

Mindfulness in High Conflict Courtrooms Thoughts and Strategies from Judges*

Place a physical reminder on the bench. For example, a card with one of two words such as "Relax....Breathe."

You have control over time in your courtroom. You have the opportunity to take a break when needed.

The bench is a private space. You can have a stress ball to squeeze or a foot massage on the floor.

A judge has to have a sustained presence and is "always on stage." Have your deputy close your door and do something to clear your mind or relax your body between hearings.

Judges must have absolute control over their emotions and appear unaffected by what they hear. If needed, sit with another judge for a few minutes of fellowship or to say "I just need to tell someone..." before going home.

Have a transition ritual between the courtroom and your home. Play music, listen to an audio book, sing, or call someone who loves you.

Be mindful of what you do during the transition from the courtroom to home. When you get home your family wants you to listen to them.

On your way home, don't listen to the news or ruminate about the day. You have an analytical brain and it wants to analyze things. Find another way to engage it.

Practice a meditation in your chamber before leaving the courtroom or in your parked car before entering your home.

Once home, spend time doing things you enjoy with people you enjoy.

Calendar in a way to space out the most high conflict cases.

Use humor.

Actually take lunch and taste your food.

Pay attention to what you do outside of the courtroom and outside of work. Are you doing those things that keep you balanced?

* Gathered by Judge Caroline Tesche Arkin, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, and Dr. Barbara Kelly, Licensed Psychologist and Certified Family Mediator, in preparation for and during the Mindfulness course at 2017 Circuit Conference.