

LAWYERS Assistance

By J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell

HAPPY LAWYERING

An article titled “Advice for a Young Lawyer” recently caught my eye. Written by Judge Lawrence Primeaux of Meridian, MS,¹ the article offers 10 pieces of sage advice. Here is a sampling:

1. Your own story.

Most of what happens in your life is a product of the choices you make. You get to write your own story. You get to define the main character, and you decide the plot, the supporting cast and the style of the story. From time to time, read back over your story. Do some parts need to be rewritten or the plot revised to move in a more satisfying direction?

2. More than a paycheck.

Choose to do work that will add value to your clients and yourself — work that makes your clients’ lives better and makes you a better person. When all you work for is a paycheck, the only thing in your work that you have to look forward to is payday.

3. Balance.

You may have to work 70 hours a week when you first start practicing, simply because, as you will find, law school merely introduced you to the law and taught you how to think like a lawyer. And that takes an investment of time. But as you grow into lawyerhood and become more efficient, you need to pare down the hours you work to make room in your life for some living. Balance out your law time with family, church, friends, exercise and quiet time.

4. Avoid hatred and resentment.

It’s easy for lawyers to become cynical and distrustful, to question others’ motives, and to harbor hatred and resentments. The more we let the darkness into our lives, the more the light is driven out. Try to focus on the positive. Take note of the negatives, the hurts, the slights and outrageous conduct of others, and learn from them. And then let them go.

Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (LAP)

Your call is absolutely confidential
as a matter of law.

Toll-free (866)354-9334
Email: lap@louisianalap.com

5. Keep fears in perspective.

Mark Twain said, “I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them have never happened.” The fact is that most of our worries and fears never come to be. The sooner you take that to heart and live by it, the sooner you will be free of the shackles.

6. Difficulties are opportunities.

Losing a case, disappointing a client, making a mistake, angering a judge — all are part and parcel of practicing law. Get over them, set them aright, and move on to the next thing. The difficulties and struggles of the practice of law are the forces that sculpt you into the kind of lawyer that you will grow to be. How you react to those forces will determine whether you become a polished work of art or a pile of dust.

7. Seek enduring happiness.

Material goods can make us happy. The happiness that material goods bring us, however, is like cotton candy. Soon after the pleasurable flavor and sugar high dissipate, we are left with nothing of substance. Seek happiness that will endure. Seek richness in mind and spirit.

8. Grow where planted.

Ambition is a professional hazard of lawyers. You will see that some lawyers are never satisfied with the small stage they are on and the role they have to play. They are always anxious and fretful that they are missing out on the bigger show. When you decide to grow where you are planted, you will find yourself content to make your little world a better, more fulfilling place. You will have made a difference. You will

find happiness in that.

9. Avoid sharp objects.

People who juggle sharp knives usually get cut. People who associate with negative, demanding, hurtful, self-centered, boastful, spiteful, selfish, unfaithful, vengeful, dishonest, envious, greedy, abusive, conniving, bitter, crafty, controlling, self-entitled, passive-aggressive, manipulative, lazy, bigoted, crazy, cynical, gossipy, angry, narrow-minded or shallow individuals are like people who juggle sharp knives. Eschew those kinds of people like you would dangerous objects because their friendship or involvement in your life is, indeed, fraught with danger.

10. Appearances.

You will find that there are lawyers who will look down on you because you don’t wear the right suits or shoes, or don’t drive the right car, or don’t belong to the right firm, or don’t handle the right kind of cases. Those poor people see only what is on the surface, when the real value is what is in your mind and soul. Pay them no mind.

If you are not a happy lawyer and need confidential help for alcoholism, addiction or depression, call LAP at (985)778-0571, email LAP@louisianalap.com, or visit the website at: www.Louisianalap.com.

FOOTNOTE

1. Judge Lawrence Primeaux is a Chancery Court judge in Meridian, MS. The full article is available online at: <https://chancery12.wordpress.com/?s=advice+for+a+young+lawyer>.

J.E. (Buddy) Stockwell is the executive director of the Lawyers Assistance Program, Inc. (LAP) and can be reached at (866)354-9334 or via email at LAP@louisianalap.com.

