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INSIDE OUT

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HY IS STRESS MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Martini: First, controlling the impact of stress is a critical part of taking care of yourself mentally, physically and emotionally and in keeping yourself healthy in the short and long term. When you are properly managing your stress, you are able to perform better, both substantively as well as interpersonally. You are able to focus better, and when you take the time to relax, you are able to rest more easily. You are able to live a happier, more balanced life, even when you have a lot of responsibilities and pressure.

Susler: Three of the most important reasons stress management is important are your health, your ability to focus on work and your relationship with your family, friends and co-workers.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU ARE (AND AREN'T) DOING A GOOD JOB WITH STRESS MANAGEMENT?

Martini: You have to take cues based on how you feel and your anxiety level. When you are doing a good job of managing your stress, you feel calmer, have more energy, are more alert and feel more like yourself and are generally more comfortable in your own skin. The way I like to describe it is feeling like you are in the flow and you can perform more optimally when you are able to compartmentalize and manage your stress.

I know that I am experiencing challenges with managing my stress when I start feeling like a mouse on a wheel — it feels like I am constantly running on adrenaline and never truly resting from one day to the next. My sleep is impacted, so I am chronically tired and have a hard time focusing on my work and my interactions with others are also impacted. My energy level suffers, as does my general outlook on life.

Susler: When I find my patience is unusually short and I am snapping at people and feeling generally grumpy, I am not managing my stress well. This is also the case when I dream about work, get anxious and am unable to focus on the task or project at hand. However, when I am happy and smiling most of the time, when I easily focus and efficiently tackle projects and when I am sleeping better, I know I am successfully managing my stress.

WHAT ARE SOME TECHNIQUES THAT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL FOR YOU?

Martini: There have been a few, and the right



UNDER PRESSURE

When pressure's pressing down on you

By **CHRISTINA L. MARTINI** and **DAVID G. SUSLER**

one depends on the type and level of stress I am experiencing. Exercise can be a huge help, especially when it comes to getting rid of nervous energy and controlling the adrenaline in my system. I am also a big believer in having a mindfulness practice as a means of controlling stress. It is a very personal journey to figure out what your own best mindfulness practices are.

For me, meditating for more than 15 years has been beneficial to achieving a more tranquil state of being. I also believe in visualization as a great way to manage stress. This is a technique often used by athletes and I have found it can be a great way to prepare for a particularly stressful situation. I also try to plan ahead in my professional and personal life so as to avoid needless emergencies and high-pressure situations in order to cut stress where I can.

Susler: I have both immediate and long-term stress management techniques. My primary long-term technique is practicing transcendental meditation. It is a daily practice I have been doing regularly for the past 15 years. I also sometimes use TM for more immediate stress relief, such as calming my nerves before going to court or to help me fall asleep on those nights when my brain doesn't want to shut off.

Listening to music is another important stress reliever — a good Springsteen song in a particularly tough moment always helps. Exercise and

laughter are also proven techniques. Doing something to distract myself, whether for a few minutes or a few hours helps as well. This can include closing my eyes and taking a few deep breaths to center myself, getting up from my desk and going to talk to someone else in the office or calling a friend to talk for a few minutes.

Each of these helps to calm stress in the moment and enable me to regain my focus to do my work and to enjoy my life. CL

Christina L. Martini is a practicing attorney, author and columnist. She is chair of the Chicago intellectual property practice group and the national hiring partner of associate recruiting at DLA Piper and sits on its executive committee. She focuses on domestic and international trademark, copyright, domain name, internet, advertising and unfair competition law.

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To submit a question for future columns, e-mail questions.insideout@gmail.com