

# Fighting for the Client and the Attorney

BY NATHANIEL BACA

---

**A**s we look toward the end of winter and to springtime soon ahead, I want to take a moment with you to consider the hard work that we do on a daily basis, and how we can recognize and help each other navigate the common stressors and pain points in our legal careers to find a sense of renewed purpose.

Consider the challenges of the mental, emotional, and time investment of some of our most significant and meaningful cases. The truth is that particularly challenging and emotionally charged cases can test not only our legal acumen, but also our personal resilience. How can we navigate this complex terrain while maintaining perspective in our own lives and upholding our personal well-being?

## Understanding the Emotional Weight

Thankfully, the legal culture over the last decade has advanced enough that more lawyers recognize and acknowledge the emotional weight that comes with our work. Recognizing the emotional impact is no longer a sign of weakness but an acknowledgment of the human toll that we can subject ourselves to in our work. It is normal to be impacted by the emotional weight of our work.

## Maintaining Perspective

As lawyers, we are expected to advocate enthusiastically for our clients, but this does not mean that we should lose ourselves along the way. In the difficult situations that we regularly face, we must find a balance between our clients and ourselves.

One of the biggest challenges in maintaining perspective can be the tendency to empathize deeply with others' experiences, especially in



distressing situations. Over-identification with clients can lead to emotional exhaustion and impaired decision-making. Keeping a clear distinction between professional obligations and personal feelings is essential. The separation allows us to maintain our objectivity and legal reasoning throughout the case. By maintaining professional detachment, we not only protect ourselves, but also become better advocates for our clients and serve the interests of justice to a greater degree.

## Self-Care and Support Systems

Engaging in regular self-care is vital. Handling tough cases can be draining, and without proper attention to our own needs, lawyers risk burnout. Activities like exercise, meditation, hobbies, or spending time with loved ones can strengthen our resilience to be able to tolerate the stresses of work. Additionally, having a support system, be it

colleagues, mentors, or professional counselors, can provide an outlet for discussing challenges and gaining perspective. This collegiality is one of my favorite aspects of the CBA. Our peers in the CBA have lived through similar experiences and are often versed in the particular struggles that we face.

## Reflecting on the Bigger Picture

It is also important to periodically step back and reflect on the bigger picture. This involves considering our work in the broader context of the legal system and society.

I recently had the chance to meet with attorneys in the Boulder area who emphasized the importance of just outcomes for their personal well-being. The attorneys specifically noted that, though they liked to win, they also were deeply impacted by the accuracy of the judicial decisions in their cases. In other words, we place great value on our profession and its ability to function effectively. As such, I believe we all have a duty to improve the quality of our profession, not just for the millions of people who rely on us, but also for our own sense of meaning and purpose. The more that we uplift our profession and our colleagues, the more we experience satisfaction from our work. This satisfaction in turn protects us from burnout and keeps us engaged in our work.

Consider what things in your life, including your work, give you the most satisfaction, or even joy. How can you approach your work this spring with a renewed sense of purpose that is grounded in your sense of meaningful work and pride in your profession?

Arguing a hard, emotionally upsetting legal case is a demanding task that tests a lawyer's professional and personal resilience. By understanding the emotional weight of the case, maintaining perspective and professional detachment, engaging in self-care, and reflecting on the bigger picture, lawyers can navigate these challenges effectively. These strategies not only help in dealing with the case at hand, but also contribute to a sustainable and fulfilling legal career. I encourage you to lean in to the aspects of your work that you find most meaningful, and approach your work with a sense of purpose that will build your resilience. **CL**