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# The Sentinel

September 2020

## Social Security Disability Claims Go Virtual What COVID-19 Changes Mean for Your Claim

A few months ago, in this newsletter, my brother Jeremy filled you in on all of the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused in the world of personal injury cases. Since that article came out, we've had a few clients reach out to tell us how helpful it was, so this month I thought I'd do the same thing for my area of expertise — Social Security disability claims! The pandemic has touched every area of law, and this one is no exception.

The biggest and most obvious change we've been dealing with is that our hearings are no longer in person. To maintain social distancing and keep clients, lawyers, and judges safe, we're required to do all hearings over the phone. This way of operating will be in place at least through the end of 2020, so if you have a Social Security disability claim in the works or are thinking about filing one, it's important to be aware of the pros and cons.

On the positive side, a virtual hearing can happen anywhere with phone service, so our clients have been able to attend their hearings from wherever they feel most comfortable. For many people, attending a hearing from home makes the process a lot less stressful. Judges, courthouses, and courtrooms can be intimidating, and the phone process takes that fear away.

That said, there are a few disadvantages to this model too. The first and biggest one is that the judge can't see you in a phone hearing, and that can take away some of the impact of your disability. In a regular hearing, for example, the judge can see with their own eyes if a client is walking with a limp, has a regularly shift their position because of back pain, or has a disfiguring injury. Without seeing that, it's possible they won't fully grasp the extent of what you're going through or take it quite as seriously.

To make sure that this doesn't happen, our team is working even harder to prepare our clients for their hearings. We want to ensure that you can describe your disability effectively and completely. If you're still worried your claim won't be taken seriously over the phone, we can postpone your hearing until in-person hearings start up again.

The second disadvantage to virtual hearings is that they're handled by a wider range of judges. In the past, our hearings for New Mexico clients were always handled by New Mexico judges. I saw these same judges all the time, so I was familiar with each of them and knew their preferences and styles. Now, though,



I've had hearings with judges from Louisiana, Texas, and beyond! These judges are wild cards, but I've put all of my resources and years of experience into making sure my clients' hearings continue to go smoothly.

When I don't know a judge personally, I reach out to my vast network of Social Security disability lawyers around the country and ask for tips from anyone who has worked with the judge before. Generally, my colleagues are happy to pass this information on to me, and I always take it into account when preparing my clients.

Apart from the phone hearings, there haven't been too many changes in the world of Social Security disability. Many administrators are working from home at the moment, so paperwork is taking a bit longer, but everything is still being done. If you're waiting on a claim, please be patient with the process — I'm sure everyone is doing the best they can to move things through.

At the end of the day, while the pandemic has created some challenges for Social Security disability claims, our team is working harder than ever to ensure all of our clients are treated fairly and their claims are approved. As the pandemic continues to change things, we'll continue to find creative ways to adapt, adjust, and come out on top.

*-Josh Worley*

# WHAT IS AGE BUT A NUMBER?

## A Dutch Man's Quest to Change His Legal Age

In 2018, Dutch native Emile Ratelband was 69 years old. The thing was that the motivational speaker and founder of the Ratelband Research Institute didn't want to be 69. So, he went to a Dutch court and petitioned for the right to change his legal age. His intention was to change the year of birth on his birth certificate — bumping it up by 20 years. As a result, all records would show him as 49.

Why did Ratelband want to change his age?

He told the court he didn't feel like a man who was going on 70. He said he felt good — he felt like a man 20 years younger. He even said his doctors agreed and that they'd told him he had the body of someone younger.

But there was another major reason Ratelband wanted to change his age. He said doing so would increase his overall happiness and would be helpful on dating apps. He would no longer have to deal with the ageism that came with being 69. Ratelband even went as far



as to say he would be willing to delay his pension benefits another 20 years if need be.

In an interview with Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*, Ratelband said, "When I'm 69, I am limited. If I'm 49, then I can buy a new house, drive a different car. I can take up more work. When I'm on Tinder and it says I'm 69, I don't get an answer. When I'm 49, with the face I have, I will be in a luxurious position."

Interestingly enough, Ratelband's request wasn't dismissed outright by the court. The judge found merit in the argument and said that people desire to change things about themselves all the time, adding that maybe age was one of those things we should consider — "maybe" being the operative word.

The court ultimately decided that "Ratelband is at liberty to feel 20 years younger than his real age and to act accordingly." But the judge added that changing his legal documents would have "undesirable legal and societal implications." The court added "[T]here are a variety of rights and duties related to age, such as the right to vote and the duty to attend school. If Mr. Ratelband's request was allowed, those age requirements would become meaningless."

Today, Ratelband is 71 and continues his battle to change his age. While he may have lost in his initial quest to legally change his age, according to NPR, he intends to appeal the decision.

## Is Stress Harming Your Memory?

### How to Cope With Daily Triggers

Stress can cause more than just a bad mood and low energy. Over time, mental exhaustion from stress can lead to forgetfulness and reduced cognition. This can hamper your ability to do your job and enjoy life. Though stress is unavoidable, there are steps you can take to mitigate some of the negative effects of mental exhaustion, including forgetfulness.

First, consider the source of your stress. These days, a common stressor is social media. If your feeds are full of bad news and negativity, shut them down. Many researchers suggest that spending less time on the internet leads to better health. Several studies have found that constant internet use, including time spent on social media, is negatively impacting our memories. Research from Harvard, Oxford, King's College London, and Western Sydney University all confirm this: Too much internet use is a bad thing.

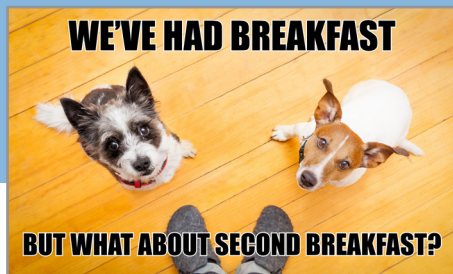
Of course, it can be easier to delete a social media app than it is to eliminate other types of stressors. Coping with a stressful coworker, for example, can be difficult. You have to figure out why they're causing you stress and how the situation can be remedied. Dealing with a work-related confrontation can be hard, but having that difficult conversation and resolving the problem can ultimately lead to less long-term stress and improve your mental health.

Another thing you can do to reduce stress is avoid multitasking. Taking on multiple projects or doing too much in too little time can leave you feeling overworked. Plus, studies have found that multitasking is not effective. You cannot deliver the same results when your attention is scattered as you can when you are focused on one thing. To make matters worse, multitasking takes a major toll on memory and cognition, according to a study from Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

If stress is impairing your memory, judgment, or cognition, take the above steps to reduce it. If you find your memory and cognition aren't improving, consider speaking with a mental health professional to discuss your best next steps. Mental health and stress management are important, and the more we do to improve these areas of our lives, the healthier and happier we will be.



# TAKE A BREAK



*Inspired by SunnyDayFamily.com*

Want to show your dog that they're a very good boy or girl? Try this recipe for a tasty treat your dog will go nuts for!

## Ingredients

### For doughnuts

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup oats
- 1/3 cup coconut oil
- 1/2 cup xylitol-free peanut butter
- 2 eggs

### For topping

- Greek yogurt
- Bacon bits

### Special equipment

- Doughnut pan

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Lightly spray doughnut pan with cooking spray and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine all doughnut ingredients and mix well.
3. Transfer dough to doughnut pan. Use your hands to tightly pack each mold.
4. Bake doughnuts for 14 minutes. Carefully remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.
5. To decorate your doughnut treats, place Greek yogurt in a small, wide bowl. Dip each doughnut in yogurt and sprinkle with bacon bits.
6. Place decorated doughnuts in the freezer for 10 minutes for the yogurt to harden. Serve straight from the freezer to your hungry dogs.

## 11 DAYS DELETED FROM HISTORY

### How the British Changed Their Calendar System and Caused Chaos

For centuries, Europeans used the Julian calendar, created by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. It was based on the solar calendar, so most of Europe thought it was the most accurate calendar. However, over the centuries, dates had "drifted," and many important days, like Easter and the spring equinox, were no longer falling on the dates they were supposed to.

To compensate, the new Gregorian calendar was developed and put to use by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. It helped put things back in order and eliminated the extra day every 128 years.

However, not everyone adopted the Gregorian calendar right away, such as the British. That meant that Europeans were using two diverging calendars for over 200 years. Talk about confusing! People realized that as the world started to expand and as countries became more connected, having a single calendar system was critical.

Finally, the British chose the year 1752 to make the change. But, in order to make it work, they had to "jump" forward. For instance, 1751 could only be 10 months long — starting with March and ending with Dec. 31, 1751. But even that adjustment didn't quite bring the English up to speed in time to make the shift. They also had to cut 11 days from 1752. The unlucky dates that were cut were Sept. 2–14, 1752.

The people were not happy. English historians found research that British citizens chanted "Give us our 11 days!" in the streets. The phrase became so popular that some politicians even campaigned with that as their slogan. Several other historical accounts state that many people were worried that by cutting the calendar, their own lives would be cut 11 days shorter. There was a lot of confusion and chaos, but over time, dates fell where they were supposed to, and everyone lived their full lives, those 11 days included.







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## BEAM ME UP, LUCY How Lucille Ball Saved 'Star Trek' in the 1960s

Did You know that Lucille Ball — the iconic comedian best known for her 1950s show "I Love Lucy" — is the reason "Star Trek" exists today? Ball was a Hollywood force in the '50s and '60s, and she produced hit after hit with her production company.

In fact, Desilu, co-founded by Ball and her then-husband, Desi Arnaz, was responsible for hits like "The Andy Griffith Show" and "The Dick Van Dyke Show." The two were partners in the company until their divorce in 1960, and in 1962, Ball took over Arnaz's share.

In that moment, Ball became one of the most powerful women in Hollywood, and Desilu, one of the biggest independent production companies at the time, had a lot of pull in the industry. In 1963, one of Desilu's biggest hits was coming to an end. "The Untouchables" was a crime drama starring Robert Stack. Ball needed

a replacement, and two potential shows hit Ball's desk: "Star Trek" and "Mission: Impossible."

In 1965, Ball took the pitches to her longtime network collaborator, CBS. They said no to "Star Trek" (but yes to "Mission: Impossible"), but Ball wasn't about to give up on this new science fiction show, so she took it to NBC. The network was skeptical at first but ordered a pilot.

The pilot starred Jeffrey Hunter as Captain Pike and Leonard Nimoy as Mr. Spock. There was no James T. Kirk to be found — not yet, anyway. The pilot, titled "The Cage," was a disappointment. NBC executives weren't about to put it on air, but they decided to order a second pilot after Ball agreed to help finance it.

The second pilot starred William Shatner as Captain Kirk, and he was joined again by



Leonard Nimoy as Spock. NBC executives liked what they saw. The new pilot, titled "Where No Man Has Gone Before," was put on NBC's fall schedule, though it wasn't the first episode aired on NBC. That honor went to the episode titled "The Man Trap," which aired on Sept. 8, 1966.

While Gene Roddenberry's original "Star Trek" only lasted three seasons, it went on to become a major TV and film franchise. One of its recent iterations, "Star Trek: Discovery," is about to enter its third season on the streaming service CBS All Access — all because Lucille Ball saw potential in a little show back in 1965.