

Practicing Well: Write it Down!

Patty Beck | *Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company*

It's hard to believe that it has been a whole year since "COVID" became part of the world's daily vocabulary. When we first began working from home, I spoke with a lot of lawyers who instantly focused on the positives of this dramatic change. People shared their delight at having more time to exercise and engage in hobbies while enjoying the slower pace of their morning routines.

Lately, however, my conversations with friends and colleagues have changed where people have shared that "COVID life" is beginning to wear on them. People miss chatting with colleagues in the breakroom and the experience of walking into someone's office to strategize about a case plan. The once thrilling neighborhood walking trail has become monotonous. Even eating has become a challenge in finding new recipes or restaurants to enjoy. I have experienced this exhaustion and grappled with the unsettling feeling of being in a "rut" some days as a result, and a lot of folks have said they have experienced the same. So what can we do?

A few months ago, I made a list of things I need in order to maintain my mental health. I wrote about spending time with family and friends and the hobbies that bring me joy like seasonal decorating, building furniture and décor for our home, and cooking/baking.

I also learned that it's not enough to simply identify what I need—I wrote down ideas for how to regularly experience the items on my list. For example, I now have standing virtual coffee/lunch dates with friends and colleagues each week, Wednesdays are reserved for Hallmark movie nights with my parents,

weekend mornings are for "me time" which might entail a trip to my local craft store or cozing up with my coffee and a good book, and each weeknight my husband and I have dinner and watch *Wheel of Fortune* together (I'm aware that I basically lead the life of an 80-year-old, and I love it!).

The reason I decided to write everything down is because when life gets busy, I don't always recognize when I'm feeling "off" or "down." Sometimes it takes my husband asking if I'm okay before I notice that I'm not. When that happens, I've been able to look at my list and see what I've been missing (and better yet, I immediately have a plan for how to get out of my "rut" and get back to doing the things that I love).

I encourage you to take a few minutes and simply think about what you need to stay healthy and happy. Once you have your ideas, write them down and include concrete ways for how to achieve them. Then keep the list handy so that you can see it, especially on days when you might not realize that you need to.

As always, if you are struggling in any way with stress or mental health, please talk to someone. I assure you that now, more than ever, you are not alone! Contact your state's confidential lawyer assistance program, a mental health professional, or even a friend. It truly is remarkable how many good things can come from reflecting and talking about your life! ■



About the AUTHOR

Patty Beck is a Claim Attorney with *Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company*, where she manages

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