

**Business of Law****The Coach: Self-care in legal industry | Gary Mitchell**By **Gary Mitchell**

Gary Mitchell

(June 7, 2022, 8:30 AM EDT) -- Yes, you did. You just read the words self-care in the same sentence as the legal industry. While I highly doubt this would have been possible pre-COVID-19, the fact is, it is now. And that is a good thing.

For years, self-care in the legal industry has been ignored. Sure, behind the scenes, perhaps at the water cooler, whispers here and there. But no real and serious attention has been given to self-care until COVID-19 hit us.

Years of overworking, addiction and mental health issues have been ignored. And, at what cost? At what cost to the individuals experiencing these challenges? What cost to your clients? What cost to your firm?

Let me tell you a story.

I will never forget my first time on an airplane. As the flight attendants were doing their emergency demonstration and suggested that in the case of an emergency, and if the oxygen masks came down, we should put them on ourselves first, before trying to assist the elderly or infants. I remember distinctly that moment looking around and within eyesight, I could see elderly people and infants. I thought to myself at that moment, "Well, that's selfish!"

Years later, and with much more life under my belt, I totally got it. Of course, you put your mask on first because if you can't breathe, you will be no good to anyone else. Well, the same is true not only in life but in business, especially right now. It is no accident I named Chapter 2 of my latest book, *Growing a Law Practice During Covid-19*: "Put your own mask on first."

The bottom line is, if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be much help to others, the people you care most about, your family, friends, colleagues and your clients. As lawyers, that's what you do. Help others. So, take care of yourself. First.

Here are a few tips on how to do just that.

**1. Set your day up with intention**

Give yourself an uber injection of positivity every morning. I passionately believe you can set yourself up for a positive day by simply practising a few strategies every morning before you dive into the work for your day. Altogether, these practices only take a few minutes, and you will notice very quickly the positive effect they have on your mood and outlook. Staying positive is one of the most important things you can do for your mental health.

Things to start your day may include, and I highly recommend, practising gratitude, coming up with your own, personal, daily affirmations and reviewing your goals. I do this every morning before I dive into my day. Clients who have followed this advice notice improved focus and attention to their work.

**2. Take frequent mental breaks throughout day**

As the old saying goes, "a change is as good as a rest." I am a firm believer in taking several mini or small breaks throughout your day. This is not a sprint, but rather a marathon. Be good to yourself.

It's easier to do this if you are working from home, but you can still manage it even if you are working at the office. Go for a short walk. Read something of interest, non-work related. Catch up on business development. Whatever it is, take a mental break from the intense intellectual crunch you are under.

### **3. Do your best to fit some exercise into your day**

Depending again on your schedule, try to make exercise a priority. This is not only good for you physically, but also mentally. Movement increases your endorphins and raises your serotonin levels in your brain, which is known to create that "happy" feeling. If you are not that committed to exercise, at least get out and go for a brisk walk every day. Listen to an audiobook or your favorite music. Move!

### **4. Do your best to give your body the nourishment it needs**

Eating healthily is more important than you may realize. Although I understand this can be incredibly challenging depending on your home situation, if you are caring for children, and if your schedule is busy. But there are some things you can do to always ensure you have healthy choices at the ready.

And it's not only important what you eat, but also when you eat. You must force yourself to take regular breaks for nutrition. Eating several smaller portions of food throughout your day is much healthier than starving yourself all day and then feasting later. Again, this may be a new habit for you. Practise it. Don't beat yourself up. Give yourself time to adapt.

These are just a few tips to get you started on the path of self-care. Reach out to me if you would like to learn more.

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