

the WRITS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUCKS COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION



SUMMER 2021

The Not Opening of Assizes

MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION 2021 • ACCESS TO JUSTICE



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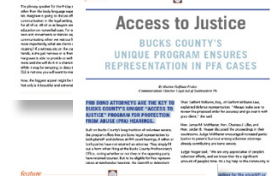
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WE ARE BACK... And Better Than Ever!

Bench Bar is back, baby! It is back in person at the wonderful Crystal Springs Resort in New Jersey. So, mark your calendars now for the Bucks County Bench Bar Conference from

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Access to Justice: PFA Representation

Pro bono attorneys are the key to Bucks County's unique "access to justice" program for Protection from Abuse (PFA) hearings. Built on Bucks County's long tradition of

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Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation Debuts New System

Nearly every general practitioner and certainly every employment law attorney received multiple telephone calls

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Discover the Beauty of Bucks County

If you're itching to get active, head to the expansive countryside of Bucks County and discover the beauty of the region! Home to many parks and trails, it's perfect for a day

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Mindfulness Tips to Live a More Wholesome Life

After more than a year of having been forced into a global shutdown due to Covid-19, it feels good to finally be moving

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Sean Gresh
*Bucks County Bar
Association President*

My Fellow Members of the Bar:

"No one goes there anymore, it's too crowded"
— **Lawrence (Yogi) Berra**

There is just something about meeting people in person. It's true you know, you simply can't make the same connections in a virtual world that you can in the real one. Ask any lawyer who has had to understand the nuance of a client's

articulate explanation of a potential claim via telephone, or a Judge attempting to assess the credibility of a witness by viewing them only from the shoulders up. Life... I mean real life, is about personal connection. The more I think about it, that is what our Bar Association is about really... personal connections.

One of the most insightful quotes I have ever read comes from President Abraham Lincoln: "I don't like that man, I must get to know him better."

Over the last few months, it has been my great pleasure to welcome members back to in-person events for our Bar Association. There is just no substitute for seeing your fellow attorneys in person, sharing a story, discussing a verdict, or just relaxing by smashing an old van with a hammer. Seeing each other out and about takes the edge off of a long difficult year for many.

Personally, I think one of the things that many people are missing in modern life is personal connections. Hollow twitter platitudes, social media vitriol, and news where everyone has an agenda (and that agenda is not simply reporting the news), modern life quietly conspires to separate and isolate us from each other. When we fail to see and meet each other as people, we fall into the trap that our modern conveniences have set for us.

One of the most insightful quotes I have ever read comes from President Abraham Lincoln: "I don't like that man,

I must get to know him better." Lincoln knew that our dislike of our fellow man often flows from our ignorance of them as a person. He knew that, if we take the time to get to know each other, we will find much more unites us than divides us. This can only be achieved through person-to-person contact.

For those of you who don't like me, come get to know me better at the Bench Bar Conference at Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, New Jersey, September 23-25. I promise you'll have a good time even if I can't change your mind about me.

It's for this task that I have always found the Bucks County Bar Association uniquely suited. I remember several occasions where I had a case with another lawyer and she (or he) and I got on each other's last nerve. Later I would have the opportunity to sit down for a drink with him or her at a Bar Association event and discover that we had quite a bit in common. I am happy to state that many such lawyers are now my friends. Those relationships would not be possible without our Bar Association.

So, if you find yourself craving a little in person connection with your fellow lawyers, why not come out to an upcoming Bar Association event? We have happy hours coming up in the summer, and some exciting new events to look forward to in the fall. For those of you who don't like me, come get to know me better at the Bench Bar Conference at Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, New Jersey, September 23–25. I promise you'll have a good time even if I can't change your mind about me. 🍷

— Sean Gresh
*Bucks County Bar
Association President*

We Welcome Your Feedback!

Thanks for your interest in *theWRITS*. Please send all comments, questions, submissions to: WritsEditor@BucksBar.org.



From the Editor...



Jason R. Weiss
Editor, Bucks Writs

Come in. We're open!

As the days go by, I have seen more (and sometimes unique) welcoming signs appear on local business doors inviting the general public to enter. Social distancing and mask requirements have eased as vaccinations climbed. We may soon be, dare I say, back to normal before we know it. It's been a long and somewhat divisive road. While I am not advocating for throwing

caution to the wind, it seems as though socializing with those outside the bubble is once again encouraged.

With the expansion of outdoor dining throughout the pandemic, there should be no shortage of restaurants to spend a pleasant summer evening for dinner. Likewise,

So I say go out and spend some of that stimulus money at any of your local establishments. Make a local business owner's day and enjoy yours!

I'm sure your local watering hole wouldn't mind if you stopped by for a cocktail or two. There are many great family owned and operated businesses throughout our vast county. There could not be a better time to explore them.

So I say go out and spend some of that stimulus money at any of your local establishments. Make a local business owner's day and enjoy yours! Happy summer. 🍷

— Jason R. Weiss

Need a Lawyer?

Welcome to the **Bucks County Bar Association's Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS)** serving all of Bucks County. The LRIS is a public service of the non-profit Bucks County Bar Association. Each year the LRIS responds to thousands of callers, referring them to attorneys with experience in the appropriate area of law or to area agencies able to provide assistance.

Persons identified as needing legal representation and who do not claim inability to pay an attorney will be referred by LRIS to a participating attorney. LRIS participation is open to all Bucks County Bar Association members having their primary office in Bucks County.

You can contact the LRIS at **215-348-9413**. 📞



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Mock Trial Competition 2021

By: Bianca A. Roberto

We Zoomed, we saw, we conquered.

Spring is upon us, the sun is out, we're getting away from our computer screens, and we can safely say that the 2021 Mock Trial Competition was a huge success.

The BCBA's Young Lawyers' Division continued the tradition of coordinating the Bucks County High School Mock Trial Competition this year on behalf of the Pennsylvania Bar Association. The Bucks County competition is part of the larger statewide competition run by the PBA, and is a staple on our calendars every Winter. This year, a total of 232 teams from 199 schools competed in the district and regional competitions across the Commonwealth.

Let's be honest, the pandemic threw a wrench into our well-oiled machine. In past years, the Bucks County Court of Common Pleas has graciously made its courtrooms and facilities available to the students, coaches, families, and volunteers. The students have the opportunity to experience presenting their cases in a real courtroom before sitting judges and attorneys practicing in and around Bucks County. At the end of last year, in an effort to be fair to all of the participating schools, the PBA decided to make the entire statewide competition virtual. Gasp. In its 38-year history, the Mock Trial Competition has never been held virtually. We were told that supplemental competition rules would be drafted, and the schools would have to decide whether they still wanted to compete.

While we were all used to virtual meetings, and the occasional virtual court appearance by the end of 2020, a virtual trial competition was a novel idea. Coordinating the Mock Trial Competition is already a massive undertaking, and the thought of organizing multiple simultaneous trials with parties, jurors, judges, bailiffs, coaches, and spectators, was daunting. So many questions arose. How does one hold a virtual competition? Can we even run three different Zoom meetings at once? What is a breakout room, exactly?

Would the schools sign up? Would our volunteers still participate? Can I fit three laptops on my desk?

I am happy to report that the competition went great! The competition started with 12 Bucks County high school teams vying for the top spot in our division. Over the course of five weeks, 24 trials were held, with 24 judges, 24 jury panels, and 24 bailiffs. Throughout the competition, the students presented compelling cases, shared evidence on their screens with ease, and were able to connect with the judges and jurors like pros. After the first rounds, eight teams advanced. The next round boasted 3 of the 4 teams being undefeated.

“So many questions arose. How does one hold a virtual competition? Can we even run three different Zoom meetings at once? What is a breakout room, exactly? Would the schools sign up? Would our volunteers still participate? Can I fit three laptops on my desk?”

The final 4 teams were Central Bucks South High School (Team 1), Holicon Middle School, Central Bucks West High School, and Council Rock South High School (Team 2). In the final trial, Central Bucks South High School faced off against Council Rock South High School, and won. Central Bucks South High School then advanced to the State Championships along with 13 other Pennsylvania teams.



Thank You Volunteers!

BCBA Members:

Ian S. Abovitz, Esq.
Maureen L. Anderson, Esq.
Mitchell H. Baylarian, Esq.
Tiffanie C. Benfer, Esq.
H. Jeffrey Brahlin, Esq.
Dina Brilliant, Esq.
Meg Brooks, Esq.
Julianna Merback Burdo, Esq.*
Melissa J. Cantwell, Esq.
Maureen B. Carlton, Esq.
Alison M. Carr, Esq.
Joseph Chellev, Esq.
Jahn S. Chesnov, Esq.
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**Juror and/or Judge*

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Hon. Denise M. Bowman
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Hon. Robert J. Mellon

Hon. Michael W. Petrucci
Hon. Jeffrey G. Trauger
Hon. Clyde W. Waite
Hon. Jordan B. Yeager

Schools:

Central Bucks High School East
Central Bucks High School South
Central Bucks High School West
Council Rock High School South

Holicong Middle School
Holy Ghost Preparatory School
Lenape Middle School

Pennridge High School
Plumstead Christian School
UNAMI Middle School
Villa Joseph Marie High School

Our venerated Bucks County Court of Common Pleas Judges and Magisterial District Court Judges presided over many of the trials. As always, the students were so appreciative of the Judges volunteering their time and giving them thoughtful advice after the trials. Our county is unique as many counties do not have sitting judges who preside over the trials. It is a true privilege to have the Judges on our county's bench be so generous

with their experience and time. We are grateful to the Judges and their administrative staff for their support and assistance.

Practicing attorneys in our county generously volunteered to put on their virtual robes and act as presiding judges, and sit as jurors and bailiffs. After every trial, our volunteers gave encouraging and

Our county is unique as many counties do not have sitting judges who preside over the trials. It is a true privilege to have the Judges on our county's bench be so generous with their experience and time.

Practicing attorneys in our county generously volunteered to put on their virtual robes and act as presiding judges, and sit as jurors and bailiffs. After every trial, our volunteers gave encouraging and meaningful feedback to the students.

meaningful feedback to the students. We are so thankful to the many attorneys who volunteered their time and knowledge.

I was delighted to be the Coordinator this year, and am so proud of the YLD, all of our BCBA members, and those in our legal community, for this achievement. We could not have pulled off the virtual competition without the help of the BCBA staff (thank you, Greg, Kristen and Emily) who purchased extra Zoom accounts so that we could run 2-3 Zoom trials at one time, and sent out numerous email blasts with information about the competition and seeking volunteers. Thank you again to everyone who volunteered, we could not do this without your help. We look forward to seeing our participants and volunteers next year in the Justice Center! 📌

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WE ASKED, YOU ANSWERED:

Working at home during the past year

What is one piece of advice or piece of equipment that has made a significant, positive difference in your ability to work from home? Our members offer their perspectives on working at home during the past year.

While many of our members highlighted the importance of hardware, software, cloud-based services, and a good internet connection, many members also pointed to the importance of focusing on wellness and keeping healthy boundaries between work and home and family. Additionally, working at home during the past year highlighted that some of us do not enjoy or prefer to work at home and that, while offices and office life may change, they aren't going away altogether anytime soon.

Thumbs up for the importance of a good monitor (or more than one good monitor)

– **Ryan Kilmer**, Associate at Stark & Stark;
John K. Shaffer, Law Office of Lester G. Weinraub; **Marielle MacMinn**; **Christina M. Reger**, Law Offices of Christina Reger, LLC; **Stephanie M. Schwartzberg**, General Counsel Penn Community Bank; **Hillary Moonay**, Obermayer; **Julie D. Goldstein**, Fox Rothschild LLP; **Bonnie Stein**, Curtin & Heefner LLP

Other Helpful Hardware

Scansnap fujitsu desktop scanner and PDF software.

– **Jill McComsey**, McComsey Law

Fujitsu ScanSnap IX1500 scanner (there are now newer versions of this excellent scanner available, but this is good enough for me)

– **Gregory Lawton**

High speed wireless scanner.

– **Joseph J. Marinaro, Esq.**

A fast copier/scanner. Worth the money I paid for it.

– **Andrew D. Cotlar**,
Law Office of Cotlar & Cotlar

I knew I needed a computer and printer at home but when I added the scanner working at home became even easier.

– **Mary Cushing Doherty**, High Swartz

A good printer

– **Bonnie-Ann Keagy**, Keagy Law

My MCFC Multi-function machine.

– **Kenneth A. Sprang**, Washington International Business Counsel, LLC

My iPad!

– **The Honorable Cynthia M. Rufe**

My laptop for virtual meetings.

– **Jonathan J. Reiss**,
Grim, Biehn, and Thatcher

Laptop computer

– **Jill M.V. Richter**; **Robert Naragon**

My VOIP phone system lets me make and take calls from my office phone number no matter where I am. Also – my Logitech webcam and Plantronics headset (wireless, and connects to desk phone, cell phone and computer), together with a large monitor, made Zoom meetings really easy.

– **Caroline A. Edwards**,
The Law Offices of Caroline Achey Edwards

I actually installed an office phone in home months before the pandemic, which rings straight through from our office and allows me call other extensions. It made a world of difference during the pandemic and quarantines.

– **Obadiah English**, Mannion Prior

Audio and video equipment.

– **Martin N. Ghen, Esq.**

Wired ear buds

– **Leanna Johannes**,
PNC Bank or wealth management

Earbuds!!!

– **Rachel M. Fingles**, Legal Solutions LLC

Internet Speed, Connection, and other Services

A fast fiber optic internet connection.

– **Donald B. Veix, Jr.**, VeixLaw, PLLC

Hi speed internet router

– **Niels Eriksen, Jr.**, Eriksen Law

Internet

– **Cynthia Bashore**

Software/Services

Zoom

– **W. Austin Allen, II**, Law Offices of W. Austin Allen, II, P.C.; **Scott Fegley**, Fegley Law; **Greg Emmons**, Goldstein

Zoom. Hands down. Second would be docusign.

– **Carol A. Shelly**, Shelly Law Offices, LLC

I would say Zoom calls (love them and hate them but they allowed us to stay connected!).

– **Maureen B. Carlton**,
Partner at Curtin & Heefner LLP

Using Zoom and Webex to meet virtually

– **John C. Kazary**,
Univest Bank and Trust Co.

Hosting Zoom meetings with our team and our clients has made working from home productive and collaborative. That means it is imperative to have a fast computer with stable internet access, a good camera and microphone, and guidelines for how to successfully host or participate in online meetings.

– **Gina F. Rubel**,
Furia Rubel Communications, Inc.

A reliable IT team to support the office's ability to work from home!

– **Tiffany Thomas-Smith**,
The Thomas-Smith Firm

Be very aware of your background i.e. don't sit with the sun behind you, etc.

– **Susan Levy Eisenberg**,
Susan Eisenberg Law

Office 365

– **Marshal H. Davis**, *Davis Law*

Needles, our case management software.

– **Adam D. Flager**, *Flager & Associates, PC*

Moving to the Cloud, e.g. Dropbox, OneDrive, Google Drive, etc.

– **J. Todd Savarese**, *Savarese Law Office*

Flexibility and video conferencing.

– **Hilary M. Froehlich Kolb**, *Law Offices of Hubshman, Flood, Dorn, Kolb & Schweikert*

Remote access software that has allowed me access to my server (in our case it's called splashtop).

– **Laura Mercuri**

A remote connection to my office computer

– **Dianne C. Magee**,
Grim, Biehn, and Thatcher

The Power of Going Paperless

Coming from a completely virtual and paperless law firm, here are some less obvious and less common, but useful, technology for practitioners and law firms interested in moving forward towards a more virtual and paperless practice.

- Zipwhip (for texting clients) — email replaced regular mail for communicating with clients and now more and more, clients aren't checking email but prefer texting.
- Voice over IP Phone systems (i.e. Jabber)
- Electronic faxing capabilities (for those stubborn opposing counsel or courts that still don't email)
- File sharing software (Dropbox, Box, SecureIt)
- DocuSign (for e-signatures) — caution you to know the rules of your county before dismissing all together the practice of obtaining actual signatures and/or discarding them without being sure of each county's retention requirements — Berks e-copy is as good as gold; not the case in Philly or Bucks
- PDF editor such as Adobe Pro/Foxit (much more affordable than Adobe Pro with most of the functionality for organizing and bookmarking discovery/medical records)

– **Carolyn M. Angelaccio**,
Managing Attorney of the Law Offices of Carolyn M. Angelaccio



Home work space, boundaries, and wellness

Boundaries

The best advice that I received is that I need to set a definite stop time each day.

– **Kathleen M. Thomas**,
High Swartz Attorneys at Law

Martini at 6pm

– **Sara Webster**, *Webster Law*

A lock on my man cave door.

– **Rich Moore**

Have a schedule!

– **Arlene Simolike**, *Metka Law*

I was already fully online when COVID started. Nevertheless, my approach with Clients was to personally explain the advantages, namely, that he/she could still access me directly via email, text, phone and now, via Zoom and similar platforms. In fact, they could send me their questions at any time, but making clear that I would only respond during regular business hours, unless I made other arrangements. I also mentioned the advantage of such communication methods, as they did not need to leave work or leave children unattended whenever we needed to communicate.

– **Maria Judith Rodriguez-Martyak**,
Law Office of Maria Judith Rodriguez-Martyak and of Counsel to Repko Law, LLC

Wellness

My John Deere tractor — 9RX quad track crop monster. – **Tyler Tomlinson**,
Shareholder at Stark & Stark

Bathrobe! – **Allen W. Toadvine**,
Begley, Carlin, & Mandio, LLP

A lock on my fridge! – **Anonymous**

Other advice

Keep your business hours the same. Get up, get showered, dressed and be in your home office at the same time you would have been when you had to go to concrete office. You have to keep to the routine or your days keep getting shorter. Of course unless your home is empty from 9 to 5 which is most often not the case, you simply stop and do what you have to do with kids, lunch, etc.

It's discipline. I ran my office from my home for years and I was at my desk at 9:00 in a suit. Very few lawyers have the discipline to do that which is why having an outside office is essential for most.

Depends upon the type of practice you have. Mine required a human coming to my office once or twice a week.

Hope this helps.

– **Thomas Hora**

Some firms haven't closed at all or are returning more and more to their buildings

I haven't worked from home. – **Denis W. Lanctot**, *Jackson, Cook, Caracappa & Scott, P.C.*

My car. I simply cannot work from home and need to go to the office.

– **Jenifer Kaufman**, *Kaufman Workers Comp*

The best thing about working from home is that it made me realize I shouldn't be working from home. I'm glad to be back in the Office – **Kevin Hand**, *KRH Law*

We don't work from home – **Steven A. Cotlar, Esq.**

WLD Happy Hour



Blood Drive



WE ARE BACK... And Better Than Ever!

By Melanie Wender

Bench Bar is back, baby! It is back in person at the wonderful Crystal Springs Resort in New Jersey. So, mark your calendars now for the Bucks County Bench Bar Conference from September 23rd through the 25th.

Now, you may be thinking why come to Bench Bar this year? Well, because it is going to be more fun than you are prepared for, an exciting educational experience and a wonderful opportunity to socialize with all the amazing members of the BCBA. Need more details? Well, here you go:

As per usual, we have great CLEs planned. CLEs will be offered by the Orphans Court section, the Women Lawyers Division/Diversity section, the Civil Law section, the Criminal Law section, the Family Law section, and an offering by the Business Law section. And, of course, there is going to be a CLE from our excellent judiciary updating us as to the current and future of the Common Pleas Court. There is really a CLE for everyone. And to make it even more thrilling, the CLEs will be featuring one of the hottest pop stars in history. Who would want to miss that? This elusive pop star might even make an appearance.

The plenary speaker for the Friday morning CLE is none other than the body language expert herself, Jan Hargrave. Ms. Hargrave is going to discuss effective nonverbal communication in the legal setting, a highly relevant topic for all of us. All of us as lawyers and judges could use more education on nonverbal cues. For example, what do our own arm movements or stances say about us? What are we communicating when we rest our head on our hand? Even more importantly, what are clients or witnesses communicating? If a witness sits on the stand fidgeting with her hands, is she just nervous or is there something else? Jan Hargrave is able to provide us with these answers and more and she will do it in a charismatic, energetic way. While it may be tempting to sleep in on Friday morning, this CLE is not one you will want to miss.

Now, the biggest appeal might be Crystal Springs itself. Not only is it beautiful and extremely comfortable, there

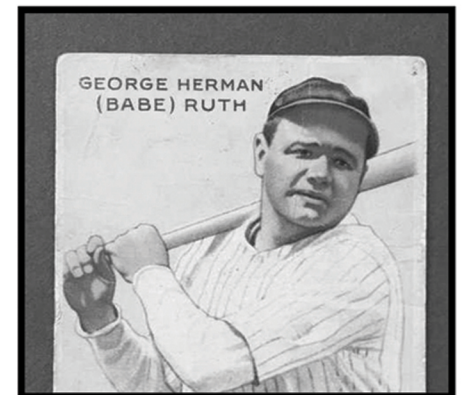


are endless activities to do, including activities for the children should you decide to make it a family affair. A quick run through of some of the activities are as follows: hiking, game deck, putting course, glow golf, wine cellar tours, family movies, scavenger hunts, marshmallow roasting, and more! And those are all just some of the free activities offered at Crystal Springs. For an additional fee, there is even more to do. A few examples are horseback riding, goat yoga, fishing, archery, Pilates, wine tasting, axe throwing, mixology class, and paint & sip. On top of that, there is the biosphere, which has both an indoor and outdoor part to the pool, as well as a great waterslide. And, of course, there is a spa, which offers a wide variety of different types of facials, body rubs, massages and others.

The greatest draw, though, is the opportunity to socialize with other members of the bar association and the judiciary. After spending so much time socially distanced and connecting over a computer, this year's Bench Bar Conference is truly the first opportunity for all of us to get back together, give each other a hug and celebrate that we made it through the pandemic. We made it and now it is time to celebrate!

See you all on September 23 through the 25th at Crystal Springs! 🍷

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Access to Justice

BUCKS COUNTY'S UNIQUE PROGRAM ENSURES REPRESENTATION IN PFA CASES

*By Marion Hoffman Fraley
Communications Director, Legal Aid of Southeastern PA*

PRO BONO ATTORNEYS ARE THE KEY TO BUCKS COUNTY'S UNIQUE "ACCESS TO JUSTICE" PROGRAM FOR PROTECTION FROM ABUSE (PFA) HEARINGS.

Built on Bucks County's long tradition of volunteer service, the program offers free pro bono legal representation to both plaintiff and defense at PFA court hearings, if either or both parties have not retained an attorney. They simply fill out a form when filing at the Bucks County Prothonotary's Office, noting whether or not they or the opposing party have retained counsel. But to be eligible for free representation at Wednesday hearings, the plaintiff or defendant MUST attend their assigned hearing. Hoping to inspire more volunteers, the Bucks County Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee presented a virtual CLE May 17, entitled "Anatomy of a PFA Case."

Barbara Kaner, Esq., Staff Attorney for Legal Aid of Southeastern PA (LASP), outlined Bucks County's 27-page PFA petition form. She noted, "The program is a benefit to litigants in Bucks County, offered because the Bar Association is so generous in providing volunteers" to support the program.

Amir Stark, Esq., attorney with Penglase & Benson, explained the timeline for case distribution, usually on Friday, and the procedure before and during PFA hearing day. He generally receives the petitioner's filing on Friday, with several days to prepare before the Wednesday hearing.

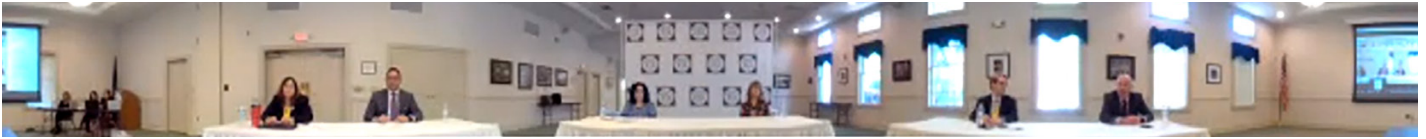
Shari Gelfont Williams, Esq., of Gelfont Williams Law, explained defense representation. "Always make sure to review the proposed order for accuracy and go over it with your client," she said.

Hon. James M. McMaster, Hon. Charissa J. Liller, and Hon. Jordan B. Yeager discussed the proceedings in their courtrooms. Judge McMaster encouraged increased participation to prevent burnout among volunteer attorneys already contributing pro bono service.

Judge Yeager said, "We are very appreciative of people's volunteer efforts, and we know that it's a significant amount of people's time. It's a big help to the community to have you there."

Top 3 reasons to volunteer for the plaintiff or defense in Bucks County PFA Court:

1. You'll provide access to justice through Bucks County's unique program for PFA hearings, in which both plaintiff and defense have the opportunity for legal representation as long as they appear in court for their assigned hearing. "If you volunteer as a plaintiff's attorney or if you volunteer as a defense attorney, you're doing a great service because your pro bono commitment as attorneys is something that we should all aspire to do," Williams said. "I also want you to understand that it helps the bench more than you can imagine, as we always have multiple judges assisting us on PFA day besides the assigned PFA judge on the fifth floor and the one on the third."



2. Young attorneys will gain valuable trial and negotiation experience, agreed Williams and Stark.
3. Great chance for young attorneys to develop mentor-mentee relationships with an experienced attorney, Stark added. Veteran attorneys who regularly volunteer at PFA hearings, for the plaintiff and/or defense, are "available to answer your questions if anybody is on the fence whether or not they want to engage in pro bono practice in PFA court," he said. Williams, who volunteers on behalf of plaintiffs and defendants, added, "There's a whole host of us regulars that will be happy to assist you. We'll be there to support you and help you 110% of the way." 🗑️



QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM? Please contact any of the presenters:

Barbara Kaner at 267-490-4849, 215-340-1818 or bkaner@lasp.org

Amir Stark at 215-348-4416 or astark@penglaseandbenson.com

Shari Williams at 215-396-2023 or shari@gelfontwilliamslaw.com

"The OPPOSITE of what gives ATTORNEYS a bad name."

In the stack of notes of appreciation I have accumulated over 28 years, none stands out to me as much as the client who said, "You're the opposite of what gives attorneys a bad name." What is it about our profession that seems to equate being a zealous advocate with being obnoxious?

Knowing that you can refer your personal injury cases to any firm that pays a referral fee, why not look to a firm that will reflect well on your recommendation? For almost three decades, other attorneys and physicians have referred their own family members to me to handle their personal injury claims. You don't take that kind of trust lightly.

Having resolved over 1500 personal injury cases, my hope remains to provide the type of legal service which warrants the continued respect and recommendation of fellow professionals. Let me know how I can help you.



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Pennsylvania Unemployment Compensation Debuts New System

By Scott L. Feldman

Nearly every general practitioner and certainly every employment law attorney

received multiple telephone calls during the pandemic from frustrated clients expressing some variation of the following: "There is a mistake on my unemployment claim and I can't get through to anyone by telephone!" Of course, Pennsylvania was not alone. Fifty different states employ fifty different unemployment compensation platforms, few of which were ready for the volume experienced in 2020. Federal stimulus plans only complicated the matter. It was small wonder the system and process was overwhelmed.

In part in reaction to the increased volume, Pennsylvania rolled out a new online system for claimants and employers, which went live on June 8, 2021. Various instructional

workshops were held throughout May, recordings of which can be accessed online at <https://www.uc.pa.gov/unemployment-benefits/UCBenMod/Pages/Resources.aspx#Workshops>. There are also video tutorials and various user guides available.

The source of much confusion and inadvertent overlap, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) system remains entirely separate. (By definition, it is for those individuals not eligible for regular unemployment compensation.)

The first and most obvious change with the new UC system is that "Keystone ID" will replace the way a claimant logs in. Instead of a Social Security Number and PIN, one will use a username and password. If you already have a

Keystone ID, which is used to access programs or services through some Commonwealth agencies, simply use the same username and password to access the new UC system. If you do not have a Keystone ID, you will need to create one. Of course, there is a password reset option.

The “benefit modernization” improvements initially follow a pathway from eligibility to registration to work history to certification to completion. Once these steps are successfully navigated and information entered — it is easy to go back and make corrections/modifications — the employee will primarily utilize a “Claimant Dashboard.” The customizable dashboard features a calendar indicating hearing dates or other appointments or deadlines, a message center with links to any Notices of Determination, and a payments summary. Weekly benefit certifications and Appeals can be filed right on the dashboard. If a Hearing has been scheduled, the claimant can update his/her attorney or witness information and even submit proposed Exhibits. In the event of overpayments, a claimant may make required credit/debit card payments online.

The “benefit modernization” improvements initially follow a pathway from eligibility to registration to work history to certification to completion. Once these steps are successfully navigated and information entered — it is easy to go back and make corrections/modifications — the employee will primarily utilize a “Claimant Dashboard.”

Employers access the same system to submit their questionnaire and related information, including a Request for Relief from Charges. For those whose benefits are expiring, claims for extension under the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) system can be filed on the new system as well.

At first glance it appears that the new system is more user friendly and allows the claimant to access more information. Hopefully, this will minimize the need for those panicked claimant calls and non-stop busy signals. 🐘



Bucks County Mediation and Arbitration Center

The Bucks County Mediation and Arbitration Center (BCMAM) is owned and operated by Barbara N. Lyons, Esq. She is certified, skilled and experienced in neutral arbitration, mediation and case evaluation. Attorneys work closely with Barbara from initial contact to the conclusion of their case.



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**For more information call
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or visit www.bcmam.org.**



Discover the Beauty of Bucks County





If you're itching to get active, head to the expansive countryside of Bucks County and discover the beauty of the region! Home to many parks and trails, it's perfect for a day of biking, hiking or running. See more with our friends at [VisitBucksCounty.com](https://www.VisitBucksCounty.com).

Take a Covered Bridge Biking or Driving Tour

Take a self-guided tour through the 12 historic remaining covered bridges.

Connect with nature from Ralph Stover State Park to Tohickon Valley Park

The winding trail connecting these two parks offers some of the best views in all of Bucks County! Take in the breathtaking view hiking alongside the cliffs on High Rocks Vista, a 200-foot sheer rock formation that also offers the opportunity to rock climb if starting down at the base.

Walk Washington Crossing Historic Park

This park marks the launch point where General George Washington and the Continental Army crossed the Delaware River on Christmas night 1776 to march to Trenton, New Jersey. Stroll the open grounds along the beautiful river as Washington once did. Walk past the old grist mill and climb to the top of Bowman's Hill Tower.



Explore Andalusia Historic House, Gardens and Arboretum

Located on a wooded promontory overlooking the Delaware River, Andalusia has been a stately presence on this stretch of water, just north of Philadelphia, for more than two hundred years. Explore the more than 100 acres and learn about over 250 different trees.

Explore the 1,200 acres of Core Creek Park

Run along safe and well-mapped paths at this Langhorne park. Take a side trip along Lake Luxembourg. You can also enjoy ball fields, tennis and horseback riding.

Stop by Peace Valley Lavender Farm and Lake Galena at Peace Valley State Park

At the lake, spy one of 250 bird species in 14 miles of trails, woods and meadows that are bursting with wildlife and wildflowers here in Doylestown. Stop by for some boating and fishing fun.

Jog the four-mile loop at Neshaminy State Park

Hop off your bike for a jog here in Bensalem where the creek joins the Delaware River. The park offers picnic areas, grills, a playground, boat launch ramps and pool.

Hammer and Hike at Ringing Rocks Park

A scientific mystery, this vast boulder field in Upper Black Eddy is filled with rocks that ring like a bell when struck with a hammer. Discover a small waterfall in the park's 128 acres.

Take a fairytale drive along Cuttallossa Road

Nestled in a wooded valley in Solebury Township, featuring a beautiful farm and a property that looks like it's straight out of a fairy tale, this is one of the best Instagram spots in Bucks County.



Fonthill Castle

Visit and tour the grounds of Fonthill Castle

This concrete castle built in the early 20th century makes the perfect backdrop for a picnic. Sit on the grass and get some fresh air and a historical “sight” to see! Stop in Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. for a guided tour.

Admire the Pennsylvania Impressionism inside the Michener Art Museum

What once housed the Bucks County Jail is now a grand art museum filled with local, state and national artists. Explore on a self-guided tour, rent the museum out for yourself with their “Private Eyes” program, or come for an event.

Jog along the more than 50 miles of Delaware Canal Towpath that run through Bucks County

The Delaware Canal is the only remaining, continuously intact canal, of the great towpath canal-building era of the early and mid-19th century.

Take a self-guided biking or driving tour past some of the area’s historic farmsteads on the Heritage Conservancy Barn Voyage

Enjoy a self-guided tour past 15 barns throughout central and upper regions of Bucks County. The Heritage Conservancy Barn Voyage boasts a variety of historic barns that pepper rolling hills and beautiful back roads!

Spend the day at a local fishing hole

There are tons of lakes and ponds, as well as the Delaware River, to catch a good fish. Or, try your hand at fly fishing.

Take a family camping trip to one of Bucks County’s scenic campgrounds

With plenty of activities to bring out your inner outdoorsman, the County’s campgrounds are fun for all. Hike, bike or fish where amenities do not fall short. Get back to nature just minutes from history in beautiful Bucks County!

Take an early morning or late evening walk and snap a picture of a Bucks County sunrise or sunset

Take a photo of the sunset or sunrise over beautiful Bucks County. Don’t forget to share it with us on social media using #ExploreinBucksCo!

Visit the serene 9-11 Memorial Garden of Reflection

The Memorial, which honors all 2,973 killed on September 11, 2001, is situated in Memorial Park amid the natural beauty of Historical Bucks County farmland.

Walk, jog, boat or kayak through nature at Silver Lake Nature Center

Though the buildings and the playground may be closed, the trails and waterways are open! Head to this beautiful Bristol space for a nature exploration.

Enjoy the Bucks County Audubon Society at Honey Hollow

Tour the trails, organic vegetable garden and pond at the New Hope watershed!

Stroll the grounds of Peddler’s Village

Spend the day at the gorgeous grounds of Peddler’s Village, a small outdoor shopping destination filled with local artisan shops, eateries, outdoor Murder Mystery Walking Tours and festivals. Spring and summer festivals include Strawberry Festival, Bluegrass & Blueberries, Peach Festival and more! 🍷

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Pro Bono Honor Roll

January 1 through March 31, 2021

THANK YOU to all attorneys who volunteered their valuable time to provide high quality legal representation to Bucks County residents. Your efforts helped ensure that there is justice for all. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you obtained final Protection from Abuse (PFA) orders for victims of domestic violence, prepared wills for senior citizens, obtained bankruptcies and expungements to provide someone a second chance, and so much more. Thank you, too, to all those who provide financial assistance through donations and arbitration allowances. Your support increases access to justice. Legal Aid of Southeastern PA (LASP) could not assist as many individuals without all of you.

A

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Hugh Algeo IV
Judith A. Algeo

B

Timothy Barton
Cynthia Bashore
Mitchell Baylarian
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Ronald R. Bolig
Kevin Bradway
Christopher J. Brill
Paul Brownstein
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C

Brendan Callahan
William H.R. Casey
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Stephen Corr
Jahn Chesnov
Patricia Cooley

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Timothy Duffy

E

Caroline Edwards
Susan Levy Eisenberg

F

Meghan Fleming
Amanda Frett
Elizabeth Wood Fritsch

G

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Martin Ghen
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E. Garrett Gummer, III

H

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Jill E. Trayer

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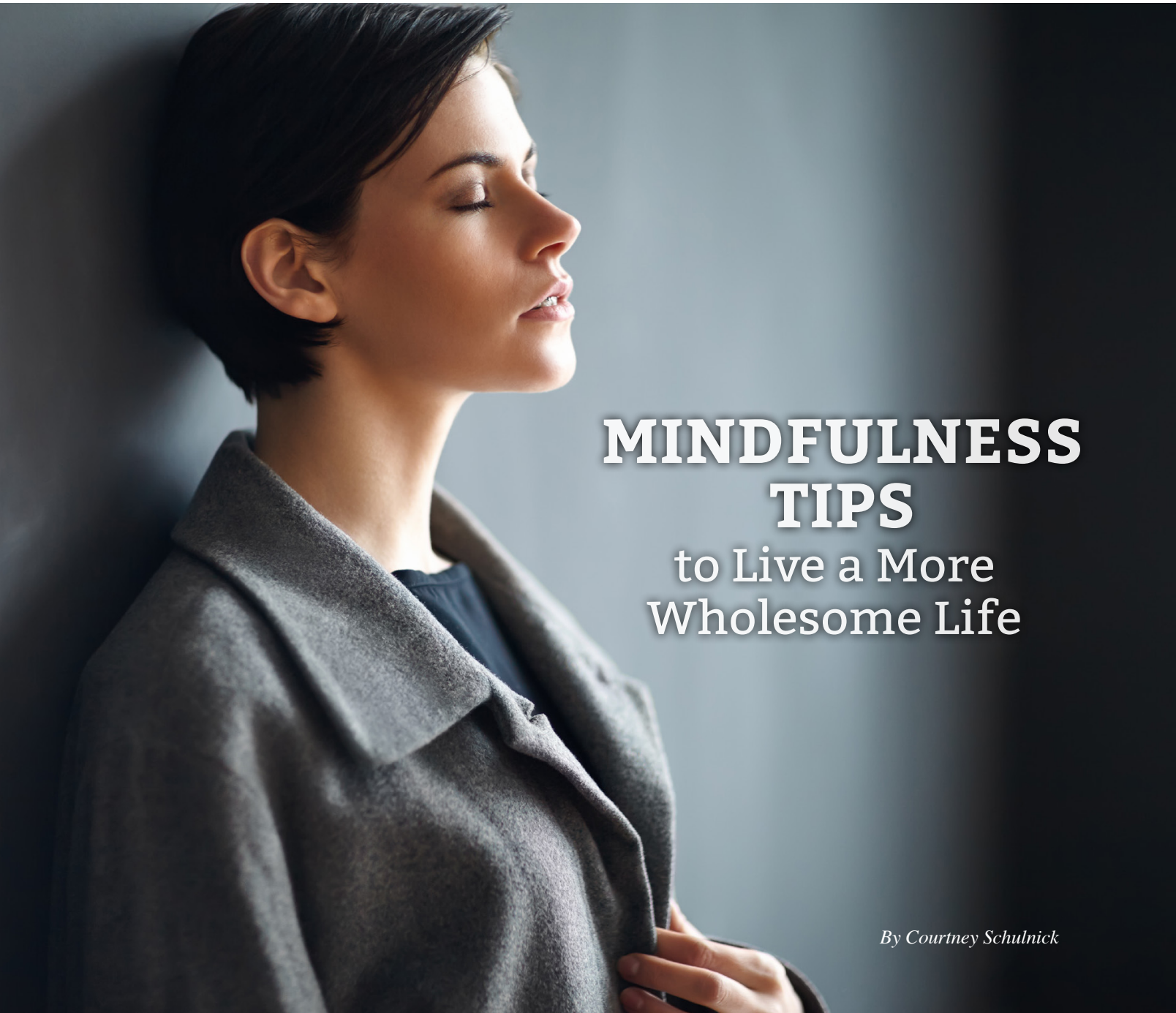
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MINDFULNESS TIPS

to Live a More Wholesome Life

By Courtney Schulnick

After more than a year of having been forced into a global shutdown due to Covid-19, it feels good to finally be moving in the direction of a less restrictive lifestyle.

Mask-wearing mandates in many parts of the world are loosening, professionals are gradually returning in-person to the workplace, concerts are resuming, children are gearing up for summer camp, and much more. While many of us welcome a return to the life we once knew with wide-open

arms, some of us may want to still hold on to that sense of “slowing-down,” which we experienced during a good portion of the quarantine.

Given our increasingly fast-paced world and all there is to juggle on any given day, it’s easy to see why we often find ourselves feeling overwhelmed and stressed-out. Sometimes it seems as though there’s so much to do and literally not enough hours in the day to get it all done. But, a regular practice of mindfulness can help us to internally

slow things down so that we are better able to navigate through the chaos of our lives. It can be as simple as taking three minutes to sit and just notice the body breathing.

Now, you may be thinking that you don't have three minutes to spare to focus attention on the breath, let alone just sit. The good news is that this doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing approach. Even taking mere seconds throughout your day to pause and connect with the breath or the body can be incredibly centering and help incline you in the direction of relaxation.

There will likely be times when our schedules simply don't permit us to fit in a formal practice of mindfulness — perhaps we plan to practice extra early in the morning, only to have a young child wake up at the same time, maybe a work conference runs later than expected, or something else pops up. In other words, life can sometimes “get in the way” and push our formal practice to the wayside. But, that doesn't mean that we can't weave mindfulness into our day in other ways.

Below are seven simple, yet effective, ways in which you can informally incorporate mindfulness into your daily life. Over time, these small practices really can lead to big changes. You may begin to notice that you feel a bit calmer, are more present and easily able to escape reactivity, and obtain a greater sense of overall well-being.

The Value of Non-Doing

Given that we tend to constantly be “doing,” we often are totally unaware of the ways in which we create unnecessary suffering for ourselves. But, when we give ourselves permission to rest, albeit only for a minute, or even a few seconds, we can recognize how we are and then identify ways to better care for ourselves. By intentionally protecting some of our time each day to simply be, we are able to step out of reactive mode and make more conscious and wiser decisions for ourselves, as well as others.

Try simply dropping into the richness of your morning cup of coffee or tea without having to check your email, watch the news or otherwise multi-task. When you drink your beverage, allow yourself to simply do just that. Notice the sensation of the mug against the lips, take in the aroma of your coffee or tea, savor its taste, feel the warmth against your hands, in your mouth and maybe even through the body as you drink it. So often we miss out on many of the moments of our lives in the midst of all of our doing. But, the moments of our lives really are better when we choose to show up for them, and allow ourselves to slow down a bit and enjoy the experience.



Mindfulness of Chores

Being that I have a husband and three young boys, I often find myself in the kitchen preparing meals and cleaning dishes — a lot of them! Although washing dishes is far from glamorous, like so many of our day-to-day chores, it is a wonderful opportunity to practice mindfulness. For example, when washing the dishes, notice the shapes and colors of the dishes, the sound of water splashing around the sink, the scent of dish soap or even the small movements and sensations in the hands and arms as you clean each dish. If boredom arises, simply acknowledge it and bring your attention back to the task at hand — washing dishes. When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, let them be just as they are and as much as possible, try not to judge your experience. Then, gently invite your attention to come back to the experience of cleaning the dishes. Even if attention wanders hundreds of times, each time you bring attention back to the cleaning of the dishes you strengthen the mind's ability to be in the present moment.



Free Yourself of Unnecessary or Unwholesome Commitments

Have you noticed the parts of your life that you commit time to, but that don't bring you joy or fulfillment? It can be liberating to recognize what in your life no longer serves you and let go of it. This may mean saying "no" to certain obligations or invitations. Rather than giving yourself a hard time for doing so, try appreciating the fact that it is really a radical act of kindness and compassion towards yourself.

Stop Killing Time

Look at how you fill up your daily hours — do you find yourself just trying to kill time? Instead, aim to create spaces for non-doing to simplify your life. Sometimes we feel lazy, guilty or think we're wasting time by doing nothing. As attorneys, we're often encouraged to capture every minute of our time in an effort to reach or even exceed our monthly billable goals.

But, allowing ourselves periods throughout our day to disconnect recharges us so that when it's time to take action, we are more focused and therefore, more productive in our work.



Assess Your Relationship with Social Media, Television, News and Your Device(s)

For many of us, our devices, like an iPhone or Alexa's voice on an Amazon Echo, serve as our alarm clock and from there, we might immediately begin scrolling through social media feeds, such as Instagram and Facebook. Then, we might check various news sites, like ESPN, NY Times or CNN for current events and so on, only to be followed by logging into our personal and professional email accounts to obtain yet, more information. The list goes on and on and when we live in this way day after day, it can stir up extra agitation and anxiety for ourselves.

Try being mindful of your relationship with your device(s), news and the information you choose to expose yourself to. How much screen time do you rack up on any given day and when? How do you feel afterwards? Try limiting your screen time and being cognizant of the type of information you choose to read or listen to. Notice how you feel when you limit your exposure. For example, when waiting in line at the grocery store, instead of pulling out your phone to check email or social media, can you stand in line and simply notice yourself doing just that? Sense your feet making contact with the support beneath you, feel the breath entering and leaving the body, notice sounds in and around the store (I've noticed that Whole Foods these days has been playing some really good tunes!). Inevitably, the mind will wonder off into thinking or planning — this is completely normal and just the

nature of our minds. Each time you notice that the mind has drifted, simply invite attention to return to the present moment by noticing the quality of the breath or perhaps sensing the body as a whole. Rather than feeling obligated to respond to emails, call anyone or otherwise "do" more, simply allow yourself time to rest.



You Are a Product of Your Environment

A motto I've tried to live by is one that my mother taught me at a very young age: "If you don't have anything nice to say about someone, don't say anything at all." Are you aware of the types of conversations that you get yourself into, whether it be with colleagues, friends or family? It can be really helpful to notice if you tend to complain, gossip or talk about others because negative communication can affect your state of mind. Be curious of the ways in which you can build more nourishing conversations into your relationships. That may mean changing the people you surround yourself with, disengaging from the toxic professional or personal relationships in your life and choosing to surround yourself with people who cultivate more positive communication.



Mindfulness in Your Daily Routine



You can train your mind to connect with the present moment with even the most mundane of daily activities. A great example is taking a shower. So often, while we stand in the shower, our minds get caught up in planning and strategizing out our entire day that we end up missing out on just how relaxing and enjoyable something as simple as taking a shower can be. The next time you take a shower, or perhaps a bath, try totally focusing your attention on the experience by being curious of body sensations, scents, sounds, and sights. With an attitude that is open, gentle and as much as possible, nonjudging, notice what comes up for you as you feel the temperature of the water against the body, smell the different fragrances from the soap, shampoo or conditioner, listen to the sounds of the water trickling down the walls or sides of the bath tub, and be aware of the sensations throughout your body.

In sum, these little tips really do add up.

Although there is so much around us that is out of our control, it is very empowering to know that we have the ability to at least control ourselves. We can cultivate greater resilience and equanimity with a regular practice of mindfulness. Taking moments throughout your day to check in on how you are is not only a gift to yourself, but to all those around you. May the benefits of your personal practice ripple out far and wide! ✌

If you care to take your practice a step further and are able to carve out even just three minutes for a formal practice, I invite you to listen to this short, three-minute guided breathing space practice: <https://youtu.be/SDWhM6AA4hc>. And if you are interested in obtaining more mindfulness resources, please visit my website: <https://www.courtneyschulnickmindfulness.com/>.






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