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Health Tips for a More Effective You

Lawyers often give a wide range of advice to their clients. Not all of that advice is focused on the law. Sometimes the most value a lawyer can add comes when he or she recognizes the need to change patterns and behaviors in order to address a problem. Over the course of my nearly 30 years as a trial lawyer, I have seen many dedicated professionals slavishly devoted to their family and clients without concern for their own personal well-being. Neglecting one's health, no matter what your profession, reduces creative energy and effectiveness. None of us are of much help to our family, workplace, or community without being physically and mentally up to the task. So I thought I would offer four "tips", learned from my own trial and error, personal observation, and education, to help us all be healthier and more productive.

1. Arrange your work space to encourage less strain, pain, and more gain.

Most of us spend our workday in a sedentary position without regard to good ergonomics or even proper posture. Remaining compressed in a seated position days on end for years leads to a variety of physical problems, including back and joint pain, as well as obesity. Consider an ergonomic computer keyboard, headset or Bluetooth in lieu of a conventional phone, or an adjustable desk to allow standing while at work. Most importantly, make time in your work day to step away from the work station, and engage in some cardiovascular activity followed up by some light stretching. Even fifteen minutes of such activity has been proven to increase focus, energy, and comfort.

2. Many of us are not running our own engine on the proper fuel.

Health fads come and go. What was bad for us years ago is now recommended. However, virtually all scientific studies on diet and long-term health lead to certain undeniable conclusions that refined sugar in all forms leads to increased risks of cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes. To avoid these risks, do your best to minimize intake of candies, sweets, sodium, sodas, and certain fruit, energy, or sports drinks that are high in processed sugar. Go to any wellness website and save a copy of the "Glycemic Index", a list ranking food from best to worst based on sugar and carbohydrate count. Increase your intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fish rich in omega-3 oils, all of which been proven to increase one's chances of a long life.

3. Health knowledge is power.

Subscribing to and reading at least one monthly health publication can provide you with valuable information regarding the pros and cons of the latest fad diets or common misperceptions about food's impact on our system. Such publications can also educate you on various prescription medications and homeopathic remedies, some of which are overprescribed, ineffective, and/or misunderstood.

4. Exercise appropriately given your overall health, age, and objectives.

Too many of us assume that every exercise will be beneficial. In fact, everybody ages at their own pace, leaving us with vastly different abilities and limitations. Indeed, some exercises are universally considered unsafe for older people and can create new problems or make existing problems worse. Before launching into a plan to go from no activity to running a marathon, consider first consulting with health professionals or certified personal trainers. Begin slowly and simply to build endurance and cardiovascular health. The old adage of "walk before you run" may save your life.

To help you get started in the right direction, consider starting tomorrow with one of these breakfast options: organic cereal topped with sunflower seeds, cinnamon, and fresh berries; two egg whites with tomatoes, pepper, and mushrooms over one slice of multi-grain toast with no-salt butter; strawberry (or other fruit) Greek yogurt with a tablespoon each of hemp seeds, coconut, and chia. The next day subscribe to one of these publications: *Harvard Men's* (or *Women's*) *Health Watch*, the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*, or *Bottom Line Health*. The third day sign up for a yoga class; the fourth, buy a stress ball; the fifth, break one bad dietary habit (snacking after dinner). Keep it up, and you'll be on your way to being healthier and more productive!

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