

Introduction

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Welcome to legal education and all that a law school education has to offer. There is virtually nothing as eye-opening or personally fulfilling as finding ways to help solve society's problems, which is one thing lawyers do. Studying law is challenging in all of the right ways. It is intellectually stimulating, socially valued, useful in everyday life, and meaningful on multiple levels. It also opens doors in ways few other educational opportunities do. The fact that you are studying law makes you one of the fortunate few.

This book is designed to help you make the very best use of your legal education, and to help you develop your professional identity as a lawyer through mindfulness and emotional intelligence practices. Some might find it frivolous to study professional development, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence in law school, particularly compared to the study of contracts or torts. However, teaching professional development in law school is a trend that is hitting law schools by storm. While law was not the first field to jump on the bandwagon, the importance of teaching value-driven purpose, as well as personal well-being, is now well-recognized in law, medicine, and all of the professions.¹ This subject matter is incredibly important to your future, and by the end of this book, we think you will understand the significance of the subject matters covered here.

Mindfulness means learning to live in the present moment and to do just one thing at a time. For lawyers, mindfulness exercises can help in three fundamental ways. On the most superficial level, these practices can reduce stress. On the next level of practical utility, these practices can help us keep calm, stay focused, and, as a result, increase productivity. On the most meaningful level, mindfulness practices can help us find our life work and our purpose here on earth. The practices are simple but the results can be life-changing.

¹ Peter Huang and Corie Rosen, *The Zombie Lawyer Apocalypse*, 42 PEPPERDINE LAW REVIEW 727, 763 (2015).

Some exercises ask you to practice being still, and others request that you be actively reflective. All are designed to help with one of these fundamental goals: calm, focus, and purpose.

Beginning with the goal of a calm state of mind, it helps to acknowledge that being an attorney can be one of the most rewarding endeavors in life, but also one of the most stressful. Lawyers have a higher than average rate of job-related stress, substance abuse, and divorce. Stress reduction is more than a nice idea. It is a lawyer survival technique. Calm people are happier and healthier. Calm lawyers also get better outcomes for their clients.

Regarding focus, a calm mind allows one to think better. Some studies show that IQ increases when the mind is calm. Decision-making is also better when one is calm. Attorneys are valued for their intellect and their ability to solve complex problems, but are also charged with helping people through some of the most difficult and challenging experiences of their lives. To achieve these goals, it helps to be calm, cool, and collected. As lawyers, we are asked to facilitate many changes in society, yet are rarely trained in the mindset needed to accomplish the things asked of us, whether this means writing briefs and memos, negotiating a deal between two countries, writing a complex multi-lateral contract, dealing with a contentious divorce, or writing policies to be used by the entire US military system. This book fills in some of this missing law school curricula.

Regarding finding each of our own unique purposes in life, a quiet mind and active self-reflection can help us discover what we are passionate about. Self-awareness is a trait that we all value in others. The American Bar Association, the professional legal association that accredits law schools and lawyers, now recognizes the benefits of training lawyers in self-reflection.² Thus, it is time for American law schools to formally incorporate self-reflection in the curriculum. This book provides a curriculum for this self-reflection, and allows students to begin creating a meaningful, sustainable, lifelong career for themselves while in law school.

As lawyers, everything we do is for someone else, never for ourselves. Law is a service profession. Without service, we don't exist. As such, self-reflection and good interpersonal skills are of paramount importance in this profession. Lawyers with good interpersonal skills have a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Legal jobs that require sound judgment and excellent interpersonal skills can never be outsourced to artificial intelligence or an overseas attorney. If you can learn to

² See *ABA Standard Learning Outcomes Interpretation 302-1*, stating that “for the purposes of Standard 302(d), other professional skills are determined by the law school and may include skills such as, interviewing, counseling, negotiation, fact development and analysis, trial practice, document drafting, conflict resolution, organization and management of legal work, collaboration, cultural competency, and self-evaluation.”

develop good interpersonal skills, there will always be a place for you in the world of law. Self-awareness is the gateway to developing strong interpersonal skills.

This book is designed to help you become a happy and healthy lawyer for life, by giving you tools to help law become a compelling, rewarding, sustainable profession for you. Through this book, we hope to help you find meaning in your work, by showing you various methods for getting to know yourself, your strengths, and your deepest professional desires. We also hope to help you strengthen your resilience, increase your emotional intelligence, and help you learn to swim with the currents of life rather than against them. If lawyers and law students can reduce stress, think more carefully about what they do and why, and approach their careers in thoughtful and directed ways, they can be more effective professionally and happier personally.

While you are free to use it any way you like, this book was originally written based upon a fourteen-week, one-hour, one-credit, law school class that I and others at my law school teach in the first semester. This class, called Practicum, is referenced frequently throughout this book.

FEATURES OF THIS BOOK

In various places, we ask you to pause in two ways. First, we ask you to pause briefly and think about something. We call each of these pauses a Little Pause. Second, we ask you to pause, take a bit more time, and, typically, write about something. We call each of these a Law Pause. Both types of pause will help you gain meaning from this book and from your own ideas.

Journaling through the Law Pauses is the primary self-reflection technique used in this book. These journaling exercises help you find your strengths, learn new skills, identify meaningful work, increase the likelihood of success in the profession, and increase your work and life satisfaction.

This book also contains visual aids, such as textboxes, photos, and illustrations, for emphasis, as well as mindful breathing exercises and a few simple meditation techniques.

This book proceeds in three parts. The first part helps you learn to nurture yourself and develop your own strategies for becoming your best. The second part builds on the first, using what you learned about self-care to help you get along better with others and thus enhance your career and your life. The third part helps you direct your life with greater meaning and purpose. Throughout all three parts, we ask you to do a series of self-exploration exercises, designed to help you make the most of your life as a lawyer. We ask that you not waste your one life, or as poet Mary Oliver would ask, “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”³

³ MARY OLIVER, *SELECTED POEMS* (BEACON PRESS 1992).

Finally a word about self-help books, including this one. None of us can become better at being someone else, only at being our true selves. This book never seeks to change you, but only to help you find out who you are and what fuels you. This helps you and it helps me, not to mention everyone else alive. In the words of screenwriter Barnet Bain, “the more inspired and innovative you are, the better off the world is.”⁴

⁴ BARNET BAIN, *THE BOOK OF DOING AND BEING: REDISCOVERING CREATIVITY IN LIFE, LOVE, AND WORK* xvii (ATRIA 2015).