

Once More, With Healing

By Steven Keeva, May 2004

For David Link, hearing chief justice Warren Burger speak at the 1983 ABA Midyear Meeting was a revelation. The venue was New Orleans, and the topic on tap was whether the association should hire a public relations firm to help improve the image of lawyers.

Much was made of the terrific job dentists had done in giving their profession a face-lift, and a conversation ensued on the issue of just how aggressive a PR firm should be in making the case for lawyers.

That's when Burger stood up and politely questioned the entire exercise, asking whether instead of offering cosmetic solutions to a professional crisis, it might be better to talk about what the lawyers—not the spinmeisters—might do to help improve the situation.

“Then,” Link recalls, “the chief pointed out that the original role of lawyers was healing social conflict, and that we really needed to embrace that role once again.” A light went on. “I had never heard it put in those terms before,” Link says. “But then I thought back on my own career, and I realized that the most satisfying parts had been when I had been a healer, whether it was when I was a government lawyer, a partner in a big law firm or a law school dean.”

Lawyer as healer: Skeptics among us might call it an oxymoron. But it made all the sense in the world to Link, who, at the time of Burger's comments, was in his eighth year of what would become an unprecedented 24-year tenure as dean of Notre Dame Law School.

“I remember when Chief Justice Burger died,” Link recalls, “and how I wondered who would pursue the concept of lawyer as healer.”

The answer to that question is now clear: Link himself. In 2002, he became the first president and CEO of the International Centre for Healing and the Law, based at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Mich.

The idea of the lawyer as healer makes good sense to a lot of people and always has. Look at Gandhi's writings on practicing law: “I understood that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder.” Or Lincoln's: “Point out to [your neighbors] how the nominal winner is often a real loser—in fees, expenses and waste of time.” And there is little doubt that Learned Hand understood the need for healing; he said that only death and serious illness were more fearsome than going through a lawsuit.

But Gandhis, Lincolns and Hands are in somewhat short supply these days, and Burger died in 1995.

MORE THAN WARRIORS

The International Centre for Healing and the Law is dedicated to furthering the concept of the lawyer as healer by championing the proposition that there are preferred options to the adversarial approach that can benefit both clients and lawyers.

“We may be used to doing things a certain way, but the truth is that most people don’t want to attack the dignity of others,” Link says. “It’s essential that we realize that becoming a warrior is really just one way of doing things. Lawyers and the public need to be aware of more humane ways, ways that bring peace to people’s lives.”

Link can point to many experiences to substantiate that belief, the last one in February. That’s when he traveled to Israel and the West Bank to lecture and speak with students and faculty at Israeli and Palestinian universities.

“In every case, I’ve found that it is governments that prolong the conflicts, not the people. The people truly want peace.” The analogy to lawyers is not lost on him. “Lawyers need to know that their clients want peace and harmony in their lives, and that they need to facilitate that, rather than exacerbate the problems. The real goal should be maintaining dignity on both sides, whether the parties are corporations or married couples.”

Link recalls one healing story from his own life.

“I was working for a large Chicago law firm, and I went down to a small town to liquidate a successful corporation. They were liquidating because the owners, who were brothers, disagreed on investment strategies.

“After listening to them, I decided that liquidation wasn’t the best thing to do. Instead, I divided the company into parts based on functions. It was a way to save the corporation and keep it together. If I had liquidated it, it would have ended the problem. But by talking them into it the way I did, we saved the company and the relationships. It was the healing alternative. I didn’t have to do it. I would have earned the fee either way. But it was the right thing to do for that family” and for that company, he says.

CALLING LAWYERS TO REFLECT

On one level, the center functions as a clearinghouse for what’s come to be called the comprehensive law movement. Susan Daicoff, a law professor at Florida Coastal School of Law (and a center fellow), coined the name and has become well-known for defining what she calls the “vectors” that comprise it. They include collaborative law, restorative justice, therapeutic jurisprudence, preventive law, humanizing legal education and procedural justice. (See www.fcsl.edu/faculty/daicoff/vectors1.htm for more.)

“What is really wonderful,” Daicoff says, “is that the center has the potential to interact with the judiciary, the practicing bar, the academy and the general public. But I think where it may have the greatest impact is with the public.”

Apart from hosting a variety of gatherings and funding research into the law-and-healing nexus, the center also plans to publish a series of books. The first, called, simply enough, *Healing and the Law*, is set to be published early in the summer. (In the interest of full disclosure: I am a center fellow and have contributed a chapter to the upcoming volume.)

One center goal is to create a body of literature—to include a broad collection of lawyer-as-healer stories. (For more on the International Centre for Healing and the Law, go to www.healingandthelaw.org.)

Link likes to point out that, historically, the law was one of the three great healing professions, the others being the clergy and medicine. It's a vocation one can be called to.

That's an aspect of lawyering that ABA President Dennis W. Archer invokes in speeches these days.

“If we approach our life's work as healers,” he said in a keynote address at the last Minnesota State Bar annual meeting, “if we reorient our thinking to take advantage of the power of healing, we can do much good for our clients and others. The mere presence of a lawyer can offer comfort and solace to a person in need of help.”

Steven Keeva, an ABA Journal assistant managing editor, is the author of Transforming Practices: Finding Joy and Satisfaction in the Legal Life.

http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/once_more_with_healing/

Attorney Wellness: The Science of Stress (and the 21-Day Challenge), Jul 14, 2015

My name is Lance Breger and I was a hot mess. Not only was I a full-time personal trainer, but also running two startup wellness businesses simultaneously. I was working 7 days a week, sacrificing sleep for 6:00am clients, emailing and blogging late into the night, viewing meals as productivity speed bumps and existing in a chronic state of stress. It was only a matter of time before I crashed – hard.

In February 2008, I was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit at George Washington University Hospital for a peritonitis infection. The extreme pain of speaking and swallowing plus the fear of potential throat surgery was the backhanded slap of mortality that I needed to change my life and priorities forever. After all, what good is a thriving business if you are dead?

Now as an Executive Wellness Coach and Founder of Infinity Wellness Partners (IWP), a comprehensive corporate wellness company that **prepares law firms for the most productive and healthy work-life**, I share important lessons learned through the challenges I faced in my life when I did not put myself first.

My mission in life is to make wellness a workplace priority every day and I do that by providing clients online/on-site training in four critical areas of wellness: **fitness, nutrition, ergonomics, mind/body**.

The Stressed State of Law

Today's legal professionals are faced with the great challenge of maintaining their productivity and well-being while experiencing the most high-pressure and fast-paced work environment ever! The **cause of stress in today's legal industry is job pressure by billable expectations, career advancement, clients, courts, co-worker tension, bosses, and work overload**.

This chronic state of pressure and stress is taking a major toll on job performance and health as 7 out of 10 individuals in the US report experiencing physical and psychological symptoms of stress according to the American Institute on Stress.

Science of Stress

As early humans our DNA was encoded with a stress response. This was a defense and survival mechanism critical in protecting ourselves against physical threats like wild animals and angry neighbors.

It's essential to know that stress begins in the brain, which is a major clue in long-term stress management. Our brain processes incoming sensory information sent from our eyes, nose, skin, tongue and mind. If this information is seen as potential danger all heck breaks loose!

The very center of the brain sounds an alarm, which releases chemicals that direct our glands to send powerful hormones throughout the body that change the function of every single organ and physiological system.

We literally upshift into a fight or flight state where our body is best prepared to rumble or run for our life. Let's look at many of the amazing happenings that occur in the body during the stress response:

- Circulation – 80% of blood goes from vital organs out to your limbs to flee or fight
- Brain – blood flows to prefrontal cortex for impulsive thinking and the brain becomes left-hemisphere dominant
- Heart – increases pumping rate and pressure to send more blood to muscles
- Blood – increases clotting in the case of a laceration
- Liver – stops detoxification
- Pancreas – increases the amount of blood sugar for available energy
- Digestion & Elimination – salivation, circulation to digestive organs and intestinal contractions are all inhibited which disrupts food digestion, assimilation and elimination.
- Muscles – create and hold more resting tension to ready for action
- Immune System – Increases in the short-term to protect against an animal bite, but decreases with long-term stress

Wow. All that in seconds of sensing a threat! This response was incredibly valuable for mobilizing us into serious action for short, intense infrequent bursts. It's no wonder that stress response, when experienced chronically, leads to a whopping 90% of all doctors visits.

Times have certainly changed since our cave days. We are no longer hunting or being hunted, but our body has the exact same life-threatening response to modern stresses like appearing in court, traffic, board meetings, bills, and deadlines.

Guess how often the average American experiences this fight or flight response? 17 to 19 times per day! And everyone reading this knows that legal professionals are anything but average individuals. To make matters worse, we don't use our stress we sit all day swallowing it.

Hope this science doesn't stress you out, but makes the important connection of how chronic stress effects your two best resources – the brain and body.

Between now and my next post, Mastering Your Mind, I have a challenge for you.

21-Day Stress Challenge

Your 21-Day Stress Challenge is to become aware of your daily stress – how many times you experience it, the physical symptoms, and what situations trigger you. I chose 21 days because **7 to 21 days of a consecutive activity is the habit formation period** or entrainment.

Use the following example to monitor your stress:

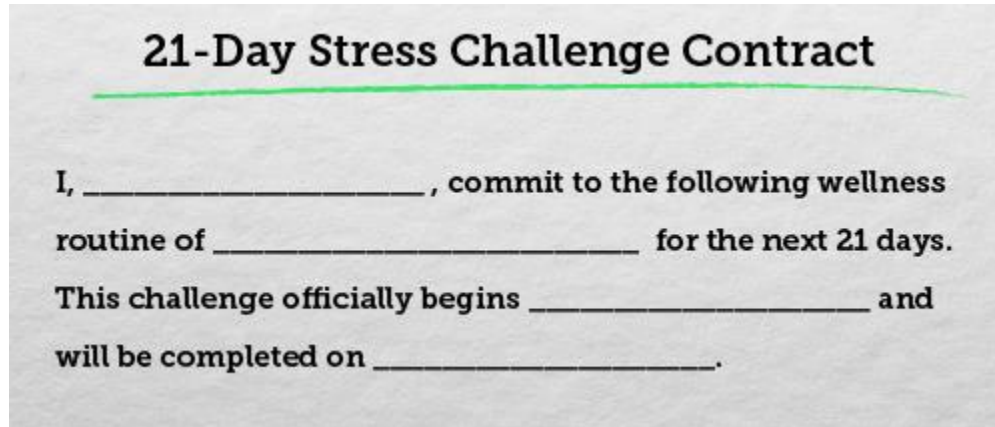
[Today's Date]

Stress #1

Symptom(s): Heart racing and tightness in chest

Situation: Nervous of running late to a client meeting
Rate: 6 out of 10 (10 high)

To officially accept my challenge write or print out the challenge contract and put it somewhere you can see every day. For bonus points share the challenge with a co-worker or loved one.



21-Day Stress Challenge Contract

I, _____, commit to the following wellness routine of _____ for the next 21 days.

This challenge officially begins _____ and will be completed on _____.

I wish you a tremendous month ahead and an enlightening 21-Day Challenge! I'd also like to invite you all to think of me as your personal Executive Wellness Coach and to share your experiences and questions with me: [@lancebreger](https://twitter.com/lancebreger) on Twitter or email me: lbreger@infinitywellnesspartners.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Lance Breger is an Executive Wellness Coach and the Founder of [Infinity Wellness Partners](https://www.infinitywellnesspartners.com), a comprehensive corporate wellness company that prepares legal professionals for the most productive and healthy work-life through online/on-site training in four areas critical to wellness: fitness, nutrition, mind/body and ergonomics.

<https://www.rocketmatter.com/attorney-wellness/attorney-wellness-science-stress-challenge/>

A 10-Minute Meditation to Work with Difficult Emotions

When we deny what's difficult by putting our heads in the sand, we create more suffering. Here's a 10-minute meditation to reverse the tendency to start digging.

By Carley Hauck, October 11, 2018

Can you feel the heat?

Life feels a little more intense these days: at home, work, out in the world. When life begins to feel more intense than normal, it's important to remember to slow down, turn toward these bigger feelings, and see the bigger picture. Take each day at a time.

Life is always [in flux](#). Every thought, feeling, and moment is quickly changing into the next. In the moment, when something feels difficult, it seems like it will never pass. The practice is [learning how to stay with and turn toward the difficulty](#).

The power of learning how to live a mindful life is to embrace this truth as much as you possibly can and live for the moment with some future planning that you hold loosely.

What I hear from most of my clients and students is that uncertainty is what creates the most difficulty. As much as we would like to know, to control, and to plan every little part of our lives so that it all works out in a way that creates more security and ease, we cannot. Life will always be impermanent and therefore always uncertain. We never really know what is coming next and sometimes the best and most courageous thing we can do is put one foot in front of the other and keep breathing through all of it. The power of learning how to live a mindful life is to embrace this truth as much as you possibly can and live for the moment with some future planning that you hold loosely.

The more we can meet any difficulty with presence, [compassion](#), and [kindness](#), the easier we can move through it. It requires that we learn to stay by turning toward the difficulty versus pushing away.

[Meditation](#) trains you to be [resilient](#). The more you can learn to stay with all the highs and lows of your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, the more strength you can bring to each moment and experience.

For example, the other week, a good friend was going through a lot of difficulty and loss. After meeting with him recently, I was struck by how intense the feelings of [sadness](#) and loss were transmitted between us. I spent a few days afterward feeling off center, crying off and on, and feeling a bit agitated in my body. At first, I was taken aback by how intense these feelings were and noticed my mind trying to make sense of what was happening. The more I could turn toward

my experience, and the physical sensations in my body, with compassion and understanding, I could feel the emotions passing and releasing.

Meditation trains you to be resilient. The more you can learn to stay with all the highs and lows of your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations, the more strength you can bring to each moment and experience.

Neuroanatomist [Jill Bolte Taylor](#) shares in her [research](#) that most emotions don't last longer than 90 seconds. I first heard about the lifecycle of emotions several years ago. I felt relieved to hear this 90-second timespan because it had mirrored some my experiences as a meditation practitioner for nearly 20 years. In the beginning of my practice, I had big waves of emotions that definitely lasted longer than 90 seconds. Why? I had never really sat with myself or allowed these feelings to be seen so there was a lot inside of me that wanted to come out. However, with time and practice, whatever feeling I was having passed through me more easily—as long as I brought my attention, understanding and compassionate observing to the table. *In the case of grief, PTSD, and/or depression there may be more time needed to work with these feelings and I recommend that anyone with depression or mood disorders consult a mental health professional before beginning or altering any course of treatment.*

I have also found, personally and professionally, that other somatic-based therapies can be complimentary to a meditation practice for approaching difficult emotions, including somatic release, acupuncture, yoga, and daily movement.

What Does Staying with Uncertainty Look Like?

We have a tendency to resist, reach for something pleasant, or deny the difficulty by putting our heads in the sand and this can ultimately create more suffering. This is a phrase I say to myself at any time I feel fear, anger, or confusion arising. It encourages me to stay and be here no matter what I am experiencing:

“I am here.”

“I am now.”

“All I need is within me.”

“All I need comes to me.”

Below is a meditation practice I have been using on myself and with clients that can support you to stay with what is difficult.

Guided Meditation for Difficult Emotions

1. **Come into a comfortable sitting position.** Imagine something difficult that you are going through. It doesn't have to be the most difficult, but something moderately difficult. We want to practice with moderation before we move into the most difficult.

Now, recognize your desire to push away the difficulty, to reach toward something that would soothe the difficulty in the moment (reaching out to someone, chocolate, distracting with technology, etc.), or denying that this difficulty is actually happening.

2. **Now turn toward it.** Breathe deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth a few times. Now invite into your awareness a large figure of compassion and strength who envelops you in a blanket of love, acceptance, and security. It can be a big cloud of compassion, a large grandmotherly figure, anything that feels loving and kind. Now, imagine this figure is holding you.
3. **Turn fully towards your difficulty.** Face it, head on. There is no need to be scared. Feel this wise being enveloping you and speaking kindly to you: “It will be okay, you are okay, you are lovable, you are enough, you are not alone, and we will get through this together.” Let yourself offer and receive loving and kind statements as many times as you need until your mind and body can soothe and slow down.
4. **Each time, you notice yourself reaching for the old familiar way of turning away from discomfort, try gently turning toward it.** The more you train the mind to acknowledge and name whatever difficulty is here, it won’t feel so challenging. In addition, your limbic system and specifically your amygdala will send a signal to your sympathetic nervous system that you can physiologically relax.
5. When I do this meditation, I often hold stones that are comforting to me, such as rose quartz, while sitting on my meditation cushion. You can find the props or comforts that speak to you.

https://www.mindful.org/a-10-minute-meditation-to-work-with-difficult-emotions/?mc_cid=a90e05e723&mc_eid=5803a24095