

## Diane Costigan Offers Tips to Combat Workplace Burnout

JUNE 14, 2019

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently put a spotlight on workplace burnout labeling it a “syndrome” that can harm an employee’s health, underscoring a problem that can be particularly acute for attorneys who routinely work long hours and face stressful situations.

On May 28, WHO announced that it would include workplace burnout as an “occupational phenomenon” in its International Classification of Diseases.

Winston Director of Coaching and Well-Being Diane Costigan recently addressed best practices for law firms aiming to identify and fight burnout in Law360’s article [“3 Ways Law Firms Can Combat Attorney Burnout.”](#)

Diane explained that combating burnout is part of Winston’s Wellness Initiative in 2019 to help people improve their mental health.

“It was on our radar screen already. To me, one of the most important things any firm can do is help its attorneys and professional staff understand how the body’s stress response works; that’s usually the underbelly of what is going on in a burnout-type situation.”

Winston offers a wide range of training programs and workshops on stress management and individual coaching for people if they’re feeling overwhelmed. The firm also offers training that helps people improve their communication skills so they are better equipped to have difficult conversations in which they set boundaries for their workload when needed.

The firm also offers tech-based tools to help lawyers and professionals deal with workplace-related stress, which includes access to Calm, a meditation and mindfulness app, that promotes an environment of calmness and guides users in meditation sessions. Later this year, Winston will also offer web-based sessions on work-life integration and workshops on a stress-reduction treatment called the emotional freedom technique.

“I think the problem when you work in an area like the law [is] there’s a lot of high stakes,” Diane said. There’s always going to be another trigger for stress throughout your day so the more you know about how stress works and how you can work with it to stay on the positive side of it, to me that’s fundamental to helping to prevent and stay one step ahead of burnout.”

Diane stressed that guidance from organizational leaders can help alleviate stress for professionals who are left unsure about how to get ahead and that setting clear expectations can curb some of that work-related stress.

“It’s not a secret that you’re going to work a lot of hours if you’re a lawyer in a large law firm,” she said, noting that an effective wellness strategy can include both a clear outline for career advancement and training in professional skills that are conducive to success.

“We are trying to infuse in all of our professional skills training things like effective communication and having difficult conversations and leadership,” she added. “Also, I think business development can cause anxiety in a lot of attorneys and so we are trying to give some real tools and ideas on how [they] can practically execute on it.”

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