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## NAVIGATING THE WATERS OF CAREER TRANSITION

In late 2007 the so-called Great Recession hit, and, like so many others, I spent the next several years floundering and thinking about making a career change. I was ready for a change, but I did not know what else to do besides practicing law. It was the only job I had held as an adult. When I met people for the first time, I would introduce myself as “I am an attorney,” not “I practice law.” Being a lawyer was the way I saw myself.

I struggled for years to find an alternative to practicing law. I went to Bar seminars, joined transition groups, did private counseling, met with friends, and asked their advice. I could not find a type of work that seemed to fit. Nothing resonated with me.

At some point I asked myself what I liked to think about and what I enjoyed doing. I thought about books I liked to read. I started thinking about the things that gave me pleasure. I asked myself, “What sections do I go to when I visit Powell’s Books?” “What types of documentaries do I like to watch?” “What do I do with my free time?”

Asking these questions led to this: I have always had a love affair with boats. I have been a sailor a good portion of my adult life. One of the great joys in my life is setting sail for parts known or unknown. One of my pastimes in Portland was to sit and watch ships transit the Willamette River.

Having practiced international trade law overseas, I have also always been fascinated by the movement of goods

across seas and all the accompanying economics and legalities. Believe it or not, I find it endlessly curious how a blow-dryer made in China ends up in a bathroom cabinet in Tualatin.

I decided to go back to school for an LLM in Maritime Law. After being accepted at several programs, I started calling maritime attorneys and asking whether this course was a viable economic option. The consistent answer was negative. According to the ten or so attorneys, professors, and career counselors with whom I spoke, there was not enough work in this area to make it a worthwhile move. The end game was going to be an air-conditioned office in a Houston high-rise. I would not have lasted ten minutes in that environment.

By October 2014, I was actively looking for work outside the law. I came across a posting for a job at the Port of Portland in international sales. The job required the kind of knowledge I would have acquired with the LLM. It occurred to me to look for work at a port.

With a little investigation, I discovered 23 public ports in Oregon. I resolved to talk to several port managers and sent five or six emails to the ports on the Columbia River east of Portland. Five port managers responded, and I set up five appointments. I asked if my skill set would be transferable. They all said yes. I asked if my background would qualify me for a management position. They all said yes. I inquired if there were actual jobs and job openings, and they each assured me that I

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would find work if I were willing to work outside the Portland area where I lived.

After my first trip, I decided with some excitement that this was a field that held a great deal of promise, that I was qualified, and that there were jobs. I resolved to meet the remaining 16 or 17 public port managers in Oregon.

At some point, I decided to commit to this career path and started thinking about how I would develop my résumé. I knew that a traditional lawyer résumé with no port work would generate no traction. So I called one of the port managers I had met close to Portland and asked him if we could create an internship that would benefit both of us. He was delighted. I also found an online class in port management run by a well-known trade association; I eventually completed the course and received a certificate. Finally, I created a blog for port commissioners on the laws relevant to ports. I never published the blog, but it gave me something else to talk about and a solid background that was helpful to me later.

In my travels, I met a port manager in southern Oregon. We spoke at length, and she invited me down for a visit. We spoke and emailed after that, and she invited me down again and then again. We were becoming friends.

## 29th Annual Dinner Celebrating Lawyers and Judges in Recovery

Please join the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program on Friday, May 5, 2017, at the 29th Annual Dinner Celebrating Lawyers and Judges in Recovery at the Hotel Monaco in downtown Portland from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m. on the 10th floor.

For a registration form or more information, call the OAAP at 503-226-1057 or 1-800-321-6227. The deadline to RSVP is Wednesday, May 3, 2017. Dinner is \$40 per person.



I knew she was planning to retire, and it was my intention to apply for her job. In July 2015, she told me she was not yet ready to retire, and I replied that I was disappointed because I wanted to apply for her job. After a long pause, she told me she was shocked because she perceived I would have needed a larger enterprise to hold my interest and match my skill set.

A few weeks later, a staff position at her port opened up. She called and offered me the job at a steep pay cut. Before I could object, she pointed out that it was a way for me to learn about the business and her port, and it would position me to take her place when she retired the following year. I would learn the business from the dock up. I swallowed hard and accepted her offer.

I moved down to southern Oregon and went to work on her staff. I enjoyed the work, the environment, and the people, but I was bored and needed more challenge.

To stay engaged, I started creating projects in the port office. I started updating the port's accounting system, rewriting their ordinances, and migrating old and dated office practices to the digital world. I sought out economic projects, such as bringing a sternwheeler back and renovating an old Coast Guard building. I worked on environmental projects to control erosion. I also worked hard to contribute to ongoing efforts to keep the navigable waterways free from natural obstructions.

Four months later, a general manager position opened at a larger coastal port. My boss encouraged me to apply and wrote a supporting letter. I applied for the job and was unanimously hired by the members of the Port Commission. The risk I took by closing my practice, moving from Portland to rural Oregon, accepting a significant pay cut, and starting over was paying off.

Now, every Friday morning just after sunrise, my harbor-master and I inspect the docks, wharves, and other infrastructure that is the heart of maritime trade and commerce in the area. We often watch the sun break over the mountains or the fog get blown out to sea. I am grateful to have the new dawn in my life.

Here's what I have learned:

I was able to move forward when I started asking myself what I liked to do and what I liked to think about. When I finally started seriously thinking about careers in those areas, my thinking started to focus.

- **Test your theories.** I started with a hypothesis: It makes economic sense for me to get an LLM. To test this, I spoke with a lot of people – enough people to feel confident I was getting good advice – and received a consistent negative message. In making the decision to look for port work, I spoke with at least 40 people. Again I received a consistent message, but this time it was positive.

- **Networking is crucial.** In fact, I now count the people I first met at the Oregon ports when I was starting my career transition as my friends and colleagues. And, conversely, they seem to take some pride in watching me grow as a professional. Someone you know will help you, but first you may have to meet that person. Network deliberately, with intention, and with a plan. Network with specific goals in mind, including what you want out of your follow-up.

- **It is, in fact, who you know.** However, I always thought that people got jobs from someone they had known for years. It does not have to be that way. You can create helpful relationships out of thin air and in a couple of months.

- **Once you make your commitment, go all in.** Accept that sacrifice is part of the process. You may have to take a step backwards to go forward. If that is the case, then make your time and effort count by staying focused on the end game.

- **Transition is seldom a question of resources, but it is always a question of resourcefulness.** When I started researching the port industry, I had no resources there. I created them. It was my resourcefulness that got me in the door.

- **The last word goes to regret.** I regret that I did not make my decision to leave law ten years earlier. More often than not, regret is about the things we do not do. If you take action, even if it is not the “correct” action, at least you will have done something to further your life. It is truly better to make a carefully planned move that turns out to be “wrong” than to suffer the long-term regret of inertia.

I am enjoying my new life in southern Oregon and am thankful for the new opportunities to continue to grow and to learn.

GRATEFUL FOR THE NEW DAWN

## OLAF Fundraiser

The OAAP and the Oregon Lawyer Assistance Foundation (OLAF) are presenting a CLE, “Using Your Resilient Lawyer Brain to Overcome Life’s Challenges,” on April 12, 2017, at the Hilton Hotel in Eugene, and on April 13, 2017, at the OSB Center in Tigard. The CLEs run from 3:00 to 5:10 p.m., with a reception immediately following. To register, visit [www.oaap.org](http://www.oaap.org), or call 503-226-1057 or 1-800-321-6227.

## I FINALLY FEEL LIKE I FIT

I got sober the last day of finals during my second year of law school. I was at school, getting ready to take my last final of the year. But instead of studying, I was staring at a poster advertising an end-of-the-semester party for law students at a bar downtown. As I read it, something inside me said that if I went to that party, I would not stop drinking for a long time.

About a week prior, I had set out to prove to myself that I could control my drinking. I knew that other people thought I had a drinking problem, but I also knew that they were wrong. So I went to a bar to have dinner, and told myself to have just one beer and then go home, just to show that I could. It worked! In fact, it worked so well, I tried it again the next day. Same bar, same dinner, same result. By the third day, the thought occurred to me that maybe I could have just two. By the time I ate my dinner, I was drunk, and even though I wanted to stop, I knew I was going to keep drinking. And I did. In three days, I went from having one beer with dinner to staying out all night and getting about as drunk as I could get at a time when I was supposed to be studying for finals. It wasn’t until that moment that I finally knew, deep down inside, that everybody else was right and I was wrong. I could not stop. I was an alcoholic.

I started drinking “for real” when I was 14. I grew up in a small rural town in the Midwest. From a very early age, I remember feeling like I was somehow not good enough – like I was different. From the outside,

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things looked normal. I had a family who loved me, and while we didn't have a lot, we always had enough. I didn't have to try very hard in school, but I never felt like I fit. I started smoking cigarettes occasionally and drinking a beer or two once in a while when we could sneak one from my friend's house.

I remember the first time I got really drunk. I was a freshman in high school and got drunk enough to get really sick during a football game. Instead of thinking, "I'm never doing that again," I remember waking up the next day thinking, "That was great!" Getting sick was just part of the deal. And so it started. From that point on, I often drank until I got sick.

I tried a few other substances – smoked a little pot and huffed a little gasoline. But neither of these made me feel like alcohol made me feel. I'm not sure it "made me feel comfortable in my own skin," as some people say, but it sure made me not care that I didn't.

In high school, drinking seemed normal. The drinking age was 18, but a few places didn't pay much attention, so I was going to bars pretty regularly from age 16 on. I tended to hang around with people who drank more than I did. When my best friend went to treatment at 17, I thought, "He's an alcoholic – I'll never be that bad."

At one point, though, I remember looking at these two old guys, sitting where they always sat at the end of the bar they always went to, and thinking, "If I don't get out of this town, I'm going to become an alcoholic, just like them." So I went away to college, thinking things would be different. They weren't. After four years of "party drinking" (most every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday; passing out in strange places; occasional blackouts; constant hangovers), I thought to myself, "If I don't get out of this state, I'm going to become an alcoholic."

Which is how I found myself in Oregon. I was married at 22. For the next 14 years, things looked pretty normal from the outside. I had a decent life, a decent job, a couple of decent houses – and I drank. Some periods were worse than others. Sometimes I drank in nice places with good-looking people. Other times, I would go out with friends to have "one or two" but not come home until 3 a.m. I sometimes liked to go where nobody knew me or just drive around by myself. Too often, I drank whiskey at home by myself, staring at the TV until I passed out. But I always made it to work. There were

no arrests, no lost jobs. I couldn't be an alcoholic, but most everything I did involved alcohol.

In retrospect, so many of the decisions I made, both large and small, were based on my drinking. When I was 36, I made an impulsive decision to apply to law school, in part because I was on a bowling team with two lawyers. We would drink beer, and they would laugh and tell great stories and tell me I would be a good lawyer. But mostly, I went because I didn't like being me very much, and I thought being a lawyer could change that.

So I went to night school. For a while during my first year, I felt like I had it all together. Working during the day, school at night, partying afterwards, decent grades. I found my people! They were smart and fun. However, by the end of the first year, my marriage ended. I started a new relationship, but it didn't take long for that person to realize that my alcohol use was out of control. I tried to stop on my own several times that year, but I couldn't "stay stopped." When I didn't drink, I was depressed, anxious, fearful, angry. It's no surprise, then, that by the end of my second year of law school, that relationship ended as well. That person was the first in my life to have the grace to tell me to my face that I had a problem with alcohol.

So there I was, staring at this poster. I knew I needed help, but I didn't know what to do. Then I remembered that one of my professors had mentioned in passing that he hadn't had a drink in something like 15 years, which seemed unimaginable to me. It also happened that it was his final that I was about to take. Not knowing what else to do, I went to his office. I told him I needed help. He sat me down at his desk and made a phone call. I found out later that he had called the OAAP. He gave me the address of a lawyer he knew. He told me to go to that address at 6 p.m. that night, and that they would help me. That's how I made it to my first AA meeting.

I was terrified to go in. I had no idea what to expect. When I finally sat down and started to listen, I heard a person celebrating his one-year sobriety anniversary. He looked nothing like me, and his experience was little like mine. However, as I listened to him speak, *he seemed to know exactly how I felt*. But instead of being depressed and miserable (like I was), he seemed genuinely happy and full of gratitude! *By sharing his story, he told me he had found hope and that I could, too. Right then, I knew I was in the right place*. I came back to that meeting the next week and the next. In fact, the lawyer holding the meeting in his office became my sponsor and, even-

## OAAP and OWLS Present the Tenth Annual Women's Wellness Retreat for Lawyers April 7-8, 2017

The OAAP and OWLS are pleased to offer the Tenth Annual Women's Wellness Retreat for Lawyers on Friday and Saturday, April 7-8, 2017. This year's theme is "Mind-Body Connection for Relaxing at Home and Work." MCLE credits are pending.

A block of rooms is reserved for attendees at a special discounted room rate at the Oregon Garden Resort, Silverton, Oregon. The deadline to reserve rooms at the discounted group rate is March 17, 2017. Reserve your room by calling the Oregon Garden Resort directly at 503-874-2500. Please reference the group code OAAP to reserve at the group rate. The group rate is available for Thursday or Saturday (subject to availability).

To register for the retreat, download the registration form at [www.oaap.org](http://www.oaap.org), or call the OAAP program assistant at 503-226-1057 or 1-800-321-6227, ext. 10. The deadline to register is Monday, April 3, 2017. For more information, contact Shari R. Gregory at 503-226-1057, ext. 14, or [sharig@oaap.org](mailto:sharig@oaap.org).



tually, my employer and friend. I haven't had to take another drink since that time. I've been to a lot of other meetings, too. I am so grateful for the people there who helped me – who have shared their experience, strength, and hope with me.

For me, AA isn't really about quitting drinking. I had done that plenty of times before. I just didn't like "sober me" very much most of the time. Each time I stopped, I would just get more and more miserable until I started drinking again. AA teaches me how to live my life in such a way that I am happier being sober than being drunk. Because of that, my life has changed. As a person in long-term recovery from alcohol, I have learned that I have a substance use disorder, just like approximately 9% of U.S. adults, and that it can be treated. I am surrounded by friends who care for me and share my values. I'm married to a wonderful person whom I met at an AA meeting. I have work that I truly love, and I get to be of service every day. I finally feel like I fit.

### A GRATEFUL LAWYER IN RECOVERY

*The OAAP supports recovery by providing individual counseling and referral to treatment, and by offering weekly recovery support groups and events for lawyers, judges, and law students. If you would like more information, or would like to be notified of upcoming OAAP recovery events, please contact Doug Querin, [douglasq@oaap.org](mailto:douglasq@oaap.org), 503-226-1057, ext. 12, or Bryan Welch, [bryanw@oaap.org](mailto:bryanw@oaap.org), 503-226-1057, ext. 19.*

## STRESS MANAGEMENT: HOW TO REDUCE, PREVENT, AND COPE WITH STRESS

You may feel there's nothing you can do about stress. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your work and family responsibilities will always be demanding. However, you have more control over stress than you might think. No matter how stressful your life seems, you can take steps to relieve the pressure and regain balance.

### What is stress management?

We all respond to stress differently, so there's no "one size fits all" solution to managing stress. But if you feel like the stress in your life is out of control, it's time to take action. Stress management can teach you healthier ways to cope with stress, help you reduce its harmful effects, and prevent stress from spiraling out of control again in the future.

No matter how powerless you may feel in the face of stress, you still have control over your lifestyle, thoughts, emotions, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself, and making time for rest

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and relaxation. The first step is to recognize the true sources of stress in your life.

### What are the sources of stress in your life?

It's easy to identify sources of stress following a major life event, such as changing jobs, moving home, or losing a loved one, but pinpointing the sources of everyday stress can be more complicated. It's all too easy to overlook your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that contribute to your stress levels.

Do you explain away stress as temporary ("I just have a million things going on right now"), even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?

Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life ("Things are always crazy around here") or as a part of your personality ("I have a lot of nervous energy, that's all")?

Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

Until you accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining stress, your stress level will remain outside your control.

### How do you currently cope with stress?

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. A stress journal can help you identify them. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy, helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

## Women Lawyers Support Group

The OAAP is offering a six-week support group for women lawyers to discuss the challenges, stressors, and coping strategies of practicing law and living a full life as a woman lawyer. This group will meet at the OAAP on Wednesdays from 12 to 1 p.m., beginning April 19. The group will be facilitated by OAAP Attorney Counselor Shari R. Gregory, LCSW, JD.

To participate in this group, please contact Shari R. Gregory at 503-226-1057, ext. 14, or at [sharig@oaap.org](mailto:sharig@oaap.org).

## Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Bingeing on junk or comfort food
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

## Learning healthier ways to manage stress

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

### Stress Management Strategy #1: Avoid unnecessary stress

While stress is an automatic response from your nervous system, some stressors arise at predictable times – your commute to work, a meeting with your boss, or family gatherings, for example. When handling predictable stressors, you can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose in any given scenario, it's helpful to think of the four A's: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept.

It's not healthy to avoid a stressful situation that needs to be addressed, but you may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

- **Learn how to say "no."** Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life,

taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress. Distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts” and, when possible, say “no” to taking on too much.

- **Avoid people who stress you out.** If someone consistently causes stress in your life, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship.

- **Take control of your environment.** If the evening news makes you anxious, turn off the TV. If traffic makes you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.

### Stress Management Strategy #2: Alter the situation

If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, be more assertive and communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the stress will increase.

- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change his or her behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.

- **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. If you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you'll find it easier to stay calm and focused.

### Stress Management Strategy #3: Adapt to the stressor

How you think can have a profound effect on your stress levels. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. Regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude to stressful situations.

- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.

- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? a year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.

- **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”

### Stress Management Strategy #4: Accept the things you can't change

Many sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control – particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control, such as the way you choose to react to problems.

- **Look for the upside.** When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.

- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

In addition to the four A's of avoid, alter, adapt, and accept, some important components of stress management include physical activity, social engagement, and adopting a healthy lifestyle. Getting regular exercise, maintaining close relationships, making time for fun and relaxation, and practicing self-care will go a long way toward helping you manage stress in the long term.

LAWRENCE ROBINSON; MELINDA SMITH;  
AND ROBERT SEGAL, M.A.

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### **Finding Meaningful Work**

Finding Meaningful Work is a confidential networking and support group for lawyers making job or career transitions. In this group, lawyers will create and execute a personalized job search plan; develop a mission statement and elevator speech; learn and practice networking skills; and hone their job search skills. If you are interested in attending, please contact OAAP Attorney Counselor Shari R. Gregory, LCSW, JD, at 503-226-1057, ext. 14, or at sharig@oaap.org.

### **Career Self-Assessment Workshops**

The OAAP also offers career self-assessment workshops several times each year to assist lawyers, judges, and law students in identifying satisfying job and career opportunities. These workshops typically meet one evening per week from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. for five consecutive weeks. If you would like additional information about the OAAP career self-assessment workshops, contact Mike Long at 503-226-1057, ext. 11, or at mikel@oaap.org, or Shari R. Gregory at 503-226-1057, ext. 14, or at sharig@oaap.org.

### **Lawyers in Transition Presentation Calendar**

A "Lawyers in Transition" guest speaker is featured on the first Thursday of each month at noon at the OAAP, 520 SW Yamhill, Suite 1050, Portland, Oregon 97204. These presentations are open for anyone to attend. See the calendar below for scheduled speakers.

**April 6, 2017**    **Scott Morrill**    **Practicing attorney to adventure traveler and teacher**

**May 11, 2017\***    **Jonathan Patterson**    **Judicial clerk to staff attorney at Compassion & Choices**

**June 1, 2017**    **Jollee Patterson**    **General counsel for Portland Public Schools to senior counsel at Miller Nash**

### **JULY & AUGUST – SUMMER BREAK**

\* Second Thursday of the month

For current information on upcoming Lawyers in Transition speakers and topics, please visit the OAAP website at [www.oaap.org](http://www.oaap.org) and click on CLEs/Workshops.