can do that, you will see the rewards and dividends of your commitment and focus. ■



Benjamin K. Sanchez (bsanchez@sanchezlawfirm.com) has a general litigation practice based in Houston, Texas, and focuses on business, consumer, real estate, and family law matters. In addition to his law practice, he has a leadership training, speaking, and personal/business coaching company (Kirk & Hazel Company) and is certified by John C. Maxwell and licensed by Les Brown to train and speak on their respective material. Benjamin has been a solo/small firm Texas attorney for 21 years.