



FIND YOUR ZEN MOMENT

Ellen Freedman, CLM
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My readers know that I most frequently write about serious issues. Most tell me that I scare the bejeebers out of them with most of my articles, because I'm always focusing on what needs to be done, and the risks one faces by not doing so. So this article will be a rare departure. Why? Because most of us are so stressed out right now, especially given the state of the economy, that we need a respite — me included — to revitalize and catch our breath.

When former PBA president Lou Teti brought me on board at PBA over a decade ago, he was focused on quality of life issues. Frankly, it was about time that phrase became something other than a bad punch line at many firms. Despite his best efforts, I have not seen much actual change, though.

It seems that the only ones who have dug their heels in and demanded some semblance of balance are those of the younger generations. To those of the baby boomer generation or older, it seems like these younger lawyers have no fire in the belly. Complaints point out that the halls are dark by 5:00 pm most weeks. Where are all the associates? Here's a concept: they're home enjoying life.

But that leaves the older generations working even harder than before, in order to buffer the firm's profitability. The truth of the matter is that our rotten economy and other pressures, exacerbated by this schism between work ethic of generations, have driven most boomers to work harder than ever before, just to stay ahead of declining profits.

This article is not about any miraculous way to motivate those young lawyers. I'll leave that for another time. Nor is it about navigating the economic climate. Again, another time.

This article is about feeding your soul with much-needed nutriment. That trite old saying that if you don't take care of yourself you can't take care of others has increased significance when times are tough. You need to regenerate, to

decompress, so you can continue to muster the energy and enthusiasm you need day after day to stay in the race.

Everyone has their own path to a Zen moment. That's the term I use to define the achievement of a state of balance and renewal.

Different activities, different levels of activity, or no activity at all, define different Zen moments for each of us. Some of you will find a path to your Zen moment through activities like yoga, racquetball, walking, running, bicycling, swimming. If you're in central PA you may develop your moments while hunting or fishing. Others will submerge themselves in interesting hobbies like gardening, photography, playing music, performing in local theater, creating works of art and other creative endeavors. For those inwardly focused, meditation and visualization will create the path.

It doesn't matter how you get there, only that you do so, so you can nourish your soul. For those of you who are into visualization, let me share my spring and summertime Zen moment with you. The path unfolds each morning as I awake, although sometimes it is at approximately the same time, but I am soon heading to sleep. The sun is breaking over the horizon. The birds are loudly signaling the start of the day. There is little if any noise from cars or neighbors.

Cold moist noses, wet kisses, and a gratitude to accompany me outside no matter what the weather are always part of the equation. With a cup of coffee in hand, and sometimes an umbrella, I begin the garden tour.

If you're a gardener you know that not a day goes by without noticeable change which can cause the spirit to come alive. Aromas, particularly of recently mown lawn or emerging flowers, caress the senses. New perennials or bulbs breaking ground in spring create a particularly strong feeling of renewal and optimism. In summer the waves of perennial flowers create a feeling of longevity, endurance, achievement, and recognition and reward for one's hard work the year before.

Eventually I come back to the centerpiece of the garden, which is a patio and large pond at its edge with rushing twin waterfalls. The sunlight sparkles off the moving water in seductive winks. The frogs are heard leaping into the water with a distinctive splashing sound as I approach. That signals the Comets and Koi that food will be forthcoming. By the time I reach the water's edge the fish are circling in several schools, in anticipation.



Two of the dogs take positions on large overhanging rocks, tails wagging, to watch the antics of the fish as they eat. Sometimes some of the Koi get so excited they jump high above the water, to the delight of the dogs. And once in a while I'm amused as my Lab both eagerly and gingerly attempts to lick one of the large Koi as it grazes directly underneath him.

I settle into my chair, a small dog on my lap, to sip my coffee while I listen to the gurgling of the water, watch the brightly colored dragonflies hover above the pond, and soak in warmth from the early rays of sun. I am aware that all the world around me is otherwise still and hushed, except for the small area I inhabit, which is teeming with life and a natural healthy balance. Water is the essence of life, and it has an amazing power.

My mind fills with thoughts about what I will plant, divide, transplant or prune to enhance the garden further. A bench here, an ornament there, all comes and goes in focus. Effortlessly, I begin to breathe slower and more deeply. My mind is still. I am at peace. I am refreshed, revitalized, renewed. I have experienced my Zen moment. I know I am ready for another busy, often frantic day.

Not all days lend themselves to indulging my senses and renewing my spirit. But I find that most recently I have made a concerted effort to find the time, and I notice the difference it has made on my quality of life.

In the rush to get things done, we often forget to simply live. Live isn't about the moments you draw breath, but about the moments that draw your breath away. So you need to figure out a way to reward and renew your spirit. It doesn't have to take a lot of time, just time spent on a quality activity.

The first thing you need to do is probably find a little more time out of the office. If you haven't started working smarter instead of harder, you may never be able to take this very first step. Tough times call for workflow process re-engineering. It just so happens that doing it effectively can gain you some additional time for yourself without interfering with your profit equation. In fact, you may improve the bottom line even as you improve your quality of life. Sound good?

For those of you who have Zen moments, I'd love for you to share yours with me. I may blog about them, so we can all get life-enriching ideas from one another at www.pa-lawpracticemanagement.com. I have lots of tricks up my sleeve which may work for you.



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