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**Corporate Attorney Laura  
Anthony Explains How  
Lawyers Can Control Job  
Stress with a Balanced  
Lifestyle**

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**LAURA ANTHONY, ESQ.**  
FOUNDING PARTNER

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## Corporate Attorney Laura Anthony Explains How Lawyers Can Control Job Stress with a Balanced Lifestyle

According to attorney Sally Kane, business journalist, attorneys experience an amount enormous job stress, moreso than professionals in other fields. Due to prolonged stress, most attorneys will eventually be forced to cope with career burnout to one extent or another.

Deadlines, billing pressures, client demands, long hours, changing laws, and other demands all combine to make the practice of law one of the most stressful jobs out there. Throw in rising business pressures, evolving legal technologies, and climbing law school debt and it's no wonder [lawyers](#) are stressed.

The stress and demands of practicing [law](#) have fueled high levels of career dissatisfaction among members of the bar. Depression and suicide are common among lawyers and 44 percent of those recently surveyed by the American Bar Association said they would not recommend the profession to a young person.

In order for lawyers to understand how to confront and conquer burnout, it is essential to understand how even the sturdiest [attorney](#) can become derailed.

### The Backstory of One Attorney

They were always different than the rest of the pack. They possessed a certain undefinable quality, one that conveyed confidence without arrogance, ambition without selfishness, and an overwhelming sense of purpose.

They chewed through college courses during their senior year in high school, headed up one or more student committees, and still had the energy and time to compete in rugby or hold the top slot on the swim team.

They were well-liked, charming and charismatic. Anyone who spent more than five minutes with them knew they were going to be the one to set the pace. It would be up to the others to keep up.

They never had to adapt to the [college environment](#); they entered into it seamlessly. Again, they excelled, not just academically but in sports, social acceptance and various leadership roles. This Alpha was the first one to be picked for special projects and internships and, in a group dynamic, all heads turned their way when it was time to choose a team leader.

While their contemporaries weighed their options and weren't quite sure what their next step would be after university, their mind was already made up. They were sure of their profession since before they could drive.

They were going to be an [attorney](#), no two ways about it. Their resolve was absolute and unwavering. Law school was a given; they and they alone would select the ideal university. While their contemporaries dreaded the prospect of making important life choices, they found it thrilling.

This individual did not hail from a wealthy family, nor did they have a last name that was woven into the fabric of [American business titans](#), but they were by no means impoverished. Like most, they fell somewhere in the middle, but the middle was definitely not where they were meant to be.



In law school they turned up the intensity; classes were more demanding but they still maintained a well-rounded existence. Their academic accomplishments were the most important part of their life, but athletics and their ambition to travel are what made them truly interesting, and genuinely happy.

During their final year of law school, they completed several internships with prominent law firms and state-capital political offices. Their name was already becoming recognizable and they hadn't even passed the Bar.

Due to their exemplary work ethic and established history of success, they had several job offers to choose from upon graduating law school. As always, they weighed the options, considered their long-term goals and made a highly calculated decision devoid of emotion or impulsiveness.

Their first year at the firm was exactly what they expected: long hours, mediocre pay and the realization that there was a lot more to learn, but they loved every minute of it. Their enthusiastic demeanor, extraordinary attention to detail and ability to maintain top physical condition generated respect and attention from their superiors.

They truly fit in and did not have to don a game face in the office because this is where they were meant to be. Anything else just wouldn't feel quite right.

After passing the bar, the firm proudly announced the hire of their laser-focused new associate and, before long, they were no longer at the bottom of the food chain. In what seemed to be a matter of weeks, they were assigned the task of onboarding new recruits fresh out of law school. It was during this process that they realized how far they had come and how much they had learned.

Somewhere in the mix of new recruits they spotted someone who stood head-and-shoulders above the rest. Comparing them to the rest of the group wasn't even fair. The new Golden Child was keen, lean and hungry, and spoke three languages fluently. The rookie was charmingly intense and, by way of natural order, was the de facto group leader.

***It was obvious that one day this talented rookie would be gunning for someone's corner office.***

For a brief moment, our protagonist, the fast-track associate, felt unbalanced for the very first time. How ironic it would be if one day the bright-eyed recruit learned everything they knew and then effortlessly stepped right over them to become the firm's new pride asset.

This fleeting moment of introspection passed as quickly as it manifested. There's no time for negative thinking when there's work to be done.

As with most high-performance professionals, they became more heavily relied upon by their contemporaries, subordinates and superiors. It seemed as if everyone needed their assistance just to make it through the day, every day. As was their nature, they rose to the occasion and converted the newfound pressure into rocket fuel. The harder they were pressed, the better they produced.

As the old adage goes, "Pressure makes two things, diamonds and rubble," and becoming rubble was not in their game plan.

Their position as Associate quickly evolved into Senior Associate and the brass now required them to travel, frequently. Working from a laptop on a red eye from New York to LA became as familiar to them as breathing; it was in their DNA. Sure, they hadn't been rock climbing in a while, and their five-mile-a-day run was now a three-mile run, when they could squeeze it in, but these were small sacrifices hardly worth thinking about.



Their Success Express was rolling fast now, really fast, and they now knew what the life of an [attorney](#) was really all about. The workload perpetually increased regardless of how fast or how hard they worked, packing and unpacking became an art form unto itself, and most of the people they knew at the beginning of their career had either fallen behind or simply vanished, as if they had never existed. A fortunate few of their law school cronies had found their own fast track, but these fellow Alphas also went their own way.

### No matter, old friends outgrow one another, that's life.

What one person interprets as a challenge, another views as an obstacle; it's all a matter of perspective, but there was no time to dwell or luxuriate in sentimentality. There were three client meetings scheduled back-to-back before lunch, a series of conference calls and then a dinner meeting that would probably run until at least 10:00 p.m., leaving them just enough time to grab their bags and make it to the airport to catch the red-eye back home. With a little luck they could still get a few hours of sleep and log some time on the elliptical before work.

### No such luck. They'd circle back to it.

Barraged by a backlog of emails to answer, every minute counted the following day. About 30 emails deep they read the subject line, "Priority - Dinner With The Crew." Apparently three out of five original members of their Rat Pack were in town at the same time and reservations were set in stone at Cipriani. It was already 4:15 p.m. and the table was confirmed for 7:00; there was simply no way to make this work. They'd catch up with the old crew as soon as things slowed down a little.

Five years later the firm announced their promotion to [Partner](#). This was it, mission accomplished, but the achievement lacked the same thrill as when they had been unveiled to the world as an Associate. They were by no means devastated or derailed, but merely a little perplexed.

Long overdue for an epiphany, they realized that everything that had gotten them to where they were was no longer part of their life. If they were going to stay on top, it was time to take a personal inventory and regain some balance. Without it, their upward mobility would plateau.

Their need to initiate change would not become a fleeting notion. There was no need to write it on a Post-It note because there was a physical reminder already in their eyeline. The bright-eyed rookie they had onboarded years before was now a senior associate, still a subordinate by title but not in terms of professional excellence or compensation.

Bright Eyes had accumulated many achievements at the firm and was picking up momentum. Somehow, some way, they had done so without stepping onto the corporate treadmill and abandoning their personal endeavors. [Bright Eyes](#) was as diverse and energetic as they were their first day on the job.

Bright Eyes also quickly gained the reputation as the [superstar rainmaker](#); even if they never labored over another file again, their future was secure. They possessed the rare and highly coveted ability to bring new clients to the firm. The Founding Partners would provide them with every resource at their disposal to ensure they never jumped ship.

## Understanding Attorney Stress

One of the best analogies used to describe the kind of pressure [lawyers](#) face was written by Will Meyerhofer, JD LMSW, an attorney turned psychotherapist. The following is paraphrased.



Imagine running a marathon and making it to within the final hundred yards, gasping for air, legs burning, and the only thing pushing you forward is the fact that the finish line is within sight. You dig deep to tap the last of your stamina and there is just no way you are going to quit; there are thousands of onlookers and sweet relief is just a minute or so away.

Then, one of the senior partners emerges from the crowd to tell you, “Listen, we forget to tell you that there’s another marathon starting immediately after this one, we need you to run that one too.”

You’re a pro, so you take the news without breaking stride. You tell yourself that if there’s another marathon, there’s another finish line, AND once you cross this one, you’ll get some rest. You’re hurting but you’re still running so things could be worse; no sense in complaining.

As you approach the finish line another senior partner appears out of nowhere. They run alongside of you in order to convey an important message, “I hate to tell you this but there’s a third marathon starting right after this one. We need you to be a team player and finish this one as well, we just don’t have anyone else we can lay this off on.”

You keep running.

## Balance and Variety

It is a well-known fact that the most [successful attorneys](#), and all other effective professionals, are the ones that maintain a rich and diverse life. An influential career devoid of balance is as sustainable as shooting a cannon off of a canoe. You’ll probably hit your mark but you’ll have difficulty maintaining your impact.

Successful people are not just astute in their area of expertise, they are charismatic and energetic because they bring a myriad of exciting and interesting ONGOING life experience to the table. They possess the same curiosity they did when they started out in business and do not succumb to the mundane.

Mediocrity extinguishes productivity when the [Type A attorney](#) becomes obsessed with working harder instead of being better.

Alan Weiss, founder of Summit Consulting Group, Inc., works with clients such as Merck, Hewlett-Packard, GE, Mercedes-Benz, State Street Corporation, Times Mirror Group, The Federal Reserve, The New York Times Corporation, Toyota, and over 500 other leading organizations.

**Weiss wrote:**

## Life Balance: The Power of an Eclectic and Diverse Life

Perhaps nothing has impressed me as much over the past year as the relative equilibrium and superior judgment of those leading balanced lives. Not only is the “workaholic” lifestyle an unhealthy one, it has also turned out to be an ineffective one. Both managers and employees who have indulged in recreation, family, private interests, a physical regimen, and other diversions have tended to recover from disaster faster, employ better perspective, and provide others with vital assistance and guidance during turbulent times. The literature has long reflected the fact that people who see themselves as their jobs (e.g., I am an accountant, or a senior vice president, or a loan officer, or division president) tend to lose their identity and self-esteem when that job is threatened or eliminated. However, those who evaluate themselves in terms of their contributions (e.g., I provide financial well-being, lead people in highly competitive environments, acquire new business, etc.) retain that sense of contributing and performance across jobs and through turmoil. More than ever, the secret to success is not in working hard, but rather in working smart. And the route to working smart is best followed



by broad interests, personal growth, and time to enjoy loved ones and life. Key Point: What are you doing to broaden your life, improve learning, and spend quality time with loved ones? The first question I ask every executive whom I coach is this: “Are you having fun?” If the answer to that is “no,” then I know that performance is suffering and so are those within that sphere of influence.

## Learn Before You Burn

In every high-demand professional field, burnout is a very dangerous ongoing career killer, especially with [attorneys](#). The attorney doesn’t just become miserable, they may incur serious physical and mental issues that are not easily cured.

In a recent Forbes article by Paula Davis-Laack, she identifies three personal markers that led her to realize she was burning out as an attorney:

First, I was exhausted, and it was a different kind of tired than I had ever experienced. Getting out of bed to go to work had become exceedingly difficult, if not emotionally painful. Every work or life curveball, no matter how minor, became a major deal.

Second, I had become cynical, even by [lawyer standards](#). People generally just started to bug me and rub me the wrong way. I just wanted to be left alone in my office.

Third, I started to feel ineffective. I never lost confidence in my ability to be a good lawyer, but I stopped seeing a clear path for myself through the legal profession.

## Fix Career Fatigue, Don’t Mask It

Someone once said, “If you’re tired then sleep. If you’re still tired, then exercise. If you’re still tired, then re-evaluate your life.” They were probably an attorney, most likely a litigator.

Upon realizing that you’re just not as enthusiastic as you once were, business achievements no longer provide the sense of satisfaction they once did or you just can’t remember what it feels like to be on top of your game, then it’s time to slow down, not speed up. Moving faster is not going to get you anywhere if you’re just going through the motions.

Once you step back a few feet and get a better vantage point on your career, your life and your overall well-being, you may come to a realization shared by many professionals: you simply forgot how to have fun. It’s an easy trap to step into.

If your interpretation of the “work hard, play hard” philosophy entails getting to happy hour as quickly as possible, that may be the first activity you want to remove from the equation. It is essential to recharge without depending on dinner and drinks, or just drinks and drinks, as your primary method of decompression after you leave the office.

When you’re ready to change, and only when you’re absolutely ready, take one small step forward. It took years for your ship to fall off course; don’t expect to be able to steer it back on track in a matter of days or weeks. You’re going to rebuild some old habits, so this is about lifestyle change, not immediate results. Start doing things right and things will once again start going right.

Make a list of all the things you once enjoyed doing, even if you believe you were sure you’d never do them again. Draft a chronological account of all your old “healthy and creative” activities beginning with your high school years and ending at the last time you can recall being at your top of your game.



There exists a distinct possibility that Frisbee and Air Hockey may come to mind but don't be dismissive; add them to the list. No matter the pursuit, regardless of how juvenile it may seem, don't eliminate it from the inventory. You were once passionate about these things, so that makes them important.

Once your inventory is complete, take a shot at one or two of the simplest, most accessible activities first. Since there may not be a rock-climbing wall or an Olympic-size pool readily available, your old cycling routine may be the way to begin.

You're building a new version of your old routine, so there will be some trial and error. The pursuits that feel organic will probably be the ones that stick, but the more challenging ones may be pursuits that maintain your interest. One of the benefits that come along with being a bit older is that you possess a greater degree of patience and concentration than you did as a youth. For many [Type A professionals](#), unless there is a challenge there is no satisfaction.

## Spending Time and Wasting Time

Do not embark on a new routine that is unsustainable. It's natural to be overly enthusiastic at the beginning of a new path, but temper this excitement with some pragmatism. The fact is that you do indeed have a high-demand career, and time is a precious commodity. Re-integrate old pursuits and integrate new ones as if you're seasoning with salt; start off slowly, as you can always add more.

Bruce Lee was never an attorney, but his philosophical insights are still quoted by life coaches and motivational speakers who work with corporate professionals.

Lee said, "To spend time is to pass it in a specified manner. To waste time is to expend it thoughtlessly or carelessly. We all have time to either spend or waste and it is our decision what to do with it. But once passed, it is gone forever."

This observation is easy to misinterpret. In the case of the attorney faced with imminent burnout and the premature demise of a successful career, the goal is to recharge, not to accomplish "more" in the traditional or tangible sense. Should they come to realize that by dedicating one day a week to seemingly frivolous activities is what recharges their batteries, they are not wasting time because this is their intended "specified manner."

The belief that successful people accomplish something every single day is a fallacy. Successful professionals accomplish great things by working consistently over a prolonged period of time, not necessarily daily. They maintain their focus and persistence in the workplace by abiding by a carefully designed lifestyle based on the principle of self-preservation and physiological strength.

[Superstar attorneys](#) already understand that there are an abundance of organic obstacles on the horizon, and if their efficiency is compromised, they will lack aggressive problem-solving skills to overcome them.

As an attorney, or any other notable professional, having the strength of mind to accomplish anything is rooted in the serenity to be able to enjoy the accomplishment itself.



## The Author

Laura Anthony, Esq.,

*Founding Partner*

Anthony L.G., PLLC | A Corporate Law Firm

[LAnthony@AnthonyPLLCC.com](mailto:LAnthony@AnthonyPLLCC.com)

[Palm Beach securities attorney Laura Anthony](#) and her experienced legal team provide ongoing corporate counsel to small and mid-size private companies, OTC and exchange traded public companies as well as private companies going public on the Nasdaq, NYSE American or over-the-counter market, such as the OTCQB and OTCQX. For more than two decades [Anthony L.G., PLLC](#) has served clients providing fast, personalized, cutting-edge legal service. The firm's focus includes, but is not limited to Regulation D and Regulation S and PIPE Transactions, securities token offerings and initial coin offerings, [Regulation A/A+ offerings](#), as well as registration statements on Forms S-1, S-3, S-8 and merger registrations on Form S-4; compliance with the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, including registration on Form 10, reporting on Forms 10-Q, 10-K and 8-K, and 14C Information and 14A Proxy Statements; all forms of going public transactions; mergers and acquisitions including both reverse mergers and forward mergers; applications to and compliance with the corporate governance requirements of securities exchanges including [Nasdaq](#) and [NYSE American](#). Palm Beach attorney Laura Anthony is also the author of [SecuritiesLawBlog.com](#), the producer and host of [LawCast.com](#), Corporate Finance in Focus, and a contributor to The Huffington Post and Law360.

[Ms. Anthony](#) is involved throughout the community of Palm Beach. She is on the board of directors for the American Red Cross for Palm Beach and Martin Counties, and provides financial support to the Susan Komen Foundation, Opportunity, Inc., New Hope Charities, the Society of the Four Arts, the Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach County Zoo Society, the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts and several other organizations. She is also a financial and hands-on supporter of Palm Beach Day Academy, one of Palm Beach's oldest and most respected educational institutions. She currently resides in Palm Beach with her husband and daughter.

Ms. Anthony is an honors graduate from Florida State University College of Law and has been practicing law since 1993.

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