Stressors for Texas Judges

Work
1. Courtroom inadequate, e.g., Sound
2. Deadlines
3. Trial delays
4. Political campaigning and fundraising
5. Media coverage
6. Jury trials
7. Caseload
8. Lawyers who are difficult to deal with
9. Daily decisions about people’s life; if you care, you want to do that right thing
10. Trying to work with pro se litigants
11. Time constraints
12. Political climate
13. Lawyers who are not prepared
14. Lawyers with substance abuse problems
15. District Attorney
16. Pro se family law
17. Never ending cases with difficult attorneys and clients
18. Attorneys ignoring deadlines
19. Custody cases
20. Juvenile cases
21. Sentencing
22. Capital/aggravated sexual assault cases and issues surrounding these
23. Sentencing defendants to prison
24. Releasing felons from jail - risk assessment
25. Negative environment/negative part of society
26. Low pay
27. Problems with dishonesty and dishonest people
28. Public expectation and misunderstand of the role of judiciary
29. Workload/awesome responsibility
30. Threats by defendants
31. The Law
32. In the public eye often
33. Worry important evidence presented was not given appropriate weight
34. Difficulty making decision in tough/complex case
35. Feeling that creeps up over time that judges are not held in high regard

Work Administration
1. Stress from judicial administration; pressure from above
2. Bureaucratic delays
3. Systemic issues
4. Gossiping and personal attacks coming through the grapevine
5. Lack of funding for SCRAM and drug help for defendants
6. Commissioners Court
7. Meeting a schedule
8. Size of felony docket – huge # of pending cases
9. Volume of cases – don’t have time for quality work (check out things, research)
10. Trying to juggle too many things at once
11. Incompetent help
12. Conflicting deadlines and priorities
13. Court management, especially staff issues

Family/Personal
1.
2. Elderly parents
3. Finances
4. Over achieving
5. Children, teenagers, adult children
6. My spouse
7. Personal shortcomings, inadequacy, procrastination, health
8. Balancing family and work
9. Rush hour traffic
10. Dealing with crisis

Physical
1. Time for recreation
2. Finding time to exercise
3. Unhealthy lifestyle – lack of sleep, bad diet, lack of exercise
4. Involvement in too many activities
5. Chronic illness

Social
1. Isolation
2. Charitable activities
3. Limited relationship with other lawyers because of position on appellate court
4. Necessity to campaign/ask for money for re-election efforts

Self Care by Texas Judges

Body
1. Exercise
2. Recreation – dancing
3. Lamaze applied to self
4. Eat right, can’t have barbeque every day
5. Sleep
6. Massage therapy
7. Vacation – forced
8. Downtime
9. Acupuncture
10. Just get away from the office
13. Alcohol, not excessive
14. Golf
15. Swimming
16. Gardening
17. Fishing
18 Walking
19. Sleep late on weekends
20. Yoga
21. Solitude (alone time)
22. Breathe – deep breaths
23. Tennis
24. The Beach
25. Frequent breaks
26. Running
28. Biking
29. Daily workout
30. Ranching and farm work

Mind
1. Cultivate friends and do the work to stay close
2. Sense of humor
3. Meditation
4. Recognize own limitations, ex. personality of lawyers/judges ego’s
5. Have trustworthy judges for sounding board
6. Meet monthly with judges in your area
7. Do not take other judges too seriously
8. Have a strong 1-1 relationship with a judge
9. Reading non-legal stuff
10. Patience, patience, patience
11. Talk to close friend or relative
12. Reflection and introspection
13. Puppies
14. Talk to my spouse
15. Spend time with parents
16. When anger rises disengage and walk away
17. Relax with friends
18. Have a hobby that does not involve community service, it’s just for you (tennis)
19. Leave it at the office
20. Reading
21. Proper preparation and staying abreast of big docket
22. Friends – talking things over, yell, cuss, find solution
23. Hobbies and activities outside the legal arena
24. Honest responsiveness
25. Balance – make time for family/personal, while running for office/working
26. Create trusted community – via colleagues, other judges, church, social friends
27. Using humor/light hearted process
28. More training/awareness/education
29. Treating everyone with fairness, dignity and respect
30. Organization
31. Recognize own limitations, ex. Personalities of lawyers/judges egos
32. Enhance personal relationships

Spirit
1. 12 step or recovery groups
2. Spiritual life; nature
3. AA principles/some guidelines
4. “But for the Grace of God….”
5. Prayer/meditation
6. Faith, related reading
7. Bible study
8. Church (spiritual time)

Judges’ Stressors – Research
1. Crushing workload
2. Rural – have no privacy, always alert and on guard
3. Bored, exhausted, can’t talk to anyone about it
4. Judging drains your energy
5. Always treated with formality, like demigod
6. Bureaucracy
7. Stress becomes harmful chronic stress, becomes signs and symptoms of depression
8. When your dignity threatened, get angry
9. Threat of violence in the courtroom

Judges’ Self Care – Research
1. Leave work at court, don’t bring home
2. Intimate life – date with spouse or significant other
3. Vigorous outreach efforts to fight isolation – teach, volunteer
4. Mentor a new judge – to be an example have to take care of yourself
5. New judges need more training on stress management
6. Judge-to-judge support – realistic, honest – for naïve Q’s, doubts, worries
7. Sabbatical, vacations, long weekends
8. Training for retirement- exit mentor, serve in some capacity
9. “Buddy”
10. Use judges assistance programs