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SEEING THE POSITIVE IN CHANGE

The adage that “nothing escapes change” has never been truer. Social, economic, political, and technological changes continue to affect our personal and collective destinies. Change seems to be happening faster, but coping with it has not suddenly become easier. Individuals struggle to deal with job losses, workplace reorganizations, shifting expectations, and family problems such as alcoholism.

Change can be destabilizing, whether it's out of the blue or desired. For example, being promoted at work and getting married may be welcome events – yet they also rate high on the stress scale. Research has found that winning a lottery produces the same amount of stress as experiencing a major trauma. “Nonevents” and disappointments, such as not getting an expected promotion, also create stress by altering our hopes and expectations for our lives.

Ultimately, change can feel scary because it forces us to recognize that we aren't in control of life's variables. “Once our life is disrupted, we go through a period of what I call ‘betwixt and between,’” said Nancy K. Schlossberg, author of *Overwhelmed: Coping With Life's Ups and Downs*. “We don't know exactly who we are and what our new routines are, and we haven't established a new set of relationships. It takes a while to figure out where you fit and how things are going.”

The immediate responses to sudden change can be confusion, anxiety, and

depression. Yet the impact of change depends, to a great extent, on how we perceive and interpret it. “Based on the messages we grew up with in our families, we develop an attitude about change,” said Marilyn Mason, a Minneapolis psychotherapist. “Some people love change. Others are very reluctant and resistant because some changes in childhood were so hurtful or traumatic.”

It can be devastating when assumptions about our future suddenly collapse, or we are forced to confront facts about ourselves that we had steadfastly avoided. Yet faulty assumptions and expectations are among the greatest obstacles to healthy approaches to change. Stubbornly resisting change may create further anxiety and contribute to alcohol and other drug use.

“If we have the entrenched belief that we are in control and should be in control, we are going to be shocked to our foundations any time there is even the slightest change, because we didn't give permission for this to happen,” said Patricia Owen, a licensed psychologist and director of the Butler Center for Research at Hazelden.

People who are under stress naturally look for the quickest way to alleviate their suffering, Owen added. If they are already vulnerable to addiction, or in the early stages, they may use alcohol or other drugs to escape the stress of change. One sign of a problem is if a person justifies the use of alcohol or other drugs to cope

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Welcome, Law Students!

with change. This is a clue that alcohol is playing an inappropriate role in a person's life.

The experts agree on several effective strategies to help us cope with change:

- **Accept and name the change.** Simply acknowledging the reality of a change and that it's stressful provides some relief.
- **Assess our resources for managing change.** Such assessment enables us to take advantage of our coping strengths and build up any weak areas. If we lack support, for example, we might join a group or reach out to friends. Healthy eating, exercise, prayer, and meditation are other tools for healthy coping.
- **Take charge of change.** Even if it's uncomfortable, choosing to see change as an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth gives us the perspective needed to keep learning and growing during change.

"It's our response to the unexpected that shapes our maturity," Mason said. "Changes are opportunities for spiritual growth. When we have a crisis, it pushes us to edges we have not faced before. At that time, we can either go into denial or we can say, 'I'm going to face this, feel it, get support, and do what I can to cope.'"

Originally published in Alive & Free, a chemical health column provided by Hazelden (www.hazelden.org), a nonprofit agency that provides information and services related to addiction and recovery.

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AN UNINTENDED DESTINATION

I moved to Portland from Washington, D.C., eleven years ago with my husband to attend law school. After graduating, I accepted an offer at the firm where I had clerked for the summer, working primarily with partners who practiced energy law. When one of the partners left the firm for a small boutique practice specializing in energy law, I decided to join her.

My career was going well. I respected and enjoyed working with all of the lawyers and staff at my firm. My clients were smart and ethical. The work that I have had the opportunity to do for the past several years has been challenging and satisfying. Before leaving the East Coast, however, my husband and I had not really come to grips with the reality of living across the country from all of our family. Last year, that reality hit home when my husband's mother died after a lengthy illness.

It was difficult not being closer when she was ill. We don't have children, and it seems that each year the opportunity cost of not living close to family members as they age, and to our siblings, nieces, and nephews, becomes greater. Late last year we finally made the decision to move back to the Northeast so that we could be closer to family.

Shortly after making this decision, I decided to contact the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program (OAAP) to help jump-start my job search. The fact is, I had never actually looked for a law job. I was hired for my clerkships during law school through on-campus interviews scheduled through the career services office. The firm where I clerked the summer after my second year extended an offer to join the firm as an associate after graduating, which I accepted. The partner I worked most closely with at my first firm asked me to come with her when she decided to join my current firm. After the fortunate serendipity of my first few positions, the prospect of conducting a transnational job search seemed a little overwhelming at the outset.

I was aware that the OAAP offered assistance to lawyers making job and career changes and made an appointment to meet with one of the attorney counselors. I also decided to participate in one of the evening career satisfaction workshops that OAAP periodically offers. Through the self-assessment exercises, I confirmed that I enjoy many aspects of my practice (research, analytical problem-solving, and meeting with and advising clients).

I realized that I prefer working on big projects for large clients that I can immerse myself in rather than being spread across multiple projects for a number of clients. I also identified that many elements of litigation do not fall within my professional comfort zone. I determined that I was far more interested in pursuing an in-house counsel or public sector position than in remaining in private practice. The workshop also reinforced how important networking was going to be in my job search, which was kind of anxiety-provoking for me as someone who falls on the introversion end of the spectrum.

Equipped with these insights about my professional preferences, we decided to target our transition efforts on relocating to the Northeast where the majority of our family live. I utilized LinkedIn and my contacts in the energy field to approach attorneys working in-house for utilities, those in energy-related public sector positions, and those specializing in energy law in private practice. The career services staff at my law school provided me with a list of alumni working in the Northeast, which proved very helpful in starting my search. I scheduled a networking and job search trip to the Northeast in March. About seventy-five to eighty percent of the attorneys whom I contacted agreed to meet with me and were responsive and helpful.

This initial effort did not translate to any actual job leads, though, so I decided to cast my net a bit wider. I expanded my search to include opportunities in regulatory compliance outside the energy field and law-related opportunities in the insurance industry. Despite this additional targeted outreach, I did not receive a response to any of the applications that I submitted to positions that were outside of my direct energy law experience.

At one point during my search, I contacted a friend and former Northwest energy client who had gone to work for a Florida utility and was currently doing some energy work in the Northeast. We spoke several times, and he shared with me his job transition story and relocation to the Southeast and was able to provide me with several contacts at utilities in the Northeast. He also confided in me that he had recently decided to relocate back to the Northwest. One day, he finally called me to tell me that he had informed his employer that he was leaving to return to the Northwest and asked whether I would be interested in being considered for his job.

Although my husband and I have family in Florida and actually met there while attending graduate school,

we had not considered moving back. We had been single-mindedly focused on relocating to the Northeast. I had reservations about adjusting to the climate and culture in Florida after enjoying living in Oregon for over a decade. I was also concerned about not being quite as close to family as I had hoped originally. (We would be about two hours away rather than in the same city.) After discussing this opportunity, I told my friend/former client that I was, in fact, interested in being considered for his position and submitted my application.

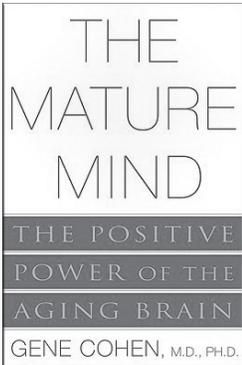
After one telephone interview, I was flown down for a full day of in-person interviews. Following the interviews, I met one of the women lawyers at the utility for dinner, who provided further insight into the culture of the work group and utility. My discussions with her solidified my belief that the position would be a good fit for me. Ultimately, they offered me the job. At about this same time, I was offered a position as a hearings officer for a New England state government. Because this second job offer would have relocated us to the Northeast where we originally thought we wanted to be, we needed to carefully consider the implications of both options.

Weighing the pros and cons of both opportunities and with the support of my husband, I ultimately decided to accept the offer with the Florida utility. We will be living in a beautiful community on the Atlantic coast, just two hours from my sister and other family members. If we didn't have this family close by, we would not have considered this opportunity. My job will involve regular travel to the Northeast where my employer is planning power transmission lines. It will be much easier for us to visit family in the Northeast from Florida than it has been to travel from Oregon. It will also be much easier for my husband's family, located mostly in the Midwest, to visit us in Florida than it would have been in a New England location that is far from an airport.

My job search has led to a very unexpected destination. It was not what we had originally planned, but I am very excited to begin this next chapter of life. I realize now that being open to opportunities other than where I originally began looking resulted in my finding a new home – both personally and professionally – that will be a good fit for our family.

A SOUTHEASTERN-BOUND COLLEAGUE

BOOK REVIEW: THE MATURE MIND: THE POSITIVE POWER OF THE AGING BRAIN



In his theory of human development, psychologist Erik Erikson offered a last, single developmental stage after the onset of adulthood – Mature Age (65 to death). In *The Mature Mind*, Gene Cohen, MD, PhD, a student of Erikson at Harvard, builds upon his developmental model by expanding the Mature Age stage into

four overlapping “developmental phases” that span the second half of life.

- **Midlife reevaluation** (early 40s to late 50s): Adults reevaluate their lives (*Where have I been? Where am I now? Where am I going?*) in search of what is true and meaningful.
- **Liberation** (late 50s to early 70s): A time to free ourselves of earlier inhibitions and limitations and a time to experiment and innovate (*If not now, when?*). Partial retirement or retirement provides an opportunity to experiment with new experiences.
- **Summing up** (late 60s through the 80s): A time of autobiographical review, giving back through volunteerism and philanthropy, and a time of resolution.
- **Encore** (late 70s to the end of life): Not “encore” as a final act but as a time of continuation and reflection, manifesting a desire to go on even in the face of adversity or loss, to remain vital, and to live well to the end.

Cognitive Functioning and the Mature Mind

Cohen introduces and summarizes brain science research of the past decade or two in support of these developmental phases. The most important of these findings is that much of the decline in mental functioning that had previously been erroneously associated with aging is, in fact, not directly caused by aging per se but by declines in physical health and fitness in general and by specific physical and mental diseases such as microstrokes, Alzheimer’s disease, substance abuse, and depression.

Cohen recognizes that certain aspects of brain function actually do decline with age, principally the raw speed that the brain is able to process information, the efficiency of short-term memory storage, and reaction times. However, solid research over the past two decades has firmly established that:

- New brain cells continue to form or develop, particularly in the region of the hippocampus, which is integral to memory formation.
- The brain is continually forming new neural pathways and rewiring itself in response to new experiences, new intellectual stimulation, and learning. Consequently, “brain cells in the parts of the brain that an older person has used continuously would look like a dense forest of thickly branched trees, compared to the thinner and less dense forest of a young brain. This neural density is the physical basis for the skills and experience of accomplished older adults.”
- The brain’s emotional circuitry matures and becomes more balanced with age, increasing the

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we’ll help with any
baggage.



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mature adult's capacity to successfully ride out emotional storms more flexibly.

- The brain's two hemispheres are more equally accessed by high-functioning older adults than younger adults, which produces advantages such as coordinated bilateral thinking as the brain ages.

In most people, speech, language, and mathematical and logical reasoning are handled by the left hemisphere. The right hemisphere, in general, specializes in such functions as face recognition, visual-spatial comprehension, and creative and synthesizing functions. Researchers using brain-scanning techniques to compare brain function in younger and older adults have found that young adults engaged in memory and autobiographical recall primarily use the left brain hemisphere, while high-functioning older adults simultaneously access both brain hemispheres when engaging in these same tasks. Cohen often described this advantage of aging brains as switching from unilateral thinking to bilateral thinking, or shifting from two-wheel to four-wheel drive at about age 50. This research supports the hypothesis that older adults are able to expand the redundant capacity of the brain and counteract age-related neural decline by reorganizing their neural networks. Cohen speculates that "perhaps part of the autobiographical drive among older adults is related to this rearrangement of brain functions that makes it easier to merge the speech, language and sequential thinking typical of the left hemisphere with the creative, synthesizing right hemisphere."

In *The Mature Mind*, Cohen also introduces the concept of developmental intelligence, which mature adults express in deepening wisdom, judgment, perspective, and vision. Developmental intelligence is characterized by three types of thinking/reasoning:

- **Relativistic thinking:** recognizing that knowledge may be relative, not absolute or black and white.
- **Dialectical thinking:** the ability to uncover and resolve contradiction in opposing and seemingly incompatible views.
- **Systematic thinking:** being able to see the larger picture and to distinguish between the forest and the trees.

"Our capacity to accept uncertainty, to admit that answers are often relative, and to suspend judgment for a more careful evaluation of opposing claims is a true measure of our developmental intelligence." These three types of thinking do not manifest naturally in youth. It takes experience to develop this more flexible and subtle form of thinking. That's why most of us would not be comfortable with the appointment of a twenty-something-year-old lawyer to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Brain Fitness

Cohen draws from brain research of the past two decades to identify five categories of activities that, if practiced regularly, can significantly boost brain functioning:

- **Mental exercise:** "Engaging in challenging new learning experiences boosts the development of the brain in the second half of life because the new experiences generate new synapses and neural structures."
- **Physical exercise:** Numerous studies have shown that regular physical exercise, particularly aerobic exercise, boosts brain power and reduces the risk of developing cognitive impairment and suffering cognitive decline.
- **Establishing strong social networks.**
- **Pursuing mastery of an activity, which instills a sense of control.**
- **Developing challenging leisure activities.**

In sum, Cohen builds a grounded argument that older, mature minds are not better or worse than they were before about age 50; they are structurally and functionally *different*. Since the publication of Cohen's groundbreaking book, there is an emerging body of research confirming the power and potential of leveraging those positive differences throughout life.

MIKE LONG
OAAP ATTORNEY COUNSELOR
ROGER ANUNSEN
PRINCIPAL, MINDRAMP CONSULTING

CHOOSING HAPPINESS: SIXTH ANNUAL OAAP/OWLS WOMEN'S WELLNESS RETREAT



Happiness was this year's theme at the Sixth Annual OAAP/OWLS Women's Wellness Retreat. Our journey to creating, renewing, and finding joy was introduced by lawyer, teacher, and author Beth Enos. Beth emphasized that happiness is an "inside job" and shared some steps that helped her shift her own

fear, anxiety, and stress to a life of joy, contentment, and peace. Two of the steps – giving up the delusion of control and taking time to feel your feelings – are also discussed in more depth in her book, *10 Steps to Finding Your Happy Place (and Staying There)*.

Beth acknowledged how very difficult it is for lawyers to give up the delusion of control. We are trained to try to control things and to expect things to go according to "the rules." She helped us to distinguish between the things we can control and the things we cannot. She encouraged us to focus on what we do, think, and say – but to release our feelings of responsibility for the outcome, our initial judgments about whether an outcome is "good" or "bad," and our attachment to a specific outcome. She shared several stories illustrating how outcomes that might seem "bad" at first often look very different when viewed from a different perspective down the road.

Divorce Support

Beginning **October 16, 2013**, the OAAP will offer a support group in Portland for lawyers experiencing the challenges and issues of divorce. The 10-week group will meet at the OAAP on Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. If you are interested or for additional information, call OAAP Attorney Counselor Shari R. Gregory, LCSW, JD, at 503-226-1057 or 1-800-321-6227, ext. 14, or at sharig@oaap.org.

Beth also acknowledged that many people are afraid to own their feelings – often because they are afraid that their feelings will overwhelm them and run out of control. She walked us through positive ways to express and own our feelings, including using statements that begin with "I," such as I feel so disappointed/scared/worried/alone, and so forth. She taught us how to feed our positive emotions, guiding us to become more aware of our thoughts, and to practice the habit of changing negative thoughts into positive ones.

After some afternoon free time to enjoy the beautiful weather, the peaceful surroundings, and an exceptionally tasty dinner, Kim Cottrell, educator, author, and Feldenkrais practitioner, helped us realize our innate capacity for graceful, efficient movement. Kim led us through Feldenkrais movements, which help increase ease and range of motion, flexibility, and coordination. We left the room with relaxed bodies and renewed spirits. On Saturday morning, Kim showed us how Feldenkrais practice can help you warm up for your day and stretch without pain.

Refreshed and invigorated from stretching, we assembled for the next segment to reflect on what makes us happy in relationships. Virginia Terhaar, PhD, helped us all explore the kinds of connections that make us happy – and why. We rediscovered how important bonds are, whether they are with friends, partners, family, pets, those who are living, or those who have passed. We came away from this session with a renewed sense that life is made rich and worthwhile because of the relationships that make us happy.

Nancie Potter, a former trial lawyer who transitioned to a second career in marriage and family counseling, then facilitated an exploration of how to find a greater balance in our work – as well as in the rest of our lives. She demonstrated ways in which we can evaluate our true calling, including looking deep inside ourselves at things that we really like to do. She encouraged us to make finding joy a priority – and to take time to express gratitude every day. Reminding us that an "attitude of gratitude" really makes a difference, she noted that it is hard to feel miserable and grateful at the same time. She provided us with

creative ways to “call out our calling,” including looking at general categories such as connection, change, simplicity, teaching, inquiry, and leadership.

The afternoon closed with Beth Enos supporting us in examining the barriers we put up to defeat our own joy and how to break them down by giving ourselves permission to be happy, joyful, grateful, and playful. She closed by offering tips for how we could retain more of what we had learned during the retreat.

With joyful spirits and a sense of renewal, we gathered together in the sunshine for our closing circle. Each offered a word that described how we felt about our experience: *Hopeful, restored, joyful, satisfied, connected, happy, renewed, and grateful.*

Many of the lawyers who attended commented on what they most appreciated about the weekend retreat. For some, it was the new and usable insights and awarenesses of how to make significant improvements in their lives with seemingly small changes. For others, it was the opportunity to connect and build relationships with other Oregon women lawyers or an appreciation for the respite from daily demands.

Whatever their reason for attending, this year’s retreat participants created, renewed, and found joy – and left looking forward to returning next year.

BARBARA S. FISHLEDER
 OAAP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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LAWYERS IN TRANSITION CALENDAR

Lawyers in Transition is a networking, educational, and support group for lawyers and judges making job or career transitions. The group meets on Thursdays at noon in the OAAP offices at **520 SW Yamhill, Suite 1050, Portland**. If you are interested in attending, please contact Shari R. Gregory, 503-226-1057, ext. 14, or Mike Long, ext. 11. A guest speaker for Lawyers in Transition is featured on the first Thursday of each month. These meetings are open for anyone to attend. See the calendar below for scheduled speakers.

The OAAP also occasionally presents career workshops 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 six consecutive weeks. If you would like additional information about the OAAP career workshops, call Shari R. Gregory or Mike Long at 503-226-1057 or 1-800-321-6227.

Oct. 3, 2013 **Brian Hicks** **Lawyer to Financial Advisor,
Beacon Rock Partners**

*** Nov. 14, 2013** **Duke Tufty** **Changing Firms:
Key Considerations**

Dec. 5, 2013 **TBA**

* Second Thursday of the month