

28 June 2017

Look after Yourself in the Summer Holidays

The build-up to the summer holidays can be hectic, with the rush to get work finished off, booking flights and activities, and the last minute shopping. All of these activities can leave you feeling stressed and tired, well before your well-earned summer break arrives.

As with other holidays throughout the year, it is important to think about your wellbeing, to make sure you make the most of your time off, and to have a good break, ready to start back in the office feeling refreshed.

What do we mean when we talk about wellbeing? Wellbeing is subjective and it does mean different things to different people, but it's about how we feel, how we think, our relationships, and how we find meaning and purpose in our lives. In a professional context wellbeing matters because it brings a number of benefits – greater self-esteem, optimism, resilience, positive relationships with colleagues, better physical and mental health, greater motivation and more productive work.

But what is it about the culture and practice of law that can compromise wellbeing? It's not that lawyers are genetically predisposed to poor wellbeing: it's about the culture of law, legal education and professional practice. It is about the well known culture of poor work/life balance, long hours and presenteeism; the competitive environment; the fear of failure, and the driven and perfectionist personalities that can be drawn to law.

At LawCare, we have some advice about how to get the most out of the holidays:

- Try to take some time off completely, especially if you're holidaying at home
- Screen calls and switch off your mobile. Don't take calls from the office
- Try to resist the urge to check your email or if you will feel more stressed if you don't, only check email once a day.
- If there are other colleagues keeping an eye on things while you're off, make sure you have briefed them
- Enjoy spending time with family and friends
- Relax and use the time off if you're at home to catch up with old friends, get outside and have fun

Taking care of ourselves during our time off can really help when we go back to work after a break. However, we know that people in the law often need extra support with personal and professional issues. LawCare's key service is our free, independent and confidential helpline, open 365 days a year, on 0800 279 6888.

We also provide information specifically for lawyers on topics such as stress, alcohol and alternative careers. We raise awareness about wellbeing, the help available and promote a proactive approach to addressing the known factors that may be compromising lawyer wellbeing. Please get in touch if you need to – www.lawcare.org.uk – and in the meantime relax, switch off and enjoy the summer break.

Elizabeth Rimmer, CEO, LawCare