

The Lawyer's Guide to Balancing Life & Work: Taking the Stress out of Success

Second Edition

By George W. Kaufman

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261 pps

Stressed after the holidays? If so, buy a copy of this helpful guide.

In *The Lawyer's Guide to Balancing Life & Work*, George Kaufman imparts stress reduction wisdom learned in his 35 years of practicing law, and in his current work with the Omega Institute, the largest residential retreat and holistic study center in America.

Kaufman shares a lot of personal insights about his life in the book, starting with the stressful experience of being an associate at a major New York firm. The author also details how having debilitating Graves' disease, which precluded him from reading for many months, caused him to reevaluate his priorities. These personal stories peppered throughout the book allow readers a very personal glimpse into Kaufman's life.

Because Kaufman worked "in the trenches" as a lawyer, he can really relate to the pressure that his fellow lawyers are experiencing—whether they openly admit the pressure or not. The author notes, "In my experience, lawyers are hesitant to acknowledge the stressful nature of the work they do and resistant to the notion that the stress being experienced takes its toll on their well-being...I think of stress like the elephant in the workplace. It's large, and obvious, and makes its presence felt. And yet we go about our daily business as though it didn't exist." (pps. 119-120)

The book details how lawyers tie their self-esteem to their professional achievement—often so strongly that they feel personally devastated by any "failure", such as not making partner.

Kaufman also comments on some of the changes in the legal profession that have occurred since the first edition of the book was published in 2000. For example, he notes that the increased popularity of flex and part-time has improved many lawyers' lives. However, in many other ways stress has increased, caused by greater difficulty in making partner, continued emphasis on per partner profits, and other factors.

The book includes many exercises that attorneys can do to reduce their job-related stress. Some of the suggested exercises help attorneys examine their values, develop awareness, express their creativity, create an action plan for moving forward, and the like. The exercises are conveniently loaded onto an accompanying CD for easy access.

Perhaps the best feature of this book is that it openly discusses exactly what many lawyers ignore. Any lawyer will come away from the book reassured that he or she is not alone in feeling stress, and, thanks to the book, is equipped to reduce it.