

Professional Perspective

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**Bloomberg  
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# Self-Care Will Save Your Life and Your Law Practice

Contributed by [Ali Katz](#), *New Law Business Model*

Lawyers work hard. Most of us work full-time, and many of us work more than 40 hours a week. So in this new “work from home” or rather “live at work” lifestyle many lawyers now find themselves in, is there any time left for self-care? Or more importantly, how can you find the time for self-care when there is just no time left in the day?

Before I give you the secrets that have worked for me over the past 15 years of building my own law practice and multiple businesses while also raising two kids, I need to make the case for you about why self-care is the game-changer needed in your life and in your law practice.

If you are anything like I was before, I was not a true self-care believer. If there is a part of you that does not believe you really need it or think you can get away without it, you will. I actually hated “self-care” before I realized how much it actually helps me accomplish everything else. I thought it was self-indulgent, expensive, and unnecessary.

When I hired my very first coach, Mariette, it was actually at a time when coaching was not available on every corner of the internet, but Mariette helped me find happiness in life and law. That said, I was appalled at what this \$350/month fancy coach did first: ask me when was the last time I went to the dentist, got a haircut, got my nails done, or exercised.

I nearly fired her on the spot! Why in the heck are you asking me about my personal hygiene, lady? I'm paying you good money to help me to love my life and law practice, not to make sure I am brushing my teeth.

Mariette said, “Alexis, if you don't start taking care of yourself, it doesn't matter what we do together—you will never like your life or law practice.” I didn't really believe her, or even know what taking care of myself meant, because I didn't get that teaching from my parents or school, but since I was paying her, I figured I would give it a shot.

So I booked the dentist appointment (I ended up needing a major procedure that would have caused huge problems on an emergency basis had I not gotten it handled in advance), got my nails done (for the first time ever), cut my hair, and started waking up an hour earlier (even as a nursing mom), and left my baby and her dad sleeping in the bed as I headed out to the gym daily before work.

It is not a bit hyperbolic for me to tell you that those four things changed my life completely. In fact, had I not made those shifts, I'd probably still be working and stuck at a big law firm, complaining about not making partner, working full-time as “of counsel,” commuting an hour each way ... miserable and unfulfilled.

Instead, I went on to build my own law practice and three other businesses dedicated to transforming the legal industry, while also writing three books and raising teenagers who really like me. So how can you find time for the same self-care?

Mastering your calendar is literally the lifeblood of everything, especially when you are both a mom and a lawyer. Many of us think of our time as work, work, work. Then whatever is left over is what goes to our family. And then, if there is anything left at the bottom of the bucket, it goes to self-care.

To survive these times, you are going to need to shift that mentality upside down and fill your own bucket first. But, you also have to see how little time it can take to do that, and how much it can multiply your time available for work, in order to be willing to do it.

So, here's the step by step:

## Step 1: Commit With a Big Enough Why

What's your primary motivator in life? Is it that you feel good? Is it your kids' well-being? Is it money? Whatever it is, write it down in a journal and then let that motivate you to take the rest of these steps. Following through on these steps is going to be simple, but it won't be easy. When you don't want to do it, you are probably going to need a “why” that is bigger than your reasons to keep doing the same thing the way you've always done.

## Step 2: Track Your Time for One Week

I don't mean your billable hours here. I mean track every minute of your day from the minute you get up until the minute you go to bed, for one whole week. By doing that, you will get to see where you are doing things you should not be doing.

These are the things you can hire someone else to do. These are the things you hate to do. These are the things that you are only doing because you think you have to do them, but really you don't. Once you've tracked your time for a week, they will become glaringly obvious.

Hire them out! And if you don't think you have the money, change the way you are pricing and packaging your services, and serving your clients (more on that in Step 4), because, as a lawyer, with a highly valuable service, money should never be the excuse.

The wrong practice area, yes. Say goodbye to litigation.

The wrong practice model, yes. See you, hourly billing.

But, not enough money to hire out tasks that you could pay someone else to do—no.

That's an excuse.

## Step 3: Schedule, Schedule, Schedule

We call it time blocking, and it's the linchpin of the game changer. But to do it and to stick to your time blocks, you need to schedule in a way you never have before.

First, you schedule the self-care! And it can start small and build up over time. How about a 30-minute workout or walk in the morning before work? how about that dentist appointment, and haircut you've been putting off? How about two 30-minute blocks a day with nothing at all on the calendar, during which you vow not to spend time with your kids or do work, but you don't have it pre-scheduled at all? Yep, that's self-care too.

And then, you schedule everything else. And I do mean everything. All the tasks get calendared to a specific time and day. All the things that must happen for you to meet your financial goals. Everything goes in a block.

## Step 4: Change How You Bill and Serve Your Clients

As I alluded to earlier, money should never be a problem for you if you have the right practice model, choose the right practice area, and price and package your services properly, you'll have plenty of money to use so you can buy back your time whenever you possibly can.

As a lawyer, you have an incredibly valuable role as a creator of the economy around you. Your services are needed no matter what the external economy looks like, and if you break free of the billing models we've been taught and build a business with your legal services, serving clients in a truly meaningful way, you will see that money is renewable (you can always make more), and that it's your time, energy, and attention that are non-renewable.

So it's time to ditch the litigation—even if you really like to fight (go to kickboxing classes), and deliver on a service that keeps people out of the court system.

Litigation is not systematic or systematize-able. It requires you to deal with the most hateful conflict-oriented lawyers, and pretty much hate your life.

Drop it, once and for all, in favor of a single practice area that you can systematize, delivers a highly valuable outcome, is relational instead of transactional, and allows you to price and package your services so the more efficient you are, the more free time you reap, and the happier you and your clients both become.

In the process, you only will benefit in every way. Not only do you get to hire people in your community to work with, create jobs for others, and develop your leadership skills, but also you will use your law degree to make an increasingly positive impact and enhance your self-worth and well-being.

Yes, building a business is hard work. But it's way harder to keep doing what you are doing the way you are doing it, and at the end of the day you'll have nothing to show for it but a lifetime of pain, broken dreams and regret. Trust me. It does not have to be like that.

So, commit to self care as the first step to turning it all around.

Now, I have to go work out. And, believe me, my mind *still* tells me to just keep sitting here, and working on my computer, and I can just skip my workout today. But when I remember how self-care has changed my life, even when I just get out of my chair for 30 minutes (especially when I don't want to do it), I haul myself up and go.

You can do it too.

You can always make more money when you are charging properly for your time, but you cannot make more time, energy, or attention. So do the hard thing, commit to self-care, and keep your commitment. It's so worth it.