



October 2013

Issue No. 90

OREGON ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

## *IN SIGHT* for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

### 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.

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

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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.

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