

## WELL-BEING WEEK IN LAW

# PARTICIPATION GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS

**MON** | **STAY STRONG**  
Physical Well-Being**TUES** | **ALIGN**  
Spiritual Well-Being**WEDS** | **ENGAGE & GROW**  
Career & Intellectual  
Well-Being**THURS** | **CONNECT**  
Social Well-Being**FRI** | **FEEL WELL**  
Emotional Well-Being

Welcome to the Well-Being Week in Law (WWIL) team! Participation by legal employers, associations, task forces, and other organizations like yours is essential for making WWIL a success. This Guide provides guidance and content that organizations can use to participate.

### WHAT IS WELL-BEING WEEK IN LAW?

WWIL first launched in May 2020, and it's now organized annually by the Institute for Well-Being in Law (IWIL). It occurs the first week of May to align with Mental Health Awareness Month.

The aim of WWIL is to raise awareness about mental health and encourage action and innovation across the profession all year-round to improve well-being.

### WHAT ARE WWIL'S DAILY THEMES?

Each day of WWIL focuses on a theme that corresponds to a distinct dimension of holistic well-being for legal professionals:

- **Monday: STAY STRONG (Physical Well-Being):** Striving for regular activity, good diet and nutrition, enough sleep and recovery. Limiting addictive substances and seeking help for physical health when needed.
- **Tuesday: ALIGN (Spiritual Well-Being):** Cultivating a sense of meaning and purpose in work and life. Aligning our work and personal lives with our values, goals, and interests.
- **Wednesday: ENGAGE & GROW (Career & Intellectual Well-Being):** Seeking personal satisfaction, continuous learning and growth in our professional and personal lives, and financial stability. Engaging in creative or intellectually challenging activities that foster ongoing development, and monitoring cognitive wellness.
- **Thursday: CONNECT (Social Well-Being):** Building connection, belonging, and a reliable support network. Making meaningful contributions to our groups and communities.
- **Friday: FEEL WELL (Emotional Well-Being):** Valuing emotions. Developing an ability to identify and manage emotions for health, to achieve goals, and to inform decisions. Seeking help for mental health when needed.

## WHAT IS THIS YEAR'S OVERALL THEME?

This year's overall theme is *Well-Being Reboot: A Fresh Start for Positive Change*. It embodies two key ideas: (1) a clean slate to start/restart our well-being action plans and (2) behavior change toward greater well-being.

# WELL-BEING reboot

*A Fresh Start for Positive Change.*

**Fresh Starts:** The "fresh start" theme stems from research by [Dr. Katy Milkman](#) (*author of How to Change*) and others. It shows that the psychological experience of a new beginning (e.g., New Year's, first of month, Mondays, birthdays) gives us extra motivation to make progress on our goals. Fresh starts make us feel like we can turn the page on our past failures. They also give us a chance to diagnose the reasons why our new habits aren't sticking.

This research inspired our WWIL theme. Many of us make well-being resolutions in January. By May, if our busy lives have gotten in the way of our big intentions, we may benefit from a reboot. We can think of WWIL like a Well-Being New Year. We can put our guilt and failures behind us and celebrate a fresh start for building the healthy lives we really want.

**Positive Change:** The second part of the theme is *positive change*. Mental health education is helpful. Alone, though, it rarely causes people to make the real-life changes needed to improve their well-being. So, although we'll still provide education, we're encouraging a focus on personal experiments and behavioral psychology tools to support change toward greater well-being.

**Mini Well-Being Experiments:** One way that WWIL will align with its theme is by recommending daily Mini Well-Being Experiments. Participants will be invited to sample many doable activities to launch their plan toward long-term, positive change. IWIL will distribute the Mini Experiments daily via social media and other channels. You should feel free to do the same as well as build organizational activities around them.

## WAYS FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO PARTICIPATE

To participate, organizations can join events organized by IWIL and create their own events and activities. Below are a few ideas:

**Raise Awareness & Anticipation:** Use email, intranet, social media, or other communication channels to build anticipation for upcoming WWIL activities. Graphics and marketing materials are freely available on the WWIL website. We encourage use of the hashtag #WWIL24 for social media posts!

**Host Lunch & Learn Sessions:** Host in-person or virtual lunch and learn sessions that focus on the WWIL themes.

**Pose A Well-Being Challenge:** Each day, invite your members to participate in a Well-Being Experiment or other challenge or activity that relates to that day's well-being dimension. Invite participants to post comments or photos of their activities on internal electronic bulletin boards or on social media.

**Recommend Resources:** Each day, recommend a Well-Being Experiment, article, book, video, podcast, tip, or gadget.

**Inspire Them.** Post inspirational quotes related to each day's well-being dimension or a short story about an exemplar of lawyer thriving.

**Help Them Plan:** Distribute a WWIL News Briefing that provides a schedule of activities and tips for participation.



## WELL-BEING MINI EXPERIMENTS

Below are science-based, Well-Being Mini Experiments to recommend to your members and/or to organize WWIL activities around.



*Striving for regular activity, good diet and nutrition, enough sleep and recovery.  
Limiting addictive substances and seeking help for physical health when needed.*

### TRY THIS: Stack Up Your Steps

Get physically active for 25 minutes today through small bouts of activity all day. Keep it going for the rest of the week ... and beyond.

Our goal is to do at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per week—ideally, aim for 300 minutes. This translates to 22 to 42 minutes per day. You can count bouts of physical activity of any length (e.g., walking briskly from the parking lot). Also try to work in two days of muscle-strengthening activity. (See [U.S. DHHS's 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines](#)).

Be creative and stay positive about moving (“Yay-more chances for steps!”):

- Walk (briskly) whenever possible—e.g., to work, for coffee, to lunch, to talk to colleagues, etc.
- When you drive, park far away.
- Replace sit-down meetings with walking meetings.
- While watching TV, walk on a treadmill, ride a stationary bike, or do strength exercises.
- Don't carry everything at once—e.g., take multiple trips to bring in grocery bags.
- Walk your dog one more time.
- Use a timer to remind yourself to get up and move at least 3-4 minutes every hour.

### TRY THIS: Try Something New – or Renewed

Engage in a physical activity for at least 30 minutes that's new to you or that you've dropped but want to start again.

Ideally, pick something you enjoy, that's challenging and helps you grow, and builds connection with others. Research says these elements will give you the biggest bang for your buck for the physical-mental well-being connection.

**Ideas:** Pilates, yoga, pickleball, all forms of dancing, outdoor biking, indoor cycling class, Tai Chi, basketball, Zumba, hiking, daily walk, boxing training, strength training, tennis, jogging club, aerial silks, Barre class.

### TRY THIS: Sleep Tight

Use the DREAM acronym to improve your sleep quantity and quality. Sleep really is a well-being superpower.

**D is for Darkness.** Darkness is essential, as light disrupts melatonin production, the hormone that signals sleepiness. Blackout curtains or a sleep mask can significantly improve sleep.

#### **R is for Routine and E is for Establishing a Schedule.**

Consistency is also key. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on weekends, to regulate your body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Also think about incorporating a pre-sleep routine into your day.

**A is for Avoiding Screens.** Electronic devices emit blue light, which suppresses melatonin. Power down phones, laptops, and TVs at least an hour before bed.

**M is for Moving & Eating to Maximize Sleep.** Regular physical activity promotes better sleep, but avoid strenuous workouts close to bedtime as they can be stimulating. Avoid heavy meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bed, as they can disrupt sleep patterns.

By incorporating these evidence-based practices, you can create a sleep routine that promotes restful nights and re-energized days.



*Cultivating a sense of meaning and purpose in work and life.  
Aligning our work and lives with our values, goals, and interests.*

### **TRY THIS: Bursts of Benevolence**

Do five new things that positively impact or improve the welfare of work colleagues or clients. Choose things outside your normal work routine, and do them all in one day. Research says you'll get a boost in your work's meaningfulness.

Try it out today (or some other day this month) and consider adding it to your monthly calendar. Writing down your helpful activities and reflecting on them can help too.

For some ideas, check out [the Acts of Kindness Activity Guide](#):

This activity is based on Prof. Blake Allan's research, [Helping others increases meaningful work](#).

### **TRY THIS: Tap Into The Power of Awe**

Do something today to inspire awe. Awe can enhance our experience of meaning in life and well-being by reminding us of our interconnectedness, the eternal splendor in our world, and larger purposes.

Here's a short article on awe, titled [Why You Need to Protect Your Sense of Wonder](#).

**Idea #1:** Take a photo of something awe-inspiring and post it on LinkedIn, using #WWIL2024. Check out this [short article](#) for advice.

**Idea #2:** Build a music playlist that inspires a sense of awe. For inspiration, here's a link to a podcast called [How Music Evokes Awe](#).

**Idea #3:** Go stargazing tonight. You don't need fancy equipment to embrace the wonder of the night sky. If you'd like advice to get started, check out this [beginner's guide](#) and head outside.

### **TRY THIS: Find The Spark: Create Meaning in Everyday Work**

Cheers to all you lawyers and legal professionals who wake up each day feeling inspired by your purpose-driven work. For the many who don't quite feel that way, there's much you can do to create more daily meaningfulness.

Meaningfulness often emerges from personal growth; feeling that our contributions matter; service to others; and feeling like a valued part of something bigger than ourselves.

So, to create more meaningfulness, you can, for example, connect with clients to hear how your work supports them professionally and personally. Help your colleagues. Think about how your smaller piece of work fits into the larger whole. Find ways to express your skills, strengths, and values more fully through your work.

To spur your thinking about creating more meaningfulness, ask yourself these three questions and then take action:

1. How does this work impact another human being?
2. What is made possible by my work?
3. How can I use one of my strengths more to do this task?

It takes some attention and effort but all the little bits add up to a more meaningful work experience—which, in turn, can boost your well-being and engagement.

For more information and ideas, see Dr. Anne Brafford's article [Judge's Well-Being and the Importance of Meaningful Work](#) (which applies to everyone, not only judges).



*Seeking personal satisfaction, continuous learning and growth in our professional and personal lives, and financial stability. Engaging in creative or intellectually challenging activities that foster ongoing development, and monitoring cognitive wellness.*

### **TRY THIS:** *Stretch Yourself*

Positive challenge and continual growth are strong sources of mental well-being, while stagnation and underutilization of skills and strengths are related to depressive symptoms. To experiment with this source of well-being, pick an area for personal growth (at work or home) and make a specific action plan for the next 3 months.

To get ideas for growing through nonwork activities, attend WWIL's *Share Your Passion* program on Friday, May 10. Sessions will be led by people connected to the legal community who will share activities they do to disconnect from work, revitalize their energy, and feed their soul. Register on the event website.

### **TRY THIS:** *Build Breaks Into Your Work Day*

Take several breaks throughout your work day to help you maintain focus, brain health, and mental well-being. Our brains start to repair themselves during breaks as short as 10 minutes.

There aren't one-size-fits all rules about breaks, so find what works for you. Use an hourly timer as a reminder to check in with your mind and body about whether it's time for a break. Or add daily breaks as calendar entries. Encourage and support colleagues in doing the same and avoid break-shaming.

Here's a short article called [Breaks for Breakthroughs](#) for further guidance.

### **TRY THIS:** *Turn Off The TV; Turn Up Your Personal Growth*

For just today, curb or eliminate TV-watching—the leisure activity that occupies the most time for the average American (about 3 hours per day). In that time slot, do something you enjoy (alone or with others) that helps you grow intellectually, interpersonally, or creatively. Such mini experiments might give us the insight and inspiration needed to begin to make new, healthier choices about how to invest our nonwork time.

**Ideas:** Read a (nonwork) book or magazine. Read to your kids. Paint, draw, sculpt, cook, or bake. Film a fun family video. Go for a photography awe walk. Plant something. Play a musical instrument. Go to a local lecture. Research a new culture. Plan a road trip or vacation. Make a list of 100 (nonwork) things that make you happy. Write a handwritten card or letter to someone.



*Building connection, belonging, and a reliable support network.  
It includes meaningful contributions to our groups and communities.*

### **TRY THIS: Don't be a Jerk at Work**

Even when you're busy and stressed, do your best to avoid being sarcastic, disrespectful, curt, snide, rude, or unfair to your colleagues. Don't yell or unfairly blame or criticize them. Pay special attention to your emails and texts.

#### **TIPS: For today, try:**

- 1) No sarcasm, condescension, or curtness. Try curiosity, kindness, and patience.
- 2) Replace "why" questions with "what" questions, which sound less personally challenging.
- 3) Pay special attention to emails, where incivility is rampant. Ask yourself: Did I include an opening greeting? Is it too brief? What tone am I projecting? Would talking be a better option? (See [Slow Down and Write Better Emails.](#))

Our accidental lapses of civility—even instances that we may perceive as minor—can accumulate and cause big injuries to our colleagues' sense of belonging that trigger depressive symptoms and burnout. In fact, research shows that incivility and interpersonal conflict have a bigger negative effect on others' sense of belonging than social support's positive effect. So, even if you can't be cheerful, try not to be mean.

For advice on curbing incivility, see [The price of incivility](#) by Christine Porath and Christine Pearson.

For advice on engaging in high-quality, micro-bits of connection, see [Four ways to create high-quality connections at work](#) by Jane Dutton and Monica Worline.

### **TRY THIS: Boost Belonging at Work**

Today, pick a way to make a meaningful contribution to benefit your work group or organization—or support a colleague in doing so. An often-neglected ingredient of workplace belonging is positive contribution. Belonging emerges, not only from caring relationships, but also from experiences of giving or contributing to others. When we can contribute our unique strengths, skills, ideas, and perspectives to benefit our groups in meaningful ways, we feel more like integrated, valued group members. The result is greater belonging, inclusion, engagement, and well-being.

If you'd like to read more about how contribution ties to inclusion, see Prof. Quinetta Roberson's [recent article](#) on the concept of "contributive justice."

### **TRY THIS: Send a Quick Gratitude Note**

Use IWIL's [free e-message tool](#) to send a note of appreciation to a colleague, client, friend, or family member. Feeling and expressing gratitude is an easy, science-based way to help protect and promote our physical and psychological health (e.g., higher mental well-being and self-esteem and fewer depressive symptoms) and strengthen our relationships at work and at home.

For more information and ideas about gratitude, see this brief article [How Gratitude Makes You Happier.](#)

*Valuing emotions. Developing an ability to identify and manage emotions for health, to achieve goals, and to inform decisions. Seeking help for mental health when needed.*

### **TRY THIS:** Focus On What You're Doing

One of the simplest prescriptions for greater happiness is this: **Think about what you're doing.** We're happiest (and less depressed) when we're mentally present while engaging in the world. The particular way we spend our day (e.g., partying vs. a quiet night at home) matters much less than whether our thoughts match our actions.

The simplicity of this advice doesn't make it easy. The human mind likes to wander: Almost half of our thoughts each day aren't related to what we're doing. And "a wandering mind is an unhappy mind" (Castro, Scientific America, 2010).

Working to improve control of our attention (especially when we're stressed, when our wandering thoughts tend to turn negative) can aid our mental health.

Aim for more daily experiences of feeling fully absorbed in what you're doing. We have only a limited amount of attention and can invest it in ways that either enrich our lives or make us unwell.

For more information, see this [Scientific America article](#) summarizing the mind wandering research and an [academic journal article](#) about its association with depression.

### **TRY THIS:** Mental Health Self Check-In

Do a mental health check-in with yourself. Start by taking a brief mental health self-assessment. Use a mental health checklist to evaluate any areas of risk for you and make a plan to take action. A few resources are provided below:

- [Mental Health America Mental Health Tests](#)
- [New York State Bar Association Personal Wellness Assessment](#)
- If you are in crisis or need immediate help, please call the Crisis Life Line at 988. You can also reach out to your local [lawyer assistance program](#).
- More self-assessments and resources are available in IWIL's [Mental Health Resources Guide](#).

### **TRY THIS:** Change Your Scenery

Explore new things and add variety to your daily routine, which can positively impact mood, well-being, and creative thinking. For example, try small changes of scenery, like a new coffee shop or lunch-time restaurant, taking your laptop outside for an hour, or working in a fresh location for a day.

Here's a short article titled [A Change of Scenery Can Boost Your Well-being and Mood](#)