

REDUCE OVERWORKING

Rest is part of strength.

>>> Individual Self-Care Strategies

- 1. Commit to off hours.** Set a start time and end time for the work day and try to manage your time to stay within it. Set parameters around weekend work time rather than letting the work expand to fill all the time that isn't specifically scheduled for other things.
- 2. Set work goals around time not task.** Set a goal to leave at a designated time—such as 6 pm-- not to complete the entire to do list before leaving. It will never be completed. You will build habits of working more efficiently and being realistic in estimating turnaround time for tasks.
- 3. Set routines and rituals to end the work day.** Clear your desk, update your prioritized task list and leave.
- 4. Set transition markers.** Create a transition marker along the way home—an intersection you drive through or train/bus station you pass—to transition from work thoughts to home thoughts. How was my partner's day? My child's day at school?
- 5. Give honest timeframes.** To managers for projects, to clients for motions. Be honest about your available time and what you are capable of completing, while maintaining your rest time. You can work around the clock for a project or a trial, but not for decades.
- 6. Accept structural limitations as structural.** One of the hardest parts of public defense is the stress of feeling you're not doing enough and knowing that the reality is that some things are not getting done, and that most of us will never reach end of the task list—and the “task list” is filled with urgent needs of people who are suffering. This can be very demoralizing. Recognize that this is structural, not a personal defect or shortcoming.

The weight of the consequences, plus the volume of cases, can create a constant sense of feeling overwhelmed and inadequate. Our work culture can reward and reinforce the idea that working around the clock is heroic, necessary, and a demonstration of dedication. One essential tool for staying in this work is developing boundaries so that you can limit the intrusion of this work into your time and energy and thoughts. We need to protect times within the work week to eat well and exercise and spend time with loved ones. We need to develop work week habits that include rest throughout each work week. For many of us, this requires setting firm time boundaries, such as leaving by a set time, or not working for a designated, regular part of the weekend. It takes regular time and effort to maintain these boundaries, and to re-set them if a particularly demanding trial or other work event causes us to modify (or abandon) them for a period of time.

health impacts of long hours

A 2021 study by the World Health Organization found that working 55 or more hours per week is associated with an estimated 35% higher risk of a stroke and a 17% higher risk of dying from ischemic heart disease, compared to working 35-40 hours a week.

>>> Organizational Community Care Strategies

1. Provide coverage for planned and unplanned absences. Pause assigned work during absence. Care for clients during absence.
2. Define off hours. Discourage non-emergency work communications during off hours. Define emergency narrowly.
3. Build culture that values rest, not ceaseless work.
4. Model rest as a leader. Train and trust others to cover your job, too.