



COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Quick Tips for De-Stressing

“We now understand that higher-level thinking is more likely to occur in the brain of a student who is emotionally secure than in the brain of a student who is scared, upset, anxious, or stressed.” ~ Laura. L. Sagan & Thomas S. Mawhinney

Stress, the body’s physiological response to something the mind perceives as dangerous, negatively impacts our ability to function at our full potential. The aforementioned quote does not just apply to students. In order to access higher-level thinking, we cannot be in a fight or flight, freeze or faint process. When we are chronically angry, scared, in a victim or “poor me” mentality, anxious, tired, or feeling out of control, we cannot access the parts of the brain necessary to practice the law. There are simple and quick ways to de-stress when our nervous system is getting carried away and we can’t allow our minds to follow suit. When you find yourself needing to be cool, calm, and collected, give one of these ideas a try:

1. **Don’t believe everything you think:** Take a moment to question your thoughts and your assessment of the situation. Is there another way of perceiving what is happening around or “to” you?
2. **Get out of your own way:** If you want to feel better, stop thinking negative thoughts.
3. **Don’t forget to breath:** Take a real deep breath into your belly. Take 5 seconds to inhale, and at least 5 seconds to exhale.
4. **Remember you have a body:** Take a moment to do a body scan. It’s easy to get caught up in our thoughts when our nervous system gets overloaded. Feel your feet on the floor, feel yourself seated in the chair, feel your back against the chair, etc.
5. **Stop and listen:** Rather than thinking ahead to what you are going to say in response, listen to the person speaking to you. Don’t let your mind wander. Focus on the present moment and what is being communicated.
6. **Think about your purpose:** It doesn’t have to be the meaning of life, but take a moment to remember why you are doing what you are doing. Be mindful about your actions and your words. Think and speak with purpose.

It is easier than you think to reduce your stress levels. While taking vacations and time off from work helps, it’s far better and easier to prevent stress on a daily basis by engaging in mindfulness techniques like those listed above. Start today!

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