

# DON'T STRESS RISK MANAGEMENT Stress Relief Tips

## YOUR FIRM can play a huge role in 'risk managing' the stress factor at work.

In developing Qantas' new 'Human Factors Risk Management Programme', Louise Raggett, Manager for Human Factors (Qantas), noted that human behaviours are influenced by an organisation's culture. Actively managing safety culture can positively influence behavioural outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Drawing from Raggett, here are some suggestions that law firms can easily implement:

**Provide lawyers with reasonable time and sufficient briefing to allow understanding of assigned tasks.**

**Provide lawyers with time off in lieu to compensate for the extra hours invested during peak periods.**

**Structure work in a team approach so that not every lawyer has to be contactable 24/7 and each lawyer need not work more than 50 hours per week (on average).**

**Partners and senior staff to set a leading example of good work-life balance.**

**Have policies where vacation leave must be cleared every work year.**

## THE INDIVIDUAL LAWYER also needs to play a part and take some affirmative action.

Ideas suggested by the Canadian Bar Association (on their website) include:

**Whittle down the workload** ~ Divide your work into smaller parts that can be accomplished in shorter intervals.

**Develop timelines for bigger projects** ~ Start at the very beginning of a file and think it through until the end, outlining all the steps, tasks to be accomplished, limitation periods, key dates, etc.

**Laugh** ~ Laughing reduces stress, improves your immune system and reduces anxiety and tension in your body. People will like you more. People will trust you more. People will want to be with you and the people who want to be with you are the sort of people you would like to be with.

**Exercise** ~ Keep active and make sure you get exercise every day. It can be as simple as taking a 20 or 30 minute walk. Biking, swimming, walking, competitive sports, gardening... Do something active every day.

**Sleep** ~ Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night. You will find yourself fresher and more vigorous if you get a proper night's sleep.

**Outdoors** ~ Spend time outdoors and catch that breath of fresh air and ray of sunshine.

**Do something you like regularly** ~ Reading, music, cooking, trekking, mountain climbing, triathlons... Keep your mind open and willing to learn new things and explore new activities. The point is to make sure you do it and if possible, do more of it.

**Keep in touch** with the people who are important to you. Invest in them ~ Make talking to a friend a daily affair or send a note/email to someone who you think would like to hear from you.

**Set aside scheduled time for family** and community activities so that you don't have the option of simply putting it off until later.

**List your accomplishments** and take time to feel good about just how much you've accomplished in a day.

**Take regular holidays**, a minimum of two weeks a year, preferably a month.

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Remember... Most successful lawyers thrive because they've recognised there's life outside the law office.

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