

Practicing Well: Self Care

Patty Beck | *A Balanced Practice, LLC*

The FJWP did not seek a statutory change or the introduction of an entirely new Bar Rule. The addition of the “judge” language to the existing Bar Rule was the goal.

The process for such a change follows:

1. FJWP proposed a rule change to the Disciplinary Procedure Committee (DPC). It was approved and to the full Board.
2. The full Board had a first reading, then a second.
3. It was passed by readings. It was then considered together with other rule changes for the Biannual Rules Petition before the Florida Supreme Court.

The FJWP Confidentiality Rule proposal was finally adopted by the Florida Supreme Court on March 7, 2022, two years after the JWPC began its efforts. It is hoped that other states will follow suit to provide confidentiality to its judges before one dies from suicide or other preventable causes. ■



About the AUTHOR

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over 40 years in Florida, as well as throughout the Southeastern United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Mr. Bush focuses on actions involving the conduct of licensed professionals. In that role, he defends lawyers, allied health care providers, accountants, real estate professionals, and architects and engineers. He may be reached at rbb@bushlawgroup.com.

When I hear the term self-care, the usual ideas instantly come to mind—exercise, cook nutritious meals, get a massage, take time away from work, etc. I often feel what many lawyers feel, which is that these are all great ideas, but I don’t have time every day to spend an hour working out, planning healthy meals, getting a massage, or doing another form of “self-care” while finishing all my work and tending to personal commitments. Sound familiar? While understandable, this mindset is also a recipe for feeling stressed and burned out when constantly putting others first (i.e., clients, colleagues, family, etc.) and not taking the time to care for ourselves.

While it has not been easy trying to find ways to stay physically and mentally healthy during this pandemic, the one thing I’ve learned is that although self-care takes time, it does not have to be time consuming. I find that I feel my best when I focus on doing several little things throughout the day to address my well-being rather than doing fewer “big” things that require more time to complete. Some things take only a few seconds while others take a few minutes (or more), and some days are obviously better than others depending on where my mind and body are at.

It has also helped to think about what self-care means to me and how I can incorporate that into my life. I’ve decided that my definition of self-care is anything that involves being kind and supportive of myself either with words or actions. I’ve also found that it’s especially important to practice on days where I feel too busy to focus on my well-being. Here are my top 10 favorite ways to *practice* self-care (emphasis on the word *practice* because it takes time to develop new habits).

1. Starting my day with “me time,” which usually entails a few minutes savoring my morning cup of coffee by myself—this is the one time of day guaranteed just for me, and I try to do it every day.
2. Writing down one thing I’m grateful for and adding it to my gratitude jar to reinforce a positive outlook on life.
3. Eating lunch away from my desk, often outside without my phone where I can feel the sun on my face and let my mind relax for a few minutes (bonus if I can swap the bag of chips for a side of carrots!).
4. When I feel overwhelmed by my workload, I look at the post-its stuck to my computer that say “breathe…” and “one bite at a time…” which inevitably calms me and helps me focus on doing the most important task first (I also use the Insight Timer app for a quick 3-minute meditation to ground myself before I start working).
5. Noticing when my inner critic is being harsh and reframing my thoughts to ones of kindness and support (i.e., when I’m working on a project and hear myself being critical, I remind myself of the positive feedback I’ve received on my prior work, that the important thing is to do my best, and that it is okay to continue learning as I go… just like everyone else).
6. Sleeping through my morning workout when I feel exhausted and need to rest. Other days it’s about mustering the willpower to do the workout when I’d rather sleep in out of laziness—regardless of how long or intense the workout, the important thing is to

show up (which is often the hardest part).

7. Driving with the windows down and sunroof open while bopping along to whatever song is on the radio (guaranteed mood booster).
8. Saying “no” to opportunities/invitations that don’t bring me joy and instead add to my stress levels (so important!).
9. Spending a few minutes chatting on the phone with my sister or a dear friend—these moments are often the most rejuvenating because they inevitably put me in a good mood and clear my mind of stress for a few minutes.
10. Eating the piece of dark chocolate... because sometimes it’s just necessary!

Self-care means being flexible and taking time to think about what you need and what you’re capable of on a given day. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach and will likely look different each day. One of the best pieces of advice I’ve received is to “do your best and let that

be good enough.” It’s easier said than done, especially on days where it feels like your “best” isn’t very good at all. But that’s where the mentality of kindness and support is incredibly important to our overall health and well-being and what often provide the motivation that may otherwise be lacking.

I encourage you to take time to think about what you want self-care to look like for you and ways that you can incorporate small changes to boost your mood and well-being each day without feeling like time is your enemy. I know many lawyers who use their commute for exercise by biking or walking, who take 10-minute breaks to play piano, and who take a few minutes each day for relaxing activities like knitting, quilting, and reading for pleasure. If none of these ideas resonate with you, talk to your colleagues about what works for them. Being open about what we’re all doing to stay healthy and well is an act of self-care in itself.

As always, if you are struggling with stress, languishing, depression, or anything mental health related, please contact your state’s confidential lawyers’ assistance program (visit the PLDF Attorney Wellness webpage for access

to the new 50-State Survey of Lawyer Mental Health & Well-Being Resources). I cannot stress enough that 2 ½ years into this pandemic, we are all fighting our own battles, and asking for help is one of the bravest acts of kindness that you can show to yourself. Be kind and be well! ■



About the AUTHOR

Patty Beck is the President & Owner of *A Balanced Practice, LLC*, where she teaches attorneys practical

strategies for incorporating well-being into their personal and professional lives. Prior to discovering her passion for attorney well-being, she worked as an associate at a large law firm in Minneapolis, MN practicing employment law and as a Claim Attorney for *Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company* where she helped attorneys navigate challenging legal malpractice and ethics complaints. Through her experience in private practice and helping lawyers through difficult times, she discovered her passion for teaching lawyers the “little things” they can do each day to improve their relationship with stress and overall satisfaction with their careers. She can be reached at patty@abalancedpractice.com.

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