



COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Do You Feel Rushed or Overwhelmed?

“Where's the fire, what's the hurry about? You better cool it off before you burn it out.”

~ Billy Joel

Is your life becoming a series of to-do lists? Is everything an emergency? Are you consumed by a sense of urgency? Do you have e-mails and phone calls to return, meetings to attend, court dates, traveling to meet with clients, briefs and motions to write, trying to squeeze in lunch with friends or loved ones, billable hours, etc.? And that is just your work life. What about all of the demands of family life? Get home for dinner, make sure the kids do their homework, housework, pay bills, etc. Are you becoming like the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland, “I’m late! I’m late! For a very important date! No time to say ‘Hello’ ‘Good-bye.’ I’m late! I’m late! I’m late!”

Take the time to slow down. Being rushed all the time creates mental, emotional, and physical illness. The practice of law is demanding, but you can still manage your time and your mind in ways that promote your health and wellbeing. Sometimes, if we get enough adrenaline flowing through our body consistently over a few weeks or months (or years), we start to crave chaos and everything becomes an emergency to the nervous system.

Give your nervous system a break. Create rituals for yourself when you get up in the morning and get ready for work, use tools throughout the day to slow down, and have a ritual to relax in the evening. Waking up and going to sleep in a calm and peaceful way prevents you from feeling too rushed at work. Try some of these:

- Take a walk.
- Do yoga or just stretch.
- Drink a peaceful cup of tea or coffee rather than taking it to-go in the car.
- Eat your breakfast without the distraction of the TV or your computer in front of you.
- While you are driving to work or court, listen to soothing, upbeat music or shut the radio off.
- Avoid distractions, such as talking to people on your Bluetooth while you are driving.
- When you get to your location, take a deep breath before you go into your first meeting.
- Review your schedule for the day and be realistic about the time you budget for each project.
- Get up from your desk at least once an hour and walk around your office.

- Place mantras or useful (inspiring, funny, etc.) quotes around your office to read.
- Carve out time to eat your lunch without any work-related distractions.
- Every half hour, focus on your breathing for a just a few moments.
- When you get home from work, put away your work clothes and change into something comfortable.
- Rather than watching TV or surfing the internet, take a walk to recharge after your day.
- Before bed, read something that interests you and is not work related.

There will be days where we run around like the White Rabbit, but this should not be the norm. Being rushed and urgent all the time prevents your brain from working properly, and lawyers cannot afford to make the mistakes that come from a brain that is in emergency mode and operating from the limbic system. The limbic system of your brain is emotional and can operate like a panic button, shutting down the parts of your brain associated with good decision making. So take Billy Joel's advice, and slow down. You know how you can slow down on a daily basis, but the trick is to actually do it. As the saying goes, "practice makes perfect," so start now by taking a deep breath!

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