

EQUIPOISE

N. (EK'WƏ POIZ') A STATE OF BALANCE, ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING IN LEGAL EDUCATION



EQUIPOISE is the newsletter of the Association of American Law Schools Section on Balance in Legal Education

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Message From the Chair

Jarrod F. Reich, Professor of Legal Writing and Lecturer in Law at University of Miami School of Law

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As we have all experienced, this past year has been the most trying in a generation, if not longer. As I write this note, quarantined from my colleagues, my students, and my community, I am overcome by two competing, yet not mutually exclusive, sets of emotions.

First, I shudder with dread as I imagine continuing horrors on the order of those we have already endured. Over the past year, we have experienced a confluence of tragedies and disasters. The killings of too many persons of color as well as the general existence and pernicious effects of systemic racism. The deaths of stalwart champions of justice and equality. The ravages of climate change, including historic wildfires, hurricanes, and blizzards. A pandemic that, as of this



writing, has killed more than 240,000 Americans and over one million worldwide. Sadly, and scarily, none of these appear to be abating any time soon, and all are compounded by leaders in government that minimize or outright deny their very existence.

Despite all of the tragedies, I am filled with hope and gratitude.

I feel hope from the millions of us engaging in peaceful protests to demand justice and equality. I feel hope from climate activists, many of them children, teenagers, and young adults, demanding we address this crisis. I feel hope from the first responders treating the ill and from the communities and individuals taking steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19. And I feel hope from the reprioritization on collective and individual well-being.

And from that hope, I am filled with gratitude. I am grateful to be part of this Section whose members work hard every day to fight injustice and to promote well-being in the community:

- In May, the Section's Executive Board issued a statement speaking out against systemic racism and police brutality and in solidarity with those reminding the world that Black Lives Matter;
- In July, the Section led a 21-Day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge, in which hundreds of academy members from nearly sixty schools participated;

- This fall, our newly-formed Committee on Conscious Living (and Lawyering) in the Age of Coronavirus is soliciting, compiling, and offering resources to the legal academy to assist us in promoting psychological and emotional well-being, as well as compassion, empathy, ethics, and related skills and characteristics, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic, including through its Conscious Practices Mini-Workshop Series; and

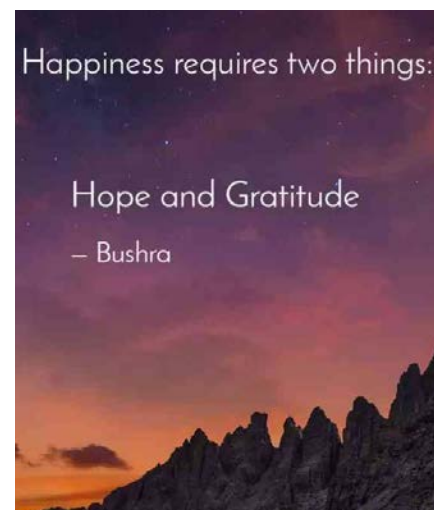
- Over the past year (as in all past years), our members have produced groundbreaking scholarship on how to promote well-being in the academy and the profession—for our students, our colleagues, and ourselves.

I am grateful to our general members, committee members, and Executive Committee for their dedication to this Section and in advancing its mission. I am grateful to our Past Chairs and Chairs-Elect who have shaped the Section over the years. And, most importantly, I am grateful to

be part of such an incredible community filled with dynamic, inspiring, and compassionate people.

There is much to fear in the world today, and there seems to be no end in sight to these terrors. Yet, if this past year has taught us anything, it is that our well-being is of the utmost importance. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of this Section and its members, we are doing our part to help the community cultivate its well-being, and to bring out the best in ourselves and others.

That is reason enough to be hopeful and grateful. ☺



This newsletter is a forum for the exchange of points of view. Opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the Section and do not necessarily represent the position of the Association of American Law Schools.

Balance Section Scholarship Committee

Congratulations to our section members on some of their recent (2020) scholarship, including:

Tara Antonipillai, *Lawyer Well-Being While Social Distancing*, *Atty. L. Mag.* (March 20, 2020).

R. Lisle Baker, *Character and Fitness for Leadership – Educating Lawyers for Compassion and Courage as well as Brains – The Wizard of Oz was Right*, *14 Tennessee J. Law and Policy* 287 (2020).

Susan L. Brooks, *Listening and Relational Lawyering in Handbook of Listening* (Worthington & Bodie, eds. 2020).

Heidi K. Brown, *Four Lessons We Can Learn as a Profession from the Pandemic*, *ABA J.* (August 1, 2020).

Peter H. Huang & Debra S. Austin, *Unsafe at Any Campus: Don't Let Colleges Become the Next Cruise Ships, Nursing Homes, and Food Processing Plants*, *96 Ind. L.J. Supp.* 25 (2020).

Rosario Lozada, *Cultivate a Community in the Classroom: Lead with Values, Vulnerability, and Gratitude*, *28 PERSPS.* 5 (2020).

Jarrod Reich, *Capitalizing on Healthy Lawyers: The Business Case for Law Firms to Promote and Prioritize Lawyer Well-Being*, *65 Vill. L. Rev.* 361 (2020).

The Scholarship Committee of the AALS Balance Board is updating our section's scholarship bibliography. The new bibliography sorts each piece of scholarship into one category and can be viewed [here](#).



Please help this effort by submitting your scholarship in the balance area. To submit, please send citations to your published or forthcoming work to Megan Bess at mbess@uic.edu.

Balance Section's Newly Formed Committee

The Balance Section's newly formed Committee on Conscious Living (and Lawyering) in the Age of Coronavirus—a big success!

The Coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we work and the way we live in profound ways. The changes have underscored the need for us all to prioritize and promote the well-being of ourselves and others. In recognition of the need for and the unique expertise the Section of Balance in Legal Education could lend in promoting well-being during the pandemic, the Section formed a Committee on Conscious Living (and Lawyering) in the Age of Coronavirus. The Committee is responsible for soliciting, compiling, and offering resources to the legal academy to assist us in promoting psychological and emotional well-being, as well as compassion, empathy, ethics, and related skills and characteristics, with a particular emphasis on cultivating all of these habits of mind and practices during the coronavirus pandemic.

Conscious Practices 2020 Webinars

Past

The Language of Well-Being in the Law School Classroom

Rosi Lozada,
Associate Professor of Legal Skills and Values,
Florida International University College of Law



Yoga: Aligning the Body to Still the Mind

Alison Lintal,
Director of Career Services and Internship Programs,
Dickinson Law



Upcoming

Helping Ourselves: Conscious Coloring to Relieve Compassion Fatigue

Debbie Borman,
Assistant Attorney General for the State of Illinois,
Author, and Illinois licensed social worker,
November 18, 5:00-5:30 p.m. EST



Becoming More Physically Active While Stuck Inside

Lisle Baker,
Professor of Law,
Suffolk University (with Tony Colesano)
December 9, 4:00-4:30 p.m. EST



You can view past webinars or register for upcoming webinars [here](#).

Virtual 2021 AALS Conference - *The Growth Mindset: A New Vision For Legal Education and Resiliency in the Legal Profession*

January 7, 2021 11:00am - 12:15pm



Main Program:

The Growth Mindset: A New Vision for Legal Education and Resiliency in the Legal Profession, Thursday, Jan. 7, 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Moderated by Jarrod Reich.*

Business meeting immediately to follow:

(1) Persistence, Performance, and Law School: Implementing Interventions to Encourage Growth Mindset and Ensure Practice-Ready Professionals, Ann Sinsheimer, Professor of Legal Writing, University of Pittsburgh School of Law & Omid Fotuhi, Research Associate, Learning and Research Development Center, University of Pittsburgh.

(2) Incorporating Grit and Growth Mindset Into Law School Curricula, Megan Bess, Assistant Professor of Law Director, Externship Program UIC John Marshall Law School

(3) Stereotype Threat and The Growth Mindset: Inclusive Pedagogical Interventions, Meredith Johnson Harbach, Professor of Law, University of Richmond School of Law.

Co-Sponsored Joint Programs:

(1) Mindfulness in Legal Pedagogy (with Teaching Methods Section): Tuesday, Jan. 5, 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

(2) Embracing & Making Change: Serving the Law Students of Today and Tomorrow (with Student Services and Part Time Division Sections), Wednesday, Jan. 6, 11:00 a.m. – 5: 00 p.m.

(3) Teaching Leadership Skills [for] [in] a Time of Crisis (with Leadership Section Pedagogy Panel), Saturday, Jan. 9, 2:45 – 4:00 p.m.

*Schedule is current as of August 7, 2020, but is subject to change and/or Zoom links to follow.

Q&A with Scott L. Rogers

Director, Mindfulness in Law Program & Lecturer in Law at University of Miami School of Law



How did you first come to be involved with mindfulness?

I was introduced to transcendental meditation by Marty Peters, a member of the UF Law faculty where I attended law school and became fascinated with the formal meditative process. Experientially, it was calming and clarifying, and I sought out readings that might offer a deeper understanding of its practice and salutary effects. There was not a lot available—this was around 1991—and I read up on Zen meditation and, in time, was introduced to the writings of Thich Nhat Hanh. I had always been interested in psychology and found the insights and personal growth aspects to mindfulness practice to be profound. I was especially taken with the observational lens it emphasized and nurtured.

The Buddhist psychological perspective was intellectually stimulating and led me to immerse in various wisdom traditions, meaningfully engage in meditation groups, deepen my understanding of the science, learn from various teachers—and from one teacher in particular for many years—and integrate practice into life, and vice versa.

What changes have you seen in law school academia since you began incorporating mindfulness into the classroom?

I began teaching mindfulness at Miami Law in 2004 when a dear friend and colleague, Mel Rubin, a gifted mediator with a keen understanding of human nature, invited me to introduce mindfulness to students in his mediation seminar. I began formally teaching a multi-week mindfulness workshop (called Jurisight) to 1L's in 2008 and integrating mindfulness into the curriculum in 2010. Over the course of these 16 years I have observed an enhanced interest in offering students a variety of tools for tending to their well-being, academic success and career satisfaction. These include introductions to mindfulness

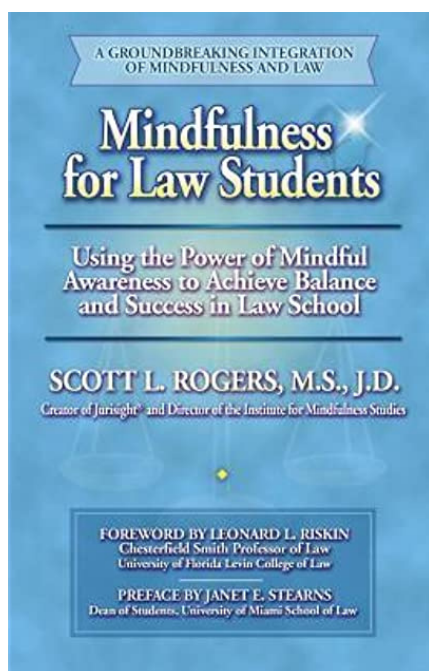
at law school orientation, mindfulness workshops during the school year, class presentations and discussions within the clinics, writing programs, and classes led by interested faculty. There have been a growing number of law student groups formed that are oriented around mindfulness and wellness, and organizational efforts are underway help support law schools and student groups interested in mindfulness, such as the Mindfulness in Law Society. Courses are now being introduced to law school curricula that integrate mindfulness and law. As mindfulness has become more familiar to many, more administrators and faculty are interested in learning more about it, both for themselves, their students and their law school communities.



What are some of the research-based benefits of mindfulness?

The scientific literature on the efficacy of practicing mindfulness is tantalizing given its broad reach and relevance to persons involved in high stress, high consequence profession, like the law. While the research is still in the early stages and I sense we have far more to learn, and refine about what we know, than we have learned, it appears to be the case that engaging in various mindfulness practices may contribute to improved mood, reduced anxiety, greater focus and less extensive mind wandering, heightened capacity to regulate emotions, greater empathy and overall resilience. The list goes on though these are areas I believe I can speak to, as well, from my own experience over the past 30 years of practice that seems to be connected to practice. Scientific reports on changes to various brain structures and functioning align with these effects and point to reduced effects of aging in certain areas of the brain, improved working memory, and a host of medical benefits ranging from improved immune function and reduced inflammation to improved sleep. Again, the list goes on.

Science Daily is a very readable online resource that reports extensively on science findings in this area. The book, *Altered Traits*, by Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson is a thoughtful and credible read in this area.



Building off of that, what are some of the specific benefits you have seen from your students practicing mindfulness?

I think this is an important question and I respond with the caveat that many factors come together that contribute to the meaningful shifts I have observed and students report. In some classes we integrate mindfulness with a specific subject matter, such as professional responsibility, negotiation, leadership, or

business compliance, while in another we explore mindfulness in connection with various subjects ranging from mediation and trial practice, to leadership and creativity, to stress reduction and decision making. Students in the Mindful Ethics class I have co-taught with Jan Jacobowitz since 2010 have reported learning the rules in a somewhat spontaneous and less effortful manner than they anticipated. And many students across all of the classes have reported feeling better able to focus (this may be among the more robust reports), less anxious (at times), more confident amid uncertain situations (like interviews), more effective at listening and communicating (with classmates and family), more resilient in the face of challenging emotional situations (like personal relationships and career concerns), less impulsive (checking technology), and a little more at ease, overall. I believe that many of these affirming effects are the result of students becoming more aware of the activity of their mind with a corresponding capacity to make more useful choices and better decisions amid internal conflict that may have previously gone unnoticed or without as much capacity to manage.

What are some practical tips you could give us for incorporating mindfulness into the classroom?

With regard to content: offer students clear guidance on the central role of “attention” and “observing the activity of the mind” in most mindfulness practices to minimize the extent students maintain the tenacious belief that a practice is meant to clear away, stop, drop, or change one’s thoughts—or experience. Early on clarify the landscape by explaining the role of relaxation and concentration in mindfulness and its practice, discuss the differences and overlap between meditation and mindfulness practice, as well

as mindfulness and mindfulness practice. Share with students a healthy mix of law review and bar journal articles written by lawyers, law students, and judges, materials written by mindfulness experts, and materials on the science of mindfulness. Give students wide berth in terms of structural aspects of practice, such as whether: eyes are opened, closed, or lowered; practice length, and whether attention is placed on the sensations of breathing or another object such as the body or sounds; and expectations on the nature of their experience. With regard to practice and the sharing of insights: Where possibly and when in keeping with

your teaching philosophy guide students yourself and without a script. When guiding others, one guides themselves and invites others to join in. Develop these skills by becoming increasingly comfortable and adept through serious engagement in a personal practice. Appreciate the responsibility that guiding students entails. At the same time, trust yourself to be able to be of service. Remain attentive when offering insight and counsel to whose benefit the insight is being offered by reflecting on what is shared (or contemplated being shared) and its personal relevance. Remember the inherent mutuality of the process. ☯



Please Become a Member of the Section

Section membership is open to faculty and professional staff of AALS membership schools; others may join as associate members. If you have access to the AALS website, the easier way to become a member of the Section is to register there. Otherwise, please contact the AALS National Office at (202) 296-8851 or aals@aals.org, and indicate your interest in joining the Section. If you become a member of the Section, you will automatically receive announcements of Section activities sent through the AALS communications platform. This is the most reliable method to assure that you are aware of upcoming Topic calls, programs, newsletters and other initiatives sponsored by the Section. We encourage any member of the Section who would like to become more involved in the Section activities to contact any member of the Section's executive board.

“Five Minutes of Gratitude” (How to set a positive mood for class) by Sylvia Lett

Associate Professor of Legal Writing & Assistant Clinical Professor of Law at University of Arizona
James E. Rogers College of Law

A couple of years ago, at the start of my early (8 a.m.) legal writing class, I noticed that many of my students were bleary-eyed and half-awake. Others looked awake but anxious, and I had already met with a good number of them about their burgeoning anxiety issues. They needed a wake-up with a side of TLC. Inspired by a phenomenal presentation at the Rocky Mountain Regional Writing Conference a few years back on the health benefits of a gratitude practice, I decided to put this idea into action to wake up and shake up my early morning class.

Set forth below is how I “sold” the idea to my skeptical 1L class, their reactions, and why I plan to continue this invaluable wellness tool this fall during these uncertain times.

To “sell” the idea of a weekly gratitude exercise, I introduced it with a Power Point lecture that explained the concept of gratitude. It discussed the scientifically proven psychological and physiological benefits of a gratitude practice that focuses on writing about life’s

positives rather than negatives. My “sales pitch” promised my students that even five minutes of writing once a week would lead them to the promised land of deeper sleep, better relationships, and increased feelings of wellness.

Next, before I posted the first writing prompt, I let them know that I had noticed their eye rolls and side glances during my lecture. I then admitted my nervousness about trying a wellness exercise since I do not consider myself to be a “woo-woo” person (although in retrospect, maybe I am!). Finally, I simply asked them to try the writing exercise with open minds and open hearts, and I promised them that if the majority of them hated it, we would not make it a weekly start to class. I also gave students the option to opt out and zone out (no electronics) if they did not want to write.

With the “why” out of the way, I explained “how” they would complete the writing assignment. They would have five minutes to read, reflect, and then write about a posted gratitude prompt.



They would write (freehand or type) until I told them to stop.

Instructions given, they started the five minutes of gratitude writing exercise. I heard a few chuckles as students read the first prompt but almost immediately, a hush descended over the room. Soon, all I heard was tapping on keyboards and scratching on paper; I saw shoulders relax and brows furrow in concentration. What I did not see were students checking their computers or phones.

When I gave the one-minute “time’s up” warning (a must!), my initially skeptical students asked me for more time to finish. My small heart grew three sizes. In truth, the five-minute gratitude exercise

really runs for about ten minutes because there are always students who continue to write past the time limit. Post-exercise, the class mood has always seemed lighter and brighter, and my students are more focused and ready to work.

My hunch is that the magic in the exercise lies in the writing prompts. The prompts have no “right” or “wrong” answers. Instead, although they ask universal questions that generate deeply personal, unique responses. The prompts are unexpected, fun, and encourage the kind of self-reflection that typically only occurs during meaningful talks with the closest of friends. Most importantly, the prompts do not pressure students into “gratitude guilt trips” – forced proclamations of gratitude based on guilt students feel when they compare how “blessed” they are to most people. The prompts, for lack of a better term, are “ick-free.” Some favorite student prompts are:

- 1) Who is the one friend you can always rely on and why?
- 2) What is your favorite part of your daily routine?
- 3) Describe your favorite location in your home and why it is your favorite.

4) What is something that you are thankful for that you have learned in the past week?

So far, the only prompt that has made students groan is, “What makes you beautiful?” I assign that one on Valentine’s Day so I cannot blame them for groaning. The prompts are a sprinkle of fairy dust that (along with a little thought) help overworked, stressed out, sleep-deprived 1Ls to feel self-reflective, centered, and creative.

Although I have felt the magic the exercise creates, this fall I hesitated to include it in my teaching “tool kit.” My chest tightened at the thought of assigning 1Ls (who neither know me nor have reason to trust me) a writing exercise on gratitude during the global pandemic. My own gratitude practice had fallen to pieces, replaced by nonstop news interrupted only by “Tiger King” episodes and endless “Zooms”– all of which failed to find traction in my “monkey mind.” So, to decide whether to include it, I read past classes’ comments about it. To my surprise, there were only positive comments. Many students wrote that “Five Minutes of Gratitude” was a weekly highpoint. Students thanked me for giving them class time to slow down for a moment

to reflect on their lives. Some mentioned that they really enjoyed writing about something other than law for a few minutes each week. Still others thanked me for showing them the benefits of self-care, and admitted that if left to their own devices, they never would institute, let alone stick with a weekly gratitude practice.

Their comments encouraged me to put “Five Minutes of Gratitude” back into rotation this fall. I believe that the exercise centers and grounds students so they approach classmates, work, and themselves with a softer heart. In fact, their comments have also inspired me, for the first time, to pull out a journal and join them. ☯



Mindful Lawyering by Cliff Rosky

Professor at The University of Utah College of Law



A few years ago, I began teaching a new course called Mindful Lawyering. In this course, I help students establish a daily secular meditation practice. Throughout the semester, we learn about how traditional approaches to the pedagogy and the practice of law often challenges the mental and physical health of students and lawyers—and how mindfulness can help us respond to these challenges. To help establish a supportive environment, the course is graded pass/fail, and the students and I take a strict vow of confidentiality regarding classroom discussions.

Each class period begins in silence. No chit chat. No devices. When the students and I enter the classroom—either physically or virtually—we just sit together, until the class period officially begins.

Before we do any talking, I guide the students through a 20-minute mindfulness meditation. I usually begin by instructing them to focus on sounds—on what sound feels like in the body, the physical sensations of hearing. This helps disarm any concerns that unwanted noise might “interrupt” the meditation, by training the students to just be aware of these sounds, rather than passing judgment on them. We then proceed to notice other physical sensations, with special focus on the sensations of breathing.

After this meditation period, we have a “check in,” in which I invite students to share anything that they noticed during the meditation period—or during any of the daily

meditations from the last week. In these exchanges, the full spectrum of joy and pain are presented—along with an immeasurable helping of self-judgment. As students, teachers, lawyers, and judges, we are so hard on ourselves, and so hard on each other. In this class, we bear witness to the suffering that we inflict on ourselves.

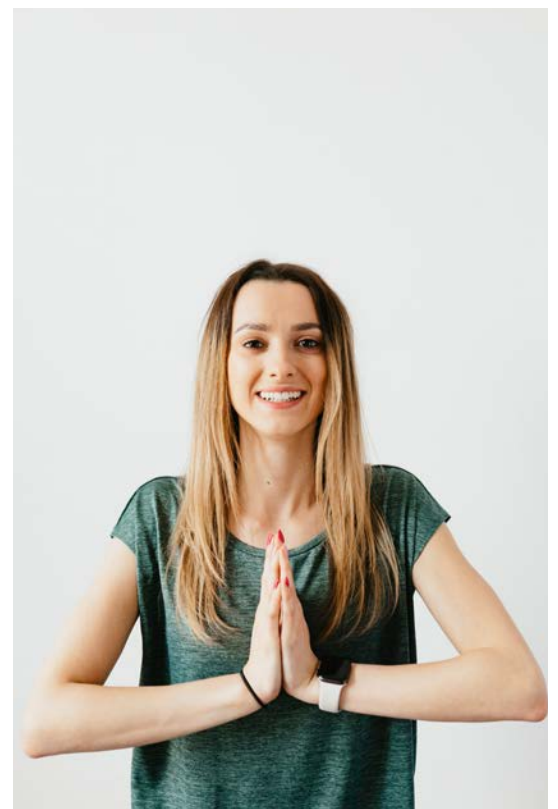
After a short break, we discuss the weekly reading assignments. After a brief introduction to mindfulness, the readings examine how mindfulness can inform, support, and transform three dimensions of the practice of law: (1) the development of personal and professional identities; (2) the mediation of interpersonal relationships; and (3) the reform of legal



institutions. In the early weeks, we focus on the benefits of mindfulness, the challenges of lawyering, and the most common obstacles to establishing a daily meditation practice. Gradually, through practice, students develop the skill of paying attention to whatever sensations, thoughts, and emotions are occurring in the present moment, without getting swept away by them. Time and again, we remind ourselves that meditation does not require us to “stop thinking,” “transcend” anything, or even “relax.” It requires awareness—and only awareness. Because lawyering is an interpersonal

skill, we conclude each class with one interpersonal exercise—a practice of mindful speaking and mindful listening. In dyads or triads, students take turns asking each other one simple question—e.g., “what brings you joy?”—and playing the role of listener, responder, or observer. When they notice themselves becoming distracted from the exercise, they practice gently re-focusing on the speaker’s words. During the semester, students repeat a modified version of this exercise in clinical placements, field placements, or simply when interacting with someone at

school or at home. Our students seem keenly interested in learning this skill. In the last two years, between 40 and 45 students have taken Mindful Lawyering—roughly 25% of all 2Ls and 3Ls in our small school. I am currently conducting a pilot study of whether and how this course affects student well-being, cognitive functioning, and lawyering skills. In the meantime, the anecdotal evidence is encouraging. Students walk away from the course with a new perspective not only on law school and lawyering, but on life itself—and a new technique for approaching life’s challenges. ☯



Book Review: "Untangling Fear in Lawyering" by Heidi Brown

Director of the Legal Writing Program and Associate Professor of Law at Brooklyn Law School



Q. What prompted you to write this book?

A. When my earlier book, *The Introverted Lawyer*, came out, I was doing a few talks at law schools and firms about how introverted, shy, and socially anxious individuals bring important assets to the profession, and how we can amplify our voices authentically rather than faking extroversion. People started reaching out afterwards and saying, "I'm not really an introvert, but I'm scared...I'm afraid to take my first deposition...I'm afraid to go to court...I'm afraid to stand up to a bully in my office... I'm also afraid to tell anyone I'm afraid." I felt that way as a law student and for over 15 years as a litigator. So, I started researching fear.

Q. In the book, you talk about unhelpful messages that our society promotes about fear. What are some of these messages, and why do you think they are unhelpful?

A. Our American society tends to push conflicting messages about fear. On one hand, we are constantly told, "Fake it till you make it!" or "Just face your fear!" or "Just do something every day that scares you!" Like fear can just easily be kicked aside or repressed (which it can't and shouldn't). On the other hand, we also hear messages like "Fear is good for you!" or "If you're not afraid, it means you don't care enough." Both types of messages are damaging to a scared person because they dismiss the harmful toll that fear takes on our mental, emotional, and physical health. Until we can consciously distinguish the useful from the detrimental components of our fear, it continues to undermine us.

Q. The title of your book contains the verb "untangling" instead of "facing" or "conquering" fear. Why did you choose "untangling"?

A. I love that word. Grappling with my own fear, I gave myself permission to reject the bravado-type messages about simply pushing through fear, and instead afforded myself time to "untangle" it. I needed to dissect it, analyze it, and study it. In doing so, I finally recognized the inaccuracies in the negative mental messages I played on a loop in my head about my lawyering abilities. Also, for the first time, I observed how my physical body reacted in a fearful moment. Instead of continuing to blindly barrel into performance moments with a "just do it" approach, I finally paused, sat with my fear, and understood its drivers and manifestations. Then, I finally could do something about it.



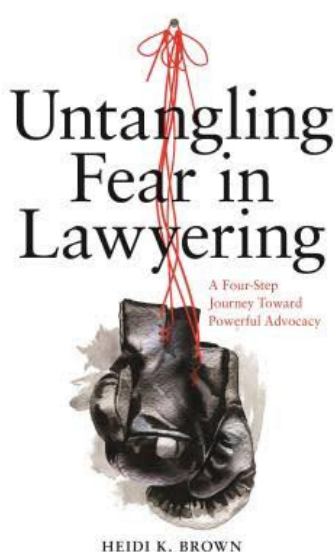
Q. Your book offers tips to help law students and lawyers untangle fear. What is the first step in your process?

A. The first step is a fun activity I call “comparative fearlessness.” We all have scenarios or situations in our personal lives in which we are absolutely fearless. In fact, these are usually situations in which society (or our friends and family) might tell us we should be afraid but we’re not. For me, that’s solo travel and boxing lessons. In Step 1, we compare those scenarios to situations in our lawyering lives in which society tells us we shouldn’t be afraid (e.g., “Hey, you signed up for this!”) but we are. When I performed this exercise, I realized that my fear in lawyering scenarios stems from a fear of judgment, criticism, rejection, and exclusion. Once we name it, we can do something about it.

Q. You call Step 2 a “mental reboot.” Can you describe how that works?

A. On the mental side, when we feel the first tingling of fear, many of us automatically launch our negative mental soundtrack I mentioned earlier. In untangling fear, it’s important to listen to, and transcribe, our unpleasant soundtrack so we can identify the negative

(and inaccurate) messaging. Then, we rewrite our soundtrack with accurate statements about our current abilities. My past unhelpful messages still creep in often, but I am able to notice them faster, pause, and then launch my positive and accurate soundtrack: “I’m prepared for this. I did the work. I know what I’m talking about. I deserve to be here.”



Q. Your book focuses a lot on the physical aspects of fear. How can individuals address that aspect?

A. I call Step 3 “channeling our inner athlete.” Many of us don’t pay attention to what happens to our physical bodies when we are afraid. We just know it doesn’t feel good. In Step 3, we conduct a physical inventory; we observe what our bodies do to try to protect us when we are afraid. When I undertook this step, I realized that my body automatically tries to

get small. My shoulders cave forward; I cross my arms and legs; I hunch. Unfortunately, this self-protective maneuver blocks my energy, blood, and oxygen flow. My heart races; I can’t catch my breath; I blush and sweat. Channeling our inner athlete, we can stand or sit in a balanced stance, both feet on the ground. When we shift our shoulders back, stand or sit tall, and open our arms and hands, we breathe better. I recommend watching Professor Amy Cuddy’s TED Talk on “power poses.” Combining this physical recalibration with our mental reboot, we untangle our fears and can step into any performance moment with fortitude.

Q. Can these tips apply as we interact virtually during the pandemic?

A. Absolutely. I still experience performance fears every time I am asked to do a podcast interview or speak to lots of people at a Zoom conference—even from the comfort and safety of my apartment. But then I remind myself of my personal fearless moments. I launch my new accurate mental soundtrack. I stand in my “power pose” and recalibrate my balanced stance. And then I go for it. I also talk about my fears a lot. By naming our fears, especially during the pandemic, we can untangle them and emerge from this stronger than ever. ☯

Balance Mantras For Us, Our Students, 2020, And Beyond

"[T]here is always something that you must remember. You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."

- A.A. Milne

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

— Martin Luther King Jr.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

"People who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do."

— Rob Siltanen

"In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity."

— Sun Tzu

"Wherever you are, be there totally."

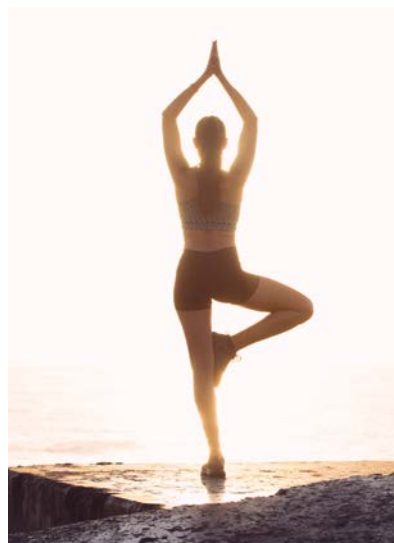
— Eckhart Tolle

"Don't let yesterday take up too much of today."

— Will Rogers

"If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help someone else."

— Confucius



"I AM

Two of the most powerful words; for what you put after them shapes your reality."

"If not us, who? If not now, when?"

— John F. Kennedy