

Book Review by Martin I. Reisig

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Transforming Practices - Finding Joy and Satisfaction in the Legal Life

Author: Steven Keeva, an ABA Journal Book

Published by Contemporary Books - \$24.95

This is a book to read slowly, while you reflect on your legal practice. Steven Keeva, Senior Editor of the ABA Journal (the Lawyers Magazine), captures the insights of lawyers who are healers and problem solvers as they listen to and work with their clients. The lessons from these lawyers provide practical and inspirational ideas for better serving our clients and better serving ourselves. Many of the lawyers described are people I'd like to know. Often, they remind me of the lawyers among us whom we instinctively admire.

Among professionals, lawyers lead the list of those suffering from depression. "Transforming Practices" tells the stories of lawyers who have found pride, comfort and satisfaction in their work. Through their stories, Steven Keeva skillfully demonstrates that by integrating our values, passion and sense of purpose into our daily practice, we can enjoy our work days and be more fully appreciated by our clients.

Too many lawyers put blinders on during their legal careers. "Transforming Practices" urges us to take off the blinders and to be true to ourselves. Some tough but solvable issues dealt with in the book include:

- 1) Feelings of separation from our clients and how we often cause this separation.
- 2) Feelings of separation from our sensitive, creative, and caring side.
- 3) Law firm billable hour pressures and deciding how you want to spend your life.
- 4) Balancing the importance of friends and family with the practice of law.

- 5) Rediscovering a sense of purpose.
- 6) Feeling closer to fellow lawyers.

Covering topics from meditation, to attentive listening, to controlling hours, to altering practices, and to better health, Keeva's book provides practical examples for achieving a fulfilling legal practice within the context of a fulfilling life.

Did you know that:

- 1) Boston law firm Hale and Dorr offers a stress reduction course for its lawyers.
- 2) The Fetzer Institute, located in Kalamazoo, is working on a Healing and the Law project.
- 3) 40 family lawyers in Minnesota practice collaborative law in divorce matters and do not litigate these cases.
- 4) Listening to clients lowers their blood pressure.
- 5) The International Alliance of Holistic Lawyers is a new organization which places emphasis on the healing and restorative role of lawyers. A growing number of lawyers minimize blame, modify anger, try to assist the client beyond the law to feel whole, and strive not to hurt other people.
- 6) A few law schools, including Northeastern and Yale, have integrated into their program time for reflective value-oriented seminars as well as trust and cooperation-building retreats.

Stories in this book liberate lawyers to pursue their highest calling. The lawyer's heart is elevated to be at least equal to our head. Keeva summarizes lawyer practices which increase the potential for fully feeling the privilege of being a lawyer.

Take a little time to enjoy "Transforming Practices," you deserve it!



Martin I. Reisig of Birmingham, Michigan serves on the Michigan Supreme Court Dispute Resolution Task Force. He is a full-time facilitator and serves on the board for the Oakland Mediation Center. He is a past recipient of the OCBA Distinguished Service Award.