

Six Strategies to Spring into a Happier, Healthier Well-Being

By Erin E. Clifford, *Litigation News* Contributing Editor



After a long winter's rest, springtime brings a rebirth in nature as trees and plants sprout, grow, and bloom. This feeling of renewal is also reflected in human nature as we shed the heaviness of winter and become invigorated to “spring clean” our spaces. The act of decluttering and reorganizing for spring is what psychologists refer to as “temporal landmarks”—moments in time that inspire us to give ourselves a fresh start.

Just as physical spaces may be neglected and become entangled with the messiness of life during the coldest months, so does the space within our mind, body, and spirit. This is especially true for those in the legal profession. The multitude of mental demands of lawyering is unparalleled to many other careers. In this highly pressurized field, a lawyer's work includes long hours and making difficult decisions, while also balancing relationships between colleagues and multiple clients. The components that make up this high-demanding career can take an emotional toll, even for the most seasoned attorney.

As a fellow attorney, I challenge you to use this season

of renewal to reset and rebalance yourself. Spring yourself toward a healthier, happier, and more harmonious well-being with the following six strategies.

1. Clear Space Within

A fresh start cannot happen without letting go of any negative emotions that are taking up space within your mind and body. There are many ways to approach the act of letting go, but this act has been used for centuries and has been effective for myself and many of my clients. Take a moment to study these questions and think about your answers in detail.

- Is there a goal or dream that hasn't come to fruition? Why not?
- Is there a toxic relationship in your career or at home?
- How do you feel about your career status and your personal life?
- Do you find yourself internally saying negative things to yourself? If so, what?
- Are you feeling disappointment, resentment, anger, or frustration? At whom or what?

Now write down a list of things that you think are negatively affecting your well-being and that you would like to let go of. This is referred to as a “burn” list. Traditionally, you would take this list and burn it, but if that’s not possible, then tear it up.

The act of burning (or tearing up) your list serves as a physical release to whatever has been holding you back mentally. Once you’ve cleared the space within your mind, your body and spirit will be ready to move forward with the next steps.

2. Clear External Spaces

Being surrounded by clutter and chaos limits your brain’s ability to process information. Therefore, the physical act of cleaning and decluttering can improve mental and physical health.

For most of us, the available time we have to clean is limited. If this is the case, choose an environment that you occupy most often. Look around your space. Are you suddenly feeling overwhelmed? If so, take it one step at a time.

- Start small. Pick one area in your home to clear. For example, your desktop or drawers, etc.
- Organize by creating piles of “keep,” “throw away,” and “give away.”
- Set a timer and schedule. Allow your spring cleaning to be a multi-day process if there is a lot to do. Some days you may be able to dedicate more time to cleaning and organizing, while other days you may have only 30 minutes. It’s all about progress, not perfection.
- Make it entertaining! Listen to your favorite podcast, audiobook, or music to keep you going.

3. Clear Your Mind

Now that you have let go of burdensome emotions and cleared physical spaces, it’s time to clear your mind. Keeping a clear mind means staying focused and enjoying the present moment. The benefits of a clear mind include reduced feelings of anxiety, stress, or worry, and open space in your mind for more innovative, creative thinking that will boost your problem-solving skills and your interactions with others. In addition, less stress and anxiety may lead to a better night’s rest and potentially lower blood pressure levels. Here are ways to clear your mind. Incorporating one or all of these in your daily routines will help you maintain a healthy mindset.

- Meditate. Start your day with five or more minutes of meditation. If you’re new to this, try an online guided meditation or use a meditation app such as Calm, Headspace, Smiling Mind, or Healthy Minds Program.
- Practice Gratitude. Write a list daily of three to five things or people that you are grateful for. Don’t be afraid to express gratitude to someone when you feel it. A simple “I appreciate you” can be beneficial for both the person and you.
- Do a Digital Detox. Commit to cutting back on extra-curricular screen time such as social media, shopping, and news websites. Set time limits on these websites.

It is also helpful to set a time to turn off screens altogether, such as an hour or two before bed, during the weekends, etc.

- Exercise. Schedule exercise into your calendar as you would a doctor’s appointment or an important meeting.

4. Take Time for Self-Care

Self-care means taking the time to do the things that you enjoy. It can be something small (a cup of herbal tea in the afternoon) or something big (a vacation). But either way, consistency is the key to increasing your mental and physical well-being. Some people may equate self-care with going to the spa, but it is much more than that. Your self-care activity may be very different than someone else’s. If the activity brings you joy and fulfillment, then it is the right self-care for you.

Engaging in self-care has been clinically proven to have multiple benefits that include reducing or eliminating anxiety and depression, improving concentration, minimizing anger and frustration, and increasing happiness and energy. Self-care is fuel for your mind and body.

5. Connect

As busy lawyers, we may neglect our connection to friends, colleagues, and family members, even the ones that we live with at home. Make time to connect with those who mean the world to you. Find time to send a text or an email, or schedule a walk, coffee date, or a meet-up during the weekend.

Social connectedness improves an individual’s sense of belonging and elevates feelings of love, value, security, self-esteem, and appreciation. Fostering social connections may also help prevent chronic illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, and dementia.

6. Give Yourself Grace

We often set the bar highest for ourselves. Cultivate self-compassion and empathy by allowing yourself to be less than your idea of perfect. Giving yourself grace means acknowledging when things are hard and understanding that we may not have a solution. When we recognize, accept, and honor our limits, we will reduce feelings of anger, stress, regret, or resentment.

Final Thoughts: Enjoy New Beginnings

Lean into the feeling of spring and utilize this time of year to encourage personal growth and development, or as an opportunity to start fresh. Just as you shed your heavy winter clothes, also shed yourself from past thoughts and behaviors that held you back or held you down as you look toward a lighter, brighter future. ^{LN}

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