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Young Lawyers

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WHAT TO DO?

As the holidays come to a close and we begin a new year, many of us will take time to reflect on the events of the past 12 months and to create goals for the coming year. For a majority of newly-minted and young lawyers, goals take the shape of professional ambitions. I would caution you, though, not to lose sight of who you were before you became a lawyer and to at least attempt to maintain some semblance of that person. It is all too easy to become entirely consumed with the practice of law, especially during the first few grueling years of practice. This type of total consumption can also easily lead to total burnout.

It's difficult to accurately track how many lawyers leave the profession each year, and the reasons obviously vary, but Google "I hate being a lawyer" and you will quickly land yourself more than 30,000 links. Countless "recovering lawyers" have dedicated their days to blogging about the misery of lawyering and marveling about how and why it took them so long to quit. While many of these of blogs and articles are undoubtedly entertaining, they are also cautionary tales for those of us who actually do enjoy the practice of law; the message? Too much of anything is a bad thing.

Admittedly, it can be very difficult to control one's own schedule during the initial stages of your legal career, but attempting to carve out personal time for yourself and your loved ones now could well save your career in the long run. It may be that dedicating some time to a personal fitness goal, taking a vacation, reading a book (for fun) or just reacquainting yourself with family and friends is just the balancing factor you need. If you still find yourself dreading another day at the office, try to assess whether or not you might be happier practicing a different type of law, or in a different practice environment. Not every associate will be happy as a partner in a big law firm and not every prosecutor will be satisfied with a lifelong career in the public sector. Taking the time to assess your goals, and what it is you

find satisfying about your current path, is a worthwhile endeavor, especially if you find yourself on the brink of quitting the legal profession altogether.

Many new or young lawyers feel pressured to know exactly what "type" of law they want to practice, pick one and then stick with it. The law is simply too broad for this type of mindset, and limiting yourself to just one area for the sake of "sticking it out" makes little sense in a profession that is virtually boundless. If you are not content with your current gig but cannot imagine what else you might do, consider joining a bar section, taking a CLE course or accepting a pro bono case outside of your current area of practice.

Most bar organizations and sections welcome new or interested potential members at their networking events. Check out an upcoming event and introduce yourself to lawyers practicing in an area in which you have interest. We all know lawyers love to talk, so it's a safe bet that you will find someone more than willing to share what it is they love and hate about their current practice.

If you would like to take a pro bono case but are concerned about a lack of experience, take comfort in knowing that legal aid organizations throughout the state of Nevada routinely offer free training opportunities for lawyers willing to take on cases beyond their areas of expertise. By doing so, you will broaden your own horizons and provide much needed legal representation to members of our community who would not otherwise be able to afford the assistance they so desperately need. If you are unsure about the pro bono needs in your community, visit www.nvbar.org/pro-bono for a list of legal service organizations and additional information regarding pro bono CLE seminars and events. Your future pro bono clients may help you just as much as you help them. ■