



Keep Calm and Practice On: Five Practices for Government Attorney Work-Life Balance

The practice of law is one of the most [stressful](#) professions due to the adversarial nature of the profession, demanding schedules and taxing workloads. Many law schools assess an applicants' character and fitness qualifications for admittance to the school and bar, but it's what happens after law school, while in the throes of actual practice, that puts attorneys to the test, including state and local government attorneys like you.

Some stress is good. Chronic stress, however, causes chemical imbalances in the body that can weaken the immune system, leading to serious medical conditions such as heart attacks and illness. A body constantly "on" and responding to stress compromises coping mechanisms and can lead to depression, substance abuse and more. So how does a practicing government attorney meet the demands of work and personal well-being? Is there a magic formula for combating stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance?

ASSESSMENT

Taking a moment to assess one's overall well-being and identifying any imbalances is the first step toward a healthier work-life balance. This introspection should provide a springboard for improved health, well-being and fulfillment because, [1. It's the right thing to do](#), [2. It impacts competence](#), and [3. It's good for business](#).

The following five practices address many of the dimensions of well-being. We call them the Five Ms. Any one "M" can help turn off the body's stress response so the body can function at its best, leading to better overall health and wellness.

THE FIVE Ms

1. Mindfulness and meditation (spiritual + emotional dimensions)—Practicing mindfulness, or bringing one's complete attention to the present experience, helps turn off the autopilot nature of the brain. Mindful meditation includes deliberately focusing one's attention on the present through breathing. Both practices are intent on helping to keep distractions at bay—whether at home or in the government law environment—and encouraging focus. Furthermore, studies show that mindful meditation can help ease psychological stresses like anxiety, depression and pain.

2. Movement (physical dimension)—Nearly any form of exercise can act as a stress reliever. Exercise and motion stimulate endorphins and lead to better overall health. [Studies](#) prove that movement helps one feel better mentally, but coupled with mindfulness, mood and stress levels can be even better.

3. Master sleep (physical dimension)—Make sleep a priority. Getting the required amount of sleep helps one stay sharp and healthy and reduces stress. It recharges the body by acting as repair time for cells and tissues. Many studies have shown that insufficient sleep over time is a risk factor in developing a serious medical condition, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

4. Maintain balance (social dimension)—Work-life balance means balancing the demands of the government legal profession with other aspects of life such as family, social interaction, technology use, personal interests and more. Having a significant imbalance in favor of work, for example, can raise the risk of heart disease and stroke. Assessing one's needs vs. responsibilities is critical to deciding how to allocate time. Keep in mind that there is no perfect balance—everyone is unique, and life is fluid. Simply be realistic, allow for flexibility and continually assess work-life demands.

5. Manage work (occupational dimension)—Being honest with oneself about career fulfillment is an essential component in not allowing work to manage oneself. Making self-actualization a priority can lead to personal contentment, career fulfillment and an overall healthier outlook on life.

The field of state and local government law is incredibly rewarding and fulfilling when one is practicing as his/her personal best for colleagues and public organizations. Investing in self and career is key to thriving as a government attorney. Lawyer Assistance Programs provide confidential services and support to judges, lawyers and law students. If you or a colleague are in need of assistance, contact your local [Lawyer Assistance Program](#) or visit [lawyerwellbeing.net](#).



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