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# TORT TRIAL AND INSURANCE PRACTICE

## AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION



Committee Newsletter | Spring 2018

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## **How to Keep the Focus and Stay Motivated On the Long Road to Success**

By Priscilla D. Kam

As attorneys, it is in our blood to be focused and motivated. We do not choose a career in law because it is the easy path to success. The vast majority of us have been motivated and focused since day one – inquisitive children who became academic achievers focused on making something of ourselves (and earning our parents the coveted “My Child is an Honor Student” bumper sticker). We made a career of education, spent summers as interns and then buckled down for months studying for a single exam that would determine our fates as attorneys. It’s exhausting thinking about it, but we did it. We are attorneys; but the journey does not end here. Remember, motivation is in our blood and there is that perpetual hunger to tackle the next accomplishment whether it is landing a big client, making partner or owning a successful solo practice. So, how do we continue to stay focused and motivated (and avoid the burnout)? It is not always easy, but here are a few tips to help along the way.

**Give Yourself a Reality Check** – Set realistic goals and deadlines. You will not make partner overnight. It is likely a long and challenging road to the partners’ table. Set small daily, monthly, and annual goals that you can realistically accomplish and which are geared toward reaching your end goal. This can be as simple as a daily to-do list. I get tremendous satisfaction from crossing things off of that list. When you hit those small milestones, give yourself credit and share your success. There is no motivation like acknowledging the success you already have achieved. If you miss the mark, that’s okay, you will hit it the next month. This philosophy also applies to deadlines. You will not always be lucky enough to choose your deadlines, but when you are, be truthful with yourself regarding how much time you need to complete a task. It is important to be efficient and proactive. You do not want to repeatedly ask for more time because you underestimated how much time you needed in the first place. Setting realistic deadlines allows you to produce quality work and build a reputation as a professional who delivers as promised. While burning the midnight oil is at times inevitable, you do not want to make it a habit.

## YLD TORT TRIAL AND INSURANCE PRACTICE COMMITTEE

### Spring 2018

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**Talk the Talk** - Communicate. As young lawyers we always want to say, “YES!” We want to do it all, but spreading yourself too thin will only hurt you in the long run. That is not to say you should or have to turn down a new assignment or opportunity, but communicate honestly about your workload and then work with your supervisors to prioritize assignments and set *realistic* deadlines. Also, communicate your interest or desire to work on new or different types of assignments. If there is a particular area of law you would like to explore, and you have the time, communicate that to your supervising attorneys. Learning something new is a great way to stay focused and motivated.

**Get Involved** – Network! This concept has been ingrained in you since law school and for good reason. It is important to build your professional network – it is an invaluable resource that will only bring you opportunity. However, this is often easier said than done. Sometimes after a long day in the office or a rough morning in court, it is difficult to find the motivation to get to that bar association dinner or to attend that charity board meeting. The best way to stay motivated when networking is to get involved with organizations that are important to you about which you are passionate.

**Find the Balance, Take the Break** – This is also easier said than done, but it is equally important. If you find yourself sitting at your desk unfocused and frustrated stop and take 15 minutes to regroup. Take a walk, get a cup of coffee, shut your door and just take a few minutes clear your mind. Also, make time for the things you enjoy doing outside of the office whether it is pursuing a hobby or spending time with family. Doing things for yourself helps to put things into perspective and to stay motivated as you keep working towards your personal and professional goals.

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