



## FLORIDA BAR NEWS

### THE MINDFUL LAWYER: FEELING LESS BUSY... WHEN BUSY

By Scott Rogers ▶ Special to the News ▶ Columns

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As the summer transitions into fall, you may notice an uptick in the level of your everyday busyness. Whereas summer used to offer a little extra breathing room, such cherished moments are proving increasingly elusive. I hope you enjoyed the summer and were able to relax and recharge, though the busyness of even a summer getaway, can be depleting.

Mindfulness, with its focus on paying attention, may offer a way to be immersed in the busyness of life, personally and professionally, without it feeling busier than it actually is, thereby leaving us to work with a set of challenges that are more manageable than we “feel” they are.

This month’s question is posed by an attorney interested in how mindfulness practice can make a difference in daily life given the demands and urgent matters inherent in the practice of law. With the 24/7 aspect of the law, the promise of reclaiming time may be a worthy exploration.

Regina asks:

*I want very much to be more mindful so that I can enjoy life more and feel less busy all the time. How can mindfulness make a difference in the middle of a very busy day when I am challenged by time constraints as well as the demands of a law practice that requires constant attention to respond to the needs of clients and other urgent matters that keep interfering with a daily routine?*

I shared Regina’s question with Robert Chender, founder and co-chair of the New York City Bar Association Mindfulness and Wellbeing Committee and counsel in Seward & Kissel’s Investment Management Group. He replies:

*Regina, your question is one that many lawyers grapple with. When we’re extremely busy, mindfulness practice can help us to stay present, do our best work, and even find more time in the day!*

*One way of describing mindfulness practice is returning our attention to the present moment, on purpose and with friendliness to ourselves. Formal mindfulness practice involves simply sitting and noticing our*

*breathing, and when we become distracted (we can tell because we no longer notice our breathing), we return our attention to the breath.*

*The more we practice mindfulness, the more we develop the mental muscle of being able to notice our distraction and return to the present, including during our workday. A recent Harvard study found that people's minds wandered away from their tasks 47 percent of the time — imagine how much more efficient we would be if we could reduce that percentage.*

*When we're being pulled in many different directions: case deadlines, demanding clients, intricate negotiations, and difficult colleagues, for example, we may try to do too many things at once, which can cause us to do less than excellent work and also lead to being overwhelmed. If we notice that we're distracted by an issue with a demanding client while we're trying to write a brief, for example, mindfulness practice can help us to actively let go of ruminating about the client, and return to the brief. Later we can put our full attention on our client. Likely our brief will be better, since we placed our full attention on it; moreover, since we're likely to be more comfortable with the brief, we're likely to be more present for our client.*

*If we are able to increase our skill at paying attention through mindfulness, we will find that there's actually more time in the day, because we spend less time being distracted, and less likely to engage in actions that not only waste time but can be depleting. This allows us to feel less busy, become more efficient, and enjoy our lives more!*

Thank you, Regina for submitting an important question. And thank you Robert for offering a helpful reply. Robert is also a teacher of "Search Inside Yourself," the mindfulness and emotional intelligence program developed and tested at Google, and you may enjoy reading Chade-Meng Tan's book, "Search Inside Yourself," that sets forth its underlying principles and practices.

If you have a question about integrating mindfulness into the practice of law that you would like answered in this column, send it to [srogers@law.miami.edu](mailto:srogers@law.miami.edu).



*Scott Rogers, M.S., J.D., is a nationally recognized leader in the area of mindfulness in law and founded and directs the University of Miami School of Law's Mindfulness in Law Program where he teaches mindful ethics, mindful leadership, mindfulness and negotiation, and mindfulness in law. He is the creator of Jurisight, one of the first CLE programs in the country to integrate mindfulness and neuroscience and conducts workshops and presentations on the role of mindfulness in legal education and across the legal profession. He is author of the recently released, **"The Mindful Law Student: A Mindfulness in Law Practice Guide,"** written for all audiences.*