

# Popular Threads on Solosez

## Help! I'm Bored, Burned Out and Anxious!

Ok. I work hard. I have a lot of cases. They are mostly going well. Most of my clients pay. But I have had not much excitement in my practice or life since the holidays, when, by the way, I mostly worked. How do I inject some excitement or variety into this life of mine which is mostly about paperwork and deadlines?

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Ever read The Most Dangerous Game?

Steve O'Donnell

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And don't forget, Fight Club

Brian Schowalter, Durango, Colorado

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I think you have to find the answer that is right for you on your own. Sounds like you need a vacation to reflect on your priorities and goals. What you want may not be as nice as what you have. I heard it said once, when a man is sitting at home in his easy chair he often wishes he were on an adventure, but when in the middle of an adventure he often wishes he were at home in his easy chair. That has been somewhat true for me and I have had a number of adventures.

D.A. "Duke" Drouillard

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What do you like to do? Golf, tennis, bowling, water ski, wind surf, fish? Single, get a girlfriend; married, get a girlfriend! Whatever was relaxing you before will do so now. Just put it in the planner and like everything else, get it done. Don't let it be put off otherwise the morass of work continues.

John J Kelly, Danbury, CT

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OK--you're in Hollywood, Florida, right? There are probably a lot of beautiful girls there right (more than most places, right)? OK--Now--here's the plan: (1) go to where ever they hang out, (2) Go up to one with tight jeans, spike high heels, a two inch gap between her top and the top of her jeans (with a tattoo of a flamingo just above..oh, never mind), a sleeveless white top, big sun glasses and blond hair tied back in a long pony-tail. (3) Go up to her and say, "I've got this friend in Oklahoma City that wants me to tell you 'hello'..." Oh, yeah--if she's got a cell phone glued to her left ear--forget it. I guarantee you'll have some excitement--what kind, I don't know.

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Dick O'Connor

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Private practice is doing other people's business. Sometimes we get restless because we need to create for ourselves. Public interest cases, local politics, charities, volunteering, neighborhood improvement - lots of ways to make life fulfilling beyond doing a good job on other people's business.

Rebecca Wiess

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Welcome to 99.9% of the world.

Law Office of Michael A. Blake, Milford, CT

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My wife (who also works with me) and I go to Las Vegas twice a year. The next trip is 02/17. It is great food, great entertainment and a great time. No phones, no clients, no deadlines and no one that you know. I HIGHLY recommend it!

Michael K. Elliott, Huntersville, NC

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Whatever you like to do, do it. Whatever you'd like to try, try it. I will absolutely, 100% guarantee you this - NEVER, in the history of the world, has a person on their deathbed said (to themselves or anybody else) "I only regret that I didn't work more." Russ Carmichael

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Buy running shoes. Find trail. Put one foot in front of other. Repeat. Daily.

Tina Willis

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I also recommend physical exertion -- but for me, team sports, especially ones where I get to knock people over and get muddy, are the best. If you sign up for a team sport, the games and/or practices go into your calendar and it is hard not to show up. My experience is that even though I have to draaaaaaaag my butt to practice, and then out of the car, and then force myself to put on my cleats, I always feel very invigorated after a good workout with my soccer team.

Being on a team gives the added advantage that you meet people who are not attorneys or clients (although they sure could be future clients or give you referrals.) That is also soooooo refreshing!

-- Amy Kleinpeter

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Drink a pot of coffee and eat a bowl of dried prunes. Then, go sit in rush hour traffic.

Possibly not the kind of excitement you're looking for, though.

Russ

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A weekend get-away can help. My wife (a high school special ed teacher) and I were pretty busy over the holidays, what with tons of work here, and school not letting out until 12/21. We took a weekend off in our favorite get-away place, and it worked wonders. We like the Central Coast, but whatever appeals to you, go there, whether it's Vegas, as suggested, or someplace closer and more natural. Otherwise, burnout can reach the critical stage.

Law Office of Raymond L. Stuehrmann, Thousand Oaks, CA

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Take a weekday off. Weekdays without work are more valuable than weekends. Go to a movie before noon. And then go downtown. Yeah, I know it sounds very Petula Clark, but there's just something about downtown when you don't have to be there. Just walk around. Maybe go to a museum or two, explore some old buildings, hit a couple of sidewalk cafes, and poke around interesting stores that you'd never otherwise go into. Just do aimless stuff and see what surprises you.

In fact, I did just that last week. What started out as a simple lunch downtown ended up five hours later as we meandered downtown, just exploring, gaining entrance to some government buildings housed in old mansions, discovered a swimming pool hidden under the Aqueducto that had only been in operation for the past 80 years or so, went off into another neighbor to see a restored church, and then drove clear across town just to buy some pastries.

jennifer j. rose

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Book stores are great--particularly independents with big leather chairs. Find a book that you've said, "I'd like to read that but I don't have time." Sit down and read it in the big leather chair.

Dick O'Connor

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Are you going soft on your original idea? I suggest he jet over to Jamaica or the Dominican Republic, leave the passport in his room, shuttle to Havanna (like Vegas just not as crowded), spend a few days, smoke some great cigars, see the night life; come back rejuvenated and maybe get a few new clients while there.

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Is that the book where man hunts man?

I think I read that book in 8th grade

Daniel X. Nguyen

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That's the one. I first considered that hunting man would break some out

out of being bored, but on second thought, being the hunted one would really be exciting, at least if you win. Now, we just gotta find someone willing to hunt David for sport, with David's blessing of course.

Steve O'Donnell

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Hard physical activity with some risk will help refocus you. The sun is also important.

Hunt for Cape Buffalo 5 hours in the long grass. Climb 5.7 Ice climb Hunt for Lion in the bush. Endurance ride of 100 miles River run for 5 days with some real rapids Diving in Belize for a week Take up parachuting Take up flying Tarpon fishing Two weeks on the snow or ice after musk ox and or polar bear.

The activity should be away from the office, no cell phone contact. It should be new. It should demand your attention. Some of the above are not as physical strenuous as others. They will make you sweat though. They will challenge you.

John Daly

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The book, Chasm City, by Alistair Reynolds, has a similar premise.

It's good stuff.

Russ (who is not burned out, but is bored, and wasting time on the internet)

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Passion, my friend. Not necessarily the kind between the sheets (though that's OK too!!), but a passion that takes you outside your professional life and transports you mentally, physically or emotionally to a different world.

Remember: Your clients do not expect you to be available 24/7. If they do, they shouldn't be your clients. You are not at your best unless you have your mental health. Clients really, truly appreciate focus, sensitivity, insight and judgment. All of these get compromised when you are not at your best.

Here's what I would do. You're in Hollywood, Florida, right? I would buy a hybrid bike, get onto the beach and bike the beach all the way from Hollywood to South Beach (the sand is hard enough to allow you to do it). That's a nice 20-mile ride. I would do it during a weekday. When you get to South Beach, find yourself a nice cafe on Ocean Drive, sit down and have a margarita and some lunch, watch the world go by, and appreciate the fact that you've been given the privilege to be in this profession and that clients want you like a hog wants slop. It does you no good to work as hard as you do without reminding yourself why you do what you do. Go for it!!!

Alan S. Fanger, Newton, MA

I'm going through something similar. I just started a solo practice and as a result, I don't have at-work chats designed to allow a person to recharge their batteries. To compensate, I pulled my old guitar out of storage. When I'm finding myself distracted, I'll pull it out - try to learn a part of a song, then get back to work.

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I'm not sure what you're asking, but it seems that everyone is offering the same suggestion--which is to do something that provides an escape from your work. While doing fun and exciting things away from work is of course important (and a natural part of being human), in my experience, weekends and vacations invariably end, and the paper work and deadlines are still there waiting for me in my office.

It seems then that the problem isn't finding something fun and exciting to do away from work (we all have a long list), but rather, the problem is work itself--the place where we spend the majority of our lives (which is an inescapable fact, unless you are extremely wealthy, lucky, or lazy). Stated another way, the problem is the engagement of our selves in our work. Or the correspondence of our hearts to our work. You can phrase it a number of different ways, but the problem is still essentially this--we view work as something separating us from all the fun and exciting things we want to do when we're not working, and so, we live in a constant state of tension between what we're doing and what we want to do.

One answer to the problem is to quit being a lawyer, move to the Cayman Islands, and sail a boat for the rest of your life, (sort of like every John Grisham protagonist). Another answer to the problem is to recognize what it is in your work that in fact, right now, keeps you coming back each morning--and there must in fact be that "it," whether you are conscious of it or not, because without that "it," you wouldn't be going to your work each morning (I am of course assuming that you're a rational person).

So what is "it"? Is it that particular client? The opportunity to engage in this particular area of law and business? The people you share an office with? The people your work allows you to associate with? The general satisfaction of just being absorbed in what you're doing? The opportunity to make the money to support the people you love, or do the things you love?

In other words, there must be something "other" in your work that keeps you coming back. Acknowledge it, and make it the conscious, deliberate reason for what you do, offering up everything you do--even the inescapable bullshit paperwork--for that "other," that "it," that "reason." If, on the other hand, you find that there in fact is absolutely no "other," no "it," no "reason" drawing you to the particular work you're doing, then you need to quit and do some other work. Otherwise, every possible diversion will be just that--a diversion covering up a wound that won't heal and that will get worse over time.

Sorry to get all heavy on you, but I read your question as a serious one, asking for a serious response--because our humanity is at stake every morning when we get up and put on our shoes.

-Dave Galalis

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Well, I dont have an enormous caseload, or a cozy comfy regular income coming in, but I do have this, peace of mind. And, this is how I get it: I have something I love and am truly good at in my life, which is completely unrelated to the law, and very physical. I train and ride show jumping horses. I live on my farm and train at home. My husband is my coach. He is a house/horse husband/ ranch manager. So, I am essentially the sole breadwinner, as selling horses is tenuous these days, and a feast or famine. But, I wouldn't have it any other way. My husband and his roles contribute to my peace of mind. Normally, I ride 2-5 horses almost every day, and we horse show in several states several times a year. Now, that's a little intense. Im not suggesting that, of course, But, I am suggesting that, at a minimum, make sure that at least 3-4 days a week, you get 1-2 good physical hours in doing a completely different thing. When I have this other thing in my life I am enjoy the rest of my day in front of the computer. Quite frankly, 2 hours in the Texas heat or cold wet winter, a cozy cool or warm office in inviting, and my brain is ready to work. Now, if you've read about my boohooing in Solosez about my torn ACL, that injury has really made me see how important my activity - other business- is to my mental health. Now that I am benched I work all the time and the stress does not have an outlet and wont turn off. I cant sleep, I am gaining weight, losing my metabolism. I cant wait to get back at it. even if I dont do quite as much legal work. (I still maintain pretty much the level of work though, because I feel better.) What I suggest is, don't feel guilty about going out and outfitting yourself for your favorite hobby, tennis, skiing, sailing, whatever. You are in horse country btw....Splurge a little, get good equipment, and think how much cheaper it is than therapy or a nervous breakdown. I bet that not only will you feel better and look better, but you will enjoy work more, and spend more quality time with your friends and family. Everyone will be happier! Don't be just a lawyer. Be something else fun to you! A closet beach volleyball player? A closet bowler? Dog show handler? Who knows? What defines you? A musical instrument? Anyway, it's a great excuse to think about yourself, you deserve it. Remember, legal work is never ending, whether you relax or not, the dent you make will be the same. So, live a little! Nina S. Willis, Warren, Texas

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I did that this week myself! Went downtown during the week. My sweet husband told me I was too stressed out and he hauled me off to the city for a chick flick - he watched it with me - and dinner and a shopping spree, for purses! (But then, he got himself an MP3 player... ulterior motive?LOL) Do something out of the ordinary, during the working week!!! That's what makes it special!! Then, redefine yourself in non lawyer terms, as I recommended earlier, for the long run! But, make it special. Something you have always wanted to do! Not something you have to drag yourself to.... Nina S. Willis, Warren, Texas

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Yes, Dick. Your first suggestion was a lot more exciting than the good book in the easy chair. That's too much like work! LOL But, what's wrong with brunettes? Nina S. Willis, Warren, Texas

I should have such problems!

My serious advice is: Take a day off, like next Wednesday. i don't care what you do, but do something fun. Go to the beach, rent a ski doo, go sailing, whatever. Take someone with you - your 5 year old, your wife, her sister, anyone you want to be with.

The next day, sleep an hour later, then go to work in your shorts and golf shirt. Do admin stuff, clean your office, but don't work on cases. Return calls if needed, but that's all. Repeat on Friday.

Take the weekend off. Do whatever you want on the weekend, but do not go near the office and do not take work home.

Hit it hard Monday and drive on.

OR, begin drinking heavily, now, to dull the pain. You decide.

Barry Kaufman

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David's thoughtful response is right on target. Arnie Herz, who writes the blog Legal Sanity, calls what David is talking about WorkLife Synergy. In fact, on Tuesday, January 23 (this coming Tuesday), at 3 p.m. Eastern, he's offering a free 90-minute teleseminar called Cultivating WorkLife Synergy.

The course includes activities, interaction and exercises to help you learn, among other things, how to create a practical and useable action plan to reenergize your work life, and it's specifically targeted towards lawyers looking to avoid career burnout and discontent.

You can get more information about the teleseminar, and register for it (or register to be notified when the recording is available for download) at [www.LegalResearchandWritingPro.com](http://www.LegalResearchandWritingPro.com).

Lisa Solomon

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Here's what I have decided, in a similar vein. I am 47 years old, don't know how to read music, have never played an instrument in my life, but have always wanted to learn how to play drums. I am looking for a set now.....

Randal A. Harvey, Troy, OH

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While I'm just a newbie at this law thing I understand what you're feeling from a business owner's prospective. Like everyone else who has answered so far, I have a few suggestions.

First, try the strenuous activity routine... taking an hour or two in the middle of the day to lift some heavy weights gives you a great endorphine rush. My husband runs the gym across the street from the Broward county

courthouse so that's partially how I avoid burnout (if you're up this way an want passes email me)...

If you're feeling a bit more adventurous try kiteboarding. Don't let age or activity level be a deterrent... it is such a good time (even when you are bad at it) and you live in a place that has some great instructors (google kiteboarding fort lauderdale)...

If it's more of a mental than physical thing...

A few friends and I have been kicking around the idea of trying to get some sort of community support project together for returning vets from the local area; whether a weekly dinner for families, or mental health support group we haven't decided yet, if you're interested let me know via email...

If you are more the intellectual sort, try focusing on an area that you don't practice in, learning a new language, or taking community college classes for something that you always been interested in but didn't happen to be a path that life led you to (come on... how many of us really wanted to be lawyers when we grew up?)

In any event, David, make sure that your choices in life are making you happy! If they are not, then change them so they do, regardless of what society tells you.

Good luck!

Shelley J. Murray. Fort Lauderdale, FL

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While you're deciding how to get out of the rut of being bored, burned out and anxious, take a look at the July/Aug 2006 issue of GPSolo, <http://www.abanet.org/genpractice/magazine/2006/jul-aug/index.html>, themed "Do Something."

jennifer j. rose

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go to CABO!!!! It made a huge difference in my life this week.

Randy B. Birch, Heber City/Salt Lake City, Utah

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Go get assigned a criminal case. That will wake you up!

Robert W. "Robby" Hughes, Jr., Stone Mountain. GA

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I am certainly not bored. However, I am burnt and anxious!! I actually have a prescription from my Doctor ordering me to take a vacation sitting on my desk.

I am planning on getting away for a Las Vegas weekend next weekend. I have not had any type of real vacation in 3 years!



I am addicted to practicing law.

Norman Gregory Fernandez, Chatsworth, CA

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Bravo!!! I think that is terrific! BTW, 47 is a great year. And, the good news is, you can't get hurt playing the drums! Nina S. Willis, Warren, Texas

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I must be addicted to NOT practicing law. I m going to go broke if I dont stop playing horsey, and start really working. LOL Nina S. Willis, Warren, Texas

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Takes guts to admit it, Nina. Lawyers are supposed to be very intense, very focused, work long hours for the betterment of society. But for a lot of people, law is what we do--not what we are.

I admire people who (I think it was Shelley) who work 16 to 20 hours a day, 7 days a week. I am, however, one of those non-focused people with a lot of interests totally unrelated to law. So I kinda retired for a while, bought a house in Santa Fe (I love NM, particularly SF) and my wife & I are renovating it. We'll probably be finished by late Spring and will put it on the market. I am thinking about taking the NM bar, though. (However, of the population of 75,000 in SF, 74,000 are lawyers.)

Dick O'Connor

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This original question clearly resonates with a lot of us, as it has drawn a lot of responses. In thinking about the question, I have been wondering whether, when we feel this sort of frustration, we might also be feeling a need for some sort of deeper meaning, some sort of sense of purpose, to our lives. At the cost of sounding preachy, I think that, when we feel like this, these occasions might be good opportunities to take the time for some personal reflection and spiritual investigation. In my opinion, such times might be a good occasion for us to get in touch with our spiritual and religious belief systems, and to try to take stock of our lives and try to measure them against our belief systems. Just my 2 cents. Respectfully, Jay

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