
FEELING RUSHED OR OVERWHELMED?

“Where’s the fire, what’s the hurry about?
You better cool it off before you burn it out.
You got so much to do and only so many hours in a day....
Slow down, you’re doing fine..
you can’t be everything you want to be before your time.”

~Billy Joel

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Is your life becoming a series of to-do lists? Does everything feel urgent or like an emergency? Do you have a full caseload, too many e-mails in your inbox, endless messages to return, meetings to attend, and have to squeeze in short lunches or phone calls while driving with friends or loved ones to maintain relationships? And that is just your work life. What about all of the demands of family life? Are you becoming the White Rabbit in Alice in Wonderland, feeling like, “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 time to slow down. Being rushed all the time creates mental, emotional, and physical illness. Your work is very demanding, but you can still manage your time and your mind in ways that promote your health and well-being. Sometimes, if you get enough adrenaline flowing through your body consistently over a few weeks or months (or years), you start to crave chaos, and everything becomes an emergency to the nervous system.

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



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- Take a walk;
- Do yoga or just stretch;
- Drink a peaceful cup of tea or coffee at home rather than taking it to-go in the car;
- Eat your breakfast without the distraction of the TV or a device;
- While you are driving to the office or court, listen to soothing, upbeat music or shut the radio off;
- When you get to your location, take a deep breath, and take a few moments to familiarize yourself with your surroundings (this calms down the nervous system);
- 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;
- Place mantras or useful (inspiring, funny, etc.) quotes around your workspace;
- 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 or finish wrapping up your workday, 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; and,
- Before bed, read something that interests you and is not work related.

There will be days when we run around like the White Rabbit, but that should not be the norm. Frequently being rushed and urgent prevents your brain from working properly, and members of the legal community 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! 🐇

Sarah Myers, Esq., LMFT, LAC, is the Executive Director of the Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program (COLAP). COLAP is the free, confidential, and independent well-being program for the legal community of Colorado. For more information, go to www.coloradolap.org. For a consultation, discussion about your stressors, or to obtain helpful resources, contact COLAP at 303-986-3345 or info@coloradolap.org.