



Legally Fit: A Healthy Lawyer Is a Good Lawyer

Sports and Entertainment



Before the pandemic, I managed my physical and mental health by maintaining an extremely regular schedule at my gym. Once upon a time, I was a child you couldn't bribe to exercise.

But adult me, a card-carrying member of the #Ihaveaheartcondition club, reserved Tuesdays for boxing, Thursdays for yin yoga and weights, and Friday one-on-one personal training (PT) appointments every week for the last four years unless I have been desperately ill or out of town. I also interspersed my gym sessions with Pilates and walking, as once I was in a routine, I found it relatively easy to continue working out (even if all I managed was 10 to 15 minutes).

Once COVID became more serious, I realized that I would miss my gym-time if we were forced into lockdown. As soon as the announcement came down, I bought as much gym equipment as possible. I even threw in a Pilates reformer for good measure and have since qualified to teach mat work Pilates as a side hustle.



Pilates reformer equipment in action

For the first six weeks, I kept up my routine, swapping boxing drills and bench press for online bodyweight classes. While I waited patiently for shiny barbells and slam balls to arrive, I learned that I could do 120 push-ups (on my knees) during a 45-minute class and that tying a resistance band around a dumbbell does a pretty great job at mimicking the cable row machine.

But before too long, it was easy to continue with my emails during a rest break. That then turned into “joining” the online class without my video on and working through most, if not all, of it. Like many lawyers, I was so caught up in my work during lockdown that I forgot to live. Inevitably, all facets of my health began to suffer, and exercise was no longer a big part of my life, except for the occasional walk and the Friday PT appointments I held dear.

Health comes before work

In reflecting on why my health had declined, I came to understand I wasn't doing what had worked for me for years. Beyond being a person who managed her heart condition with exercise, I was simply a person... and people benefit from exercise for [several reasons](#), including managing their mood and supporting or preventing chronic disease.

I took the opportunity to reset my priorities and I take great pride in saying that work is not my number one priority. In fact, it's not even in my top three anymore. I am again placing my health above all else and feel much better for it.

I recently splurged on an Apple Watch to track my movement as part of my efforts. I'm only two

weeks in, but it feels like the start of a great affair. I love seeing that I'm maintaining my steps every day rather than the sad 800 steps I was logging before, and I can't wait to access the trend data after 180 days.

Prep for the life after the pandemic

It has taken me months to build my fitness back up, but the benefits of keeping up a regular exercise routine cannot be ignored. I feel that I am a more patient and productive lawyer when I make time to exercise, that the little crisis doesn't turn into a big one, and best of all, I enjoy my job because it's part of my life, not the only part of my life.

I hope one of your biggest takeaways is to put your health and exercise first, so you feel like you have the energy and mental bandwidth for adventures as the world slowly opens back up again.

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Zoe Bradley is a senior legal counsel in the medical device industry. She eschewed the traditional law firm training pathway and started her legal career in-house. Throughout her in-house career, she has supported clients across Asia-Pacific, Japan, the Middle East, and Europe across a variety of practice areas including marketing, distribution, privacy, and competition law.
