



COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Don't Let Life Pass You By

“Slow down and enjoy life. It’s not only the scenery you miss by going too fast – you also miss the sense of where you are going and why.” ~ Eddie Cantor

How has it been for you so far? Are your experiences fulfilling, emotions hopeful and positive, and accomplishments making you proud? Do you enjoy the time you spend with others, whether it be family, friends, colleagues, or clients? Or have you been a bit anxious and feeling down, with too much to do and not enough time to do it? Maybe it’s a little bit of both. Life is busy these days, and many attorneys report that they feel as if “life is passing them by.”

Sometimes we experience anxiety over cases, working with difficult people, dealing with large workloads, and worrying about the future. Sometimes we feel depressed and isolated because we don’t have the support we need to be effective in our personal or professional lives, or our workload has been too slow for a while. Sometimes we just feel overwhelmed by the amount of responsibility on our shoulders, or the amount of tasks we have to accomplish in a day. Regardless of the reason, when we feel stressed, anxious, depressed, or overwhelmed, we don’t allow ourselves to enjoy the present moment, and life does seem to pass us by.

Research in neuroscience suggests that engaging in mindfulness meditation, breathing techniques, mantras, and exercise such as yoga helps to relax the brain and the body, reduce stress levels, and increase overall happiness. Studies also point to practicing more gratitude, listening to fun or calming music, having pets, gardening, and cultivating meaningful relationships with friends/family that you trust will improve your health and wellbeing. And, as we all know, improving our diets and moving around more throughout the day can also help shift our body’s chemistry to improve our life experience. Most of us have heard about ways we can take better care of ourselves. The question is, are we taking the time to do them?

The quickest and simplest way to reduce your stress and increase satisfaction with your life is to slow down: your thoughts, movements, speech, decision making, etc. When we slow down the “momentum train,” we can discern what is best for us (what kind of food does your body really want or need?), we can choose more helpful thoughts that lift our mood rather than bring it down (focus on resources and solutions rather than the problem itself), and we can respond to the people around us rather than reacting from a survival mentality (when we get irritable or angry at others, it means we are in a fight-or-flight reaction and the rational parts of our brain will not function well).

Slowing down allows us to behave with maturity, grace, and wisdom. The people you respect the most are probably people who, despite being in difficult or stressful situations, respond with these qualities to the world around them. Research shows that people who are the most well liked aren't necessarily those with the most intelligence, are the most attractive, or even the most gregarious. People who are sincere, consistent, and compassionate rate as the most likeable. To be consistent in our moods and behaviors so that people feel safe around us, to be sincere and honest with those around us, and to show understanding and compassion rather than judgment about other people, we have to slow down and contemplate our words and actions.

Mindlessly operating in the "rat race" and spending more time with our technology than the people around us doesn't endear other people to us, and certainly doesn't make us feel proud of ourselves. Life doesn't pass us by when we slow down to appreciate the people around us or the things in our lives we are grateful for. The stressful cases, the difficult clients, the massive to-do lists, and the glitches along the way that interrupt our plans aren't going to disappear. If, however, we learn how to handle life's ups and downs with more patience and dignity rather than with panic, irritation or anger, we can learn to enjoy more of the ride. Carve out some time in your day, every day, to mindfully and purposively slow down and breathe. Think about the big picture rather than the details of what you are doing, and give yourself a pep talk. Things always get better when we shift our perspective because the parts of the brain focused on survival can calm down long enough for the parts of the brain responsible for happiness, joy, and overall life satisfaction to take over. So hurry up and slow down!

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