



# IN SIGHT for Oregon Lawyers

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

September 2006  
Issue No. 63

## RELAX AND BE MORE PRODUCTIVE

Do you ever wish your “go, go” lifestyle would just “stop, stop,” or at least let you slow down once in a while? Do you get sucked into the swirling storm of your career and personal life only to be tossed about and spit out at some future date wondering what you missed? Do you long to feel calm and in control when your case, your day, or the best-laid plans go unexpectedly awry? If this sounds like you, then the workshop described in the sidebar below and the book reviewed in this article may be of great interest to you.

Our lives as busy professionals fulfill many needs, but usually not our desire for calmness and peace. You probably remember that desire – the one you feel while lying quietly on a beach during your first vacation in three years, or while gazing into the eyes of your newborn during parental leave, or in the quiet company of someone with whom you enjoy just “being.” The feeling surfaces when you take a step back from your busyness and hectic schedule.

“Who has time for that on a regular basis in the real world?” you may ask. Even though our need for quiet peacefulness may be great, we too often ignore it thinking that we should use that time instead to be more productive. Here is something to ponder: If you were thirsty or hungry, would you intentionally deprive yourself of food or water because you were too busy? You probably know a few lawyers who would, but do you really want to be one of them? Maybe there is a

better way to live.

This spring I stumbled upon a book at my local library, entitled *Inner Peace for Busy People*, by Joan Z. Borysenko, PhD. “Just another self-help book,” I thought. However, I was interested enough in finding “a better way to live” that I checked it out and took it home, where it sat on my bookshelf for a few days. When I finally picked it up, I expected a ho-hum read with esoteric exercises that I would never find the energy or time to do.

Not so. The book had some really practical ideas and sold me in the first chapter, entitled “Relax and Be More Productive.” The author explains how incorporating relaxation into a busy lifestyle will make you more productive:

“I believe that most busy, highly productive people operate in the high-stress range . . . [t]heir output is still high but the internal wires are starting to short-circuit and burn. If they learned to relax . . . [t]heir output would actually be greater, while the toll on their body would be lessened. If they relaxed even more . . . , they would still be able to maintain the same output they had before when they were burning out.”

“Wow!” I thought, “This book is right up my alley – I get to learn how to be even more productive!” As a working mother of twin toddlers and a pre-kindergartner, I put a premium on increased productivity. With chapter titles like “Build Your Brain Power,” “Be a Better Juggler,” “Understand What Saving Time Really Means,” and “Try Power Whining,” this book was definitely addressing my life. The chapters were short

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– about three to four pages each – which fit right into the amount of time I had available for leisure reading. And the advice was simple, practical, and helpful: Breathe deeply; make more time for the activities and people I enjoy and less for the ones I don't; learn to say no; get organized; set priorities; plus a whole slew of other suggestions – some that worked for me and some that didn't. Admittedly, I skipped the deeper reflection exercises at the end of each chapter. You may find, however, that these exercises help you drill down into the heart of the issue.

Even after a cursory read-through, I began to internalize some of the book's advice and to practice peace on a daily and routine basis. I began to understand what inner calm felt like and made a conscious effort to maintain that frame of mind throughout the day. The suggestions in the book helped bring about a clarity, calmness, and peacefulness in me that I hadn't felt since before I entered law school. These feelings fueled my passion for exploring the beautiful places in Oregon and showing them to my kids; spending more time with friends and family; and taking better care of myself. Finally, I found the author was right. I had become efficient enough to have (or make) time for both work and relaxation in my busy schedule.

Before reading *Inner Peace for Busy People*, my motto was, "She who is most productive wins!" Now it is, "Live everyday like you mean it." And I do.

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