

Finding Peace of Mind Again

My new baby girl, Carolyn, was born about week before COVID-19 began to hit New York. Amazingly, she arrived 10 days before her due date and also completely healthy. If my wife, Megan, had delivered her on her due date, she probably would've had to do it all alone; I wouldn't have been allowed in the room.

Now that we're in November, it's only natural for us to think about gratitude and Thanksgiving, but there are so many more reasons to reflect on this insane year. If there's a silver lining to the pandemic, it's a renewed sense of gratitude for the genuinely good and truly important things in our lives.

I have close friends who have lost loved ones due to COVID-19. So, I'll be honest about my own life: Although 2020 has been a horrifying, destructive year overall, I don't have a lot to complain about myself. I've been very fortunate to have a healthy family, and at Friedman & Simon, we've done everything to keep us working safely. We may *think* certain things in our lives matter, but when times get tough, we realize some of them are very insignificant.

It's human nature to get caught up in the daily routine of our lives. For example, when our lives are relatively stable, we might feel irritated that a lunch order is incorrect, or that a coworker, friend, or family member reacts in a way that peeves us. But, in reality, these are fairly minimal concerns when we consider the biggest factor to our happiness: the well-being of our family.

Yes, there are important things other than family that should be of concern. For example, work. I take work very seriously, and, if I'm honest, sometimes I prioritized work over day-to-day family events. However, the impact



of COVID-19 has changed my perspective in that I ask myself: Is this what's most important right now? If it is, then I do it; if not, I allow myself to enjoy time with my family.

That's what's so powerful about gratitude. It reminds us what's really important. I'm very grateful for my family, especially my wife, Megan. She makes it possible for me to go into the office by working from home during the epidemic and simultaneously taking care of the kids — I know it's not easy. She's a prosecutor, so she does a lot of work that requires intense focus! Jumping between being a mother and being a legal professional is something that leaves me awestruck about her every single day. There's no way I could do it.

Like many families, we're looking forward to Thanksgiving a little more this year. My oldest daughter, Natalie, who is 3 years old, is old enough to understand Thanksgiving, so I'm excited to begin the holiday memories she'll take with her for the rest of her life. And personally, while I love to eat and enjoy the nostalgia behind the feast, I am going to allow

this Thanksgiving to give me an excuse to not worry about anything else going on, including work. The legal profession runs on strict make-it-or-break-it deadlines, so it is not very often that I can truly enjoy myself without thinking about work. But on Thanksgiving, nobody (not even the court) expects me to think about work, so I don't have to!

Thanksgiving buys many of us temporary peace of mind, but I've come to realize that gratitude can grant us that same peace of mind all year long. You get a warm, safe feeling when you're reunited with family and loved ones — you know everything is going to be okay because everyone is there with you. Let's not forget that feeling as we head into the new year. Happy Thanksgiving, friends.



—Michael J. Mills

MEDITATION ALTERNATIVES

For People Who Don't Like to Meditate



Meditation is lauded for its health benefits and is often suggested as an effective way to clear the mind, organize thoughts, and reduce stress. Realistically, however, it's not for everyone. In fact, some people don't experience any benefits at all from meditating.

In a recent study published in *New Scientist* about the effectiveness of meditation, researchers confirmed that some people do not benefit from meditation and that about 8% of people who try meditation experience an "unwanted effect," such as an *increase* in anxiety.

While the holiday season, "should" be joyful, it does often bring to celebrants a variety of stressors. This year, on top of all the stress 2020 has already brought to everyone, the holidays, with changes in travel and gatherings and other traditional aspects of celebration, will probably come with a very special version of 2020 holiday stress.

If you're not interested in meditation, or it just doesn't work for you, here are some alternative ways to clear your mind and reduce stress, which may be especially great habits to introduce or reinforce this holiday season.

Get serious about physical activity. Aerobic exercises — like walking, jogging, running, cycling, and swimming — are great for clearing your mind and getting your body moving. Really, any exercise that gets the heart pumping and increases your respiratory rate will do. Research supports that aerobic exercise is a great alternative to meditation that yields many of the same benefits.

Exercising outdoors or in nature — especially in new places — enhances these benefits. Because your surroundings are going to be unfamiliar, your mind is more focused, which can help if you're searching for clarity.

Stay mentally engaged. Many people achieve clarity, focus, and stress reduction through simple but engaging tasks, such as immersing themselves in an adult coloring book, doing brain teasers, crossword puzzles, or assembling LEGO sets, which proves they can be effective therapeutic tools or alternatives to meditation. The LEGO Company has actually been developing more products for adults with this sort of research in mind.

But why LEGO products specifically? In addition to being objects you touch and push together, LEGO products come with clear, step-by-step instructions, which make them easy to put together and allow you to focus more on the task at hand. Even if you don't complete the piece in one sitting, working on a project a few minutes a day can be a beneficial way to find a little clarity.

Why a Single Detail Can Make or Break Your Case



How do you tell a good lawyer from an excellent lawyer? The answer is in the details.

Last edition, we shared the story of a case where one picture was powerful enough to help our client win her case. This edition, we want to talk about how important staying alert is to your case, whether it's taking pictures to support your case or hiring the right attorney to be at your side.

Because when it comes to catching details, you need an attorney who not only pays attention, but who also understands that evidence needs to be evaluated and re-evaluated multiple times, with diverse perspectives in mind. No rock should go unturned when it comes to support for your claim — your win (and, often, health and well-being) may completely depend on it.

Even if your case seems fairly simple, you'd be shocked how many times small details can reveal life-changing facts, for better or worse. At Friedman & Simon, we've seen this scenario hundreds of times. For example, we've had cases where our client doesn't start off with the upper hand. They're often severely injured, and sometimes, at first glance, even video evidence doesn't totally support their claim. We have had cases where witnesses and the client tell us the truth about their injuries and the circumstances, but the video evidence seems to tell a different story.

What do we do when evidence and word-of-mouth don't add up? We dig deeper. We might play security video a hundred times to detect a single moving shadow, revealing an obstacle that had caused a client to fall. We will slow the video and enlarge the video in order to focus on a grouping of pixels to analyze the video frame by frame.

Sometimes, it may seem that no video exists. At Friedman and Simon, we investigate the surrounding areas. We look to see if the surrounding businesses, parking lots, and/or homes have security cameras. If they do, we investigate whether the cameras captured the events. That's why you should never leave your case to chance. Contact an experienced injury attorney at Friedman & Simon when you or a loved one is hurt. Your legal fight doesn't have to be intimidating when you have powerful help on your side.

ATTORNEYS AS PRESIDENTS — MINUS THE LAW DEGREE

Although the news has been a living nightmare for many of us, the most fun part of election year is recounting presidential facts and history. While you might know that plenty of U.S. presidents were attorneys, you might not know that some U.S. presidents were attorneys without having gone to law school at all. (Lucky them!)

WHY PRESIDENTS READ LAW.

“Reading law” refers to the act of learning law by apprenticeship (e.g., Abraham Lincoln read law before becoming an attorney). There was once a time when law school was actually a novel idea — at least in the United States, since it was a collection of colonies. Many college-educated lawyers had gained their training in England before returning to the States. The first law degree granted by a U.S. university was the College of William & Mary in 1793.

One of the most famous U.S. presidents who read law was already mentioned, Abraham Lincoln. He was truly self-taught in every way, not having gone to even elementary school. He learned nearly everything he knew while living on prairies. Many U.S. presidents had a similar passion for law and didn’t need the structured learning of law school to pursue it, including John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, James K. Polk, Millard Fillmore, James Buchanan, James A. Garfield, Grover Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, and Calvin Coolidge.



CAN YOU TAKE AN APPRENTICESHIP TODAY?

Yes! There are many advantages to learning law under a practicing attorney. For one, you don’t pay the price of law school, and you can even be paid to learn and practice. However, an extremely limited number of states will allow you to take the bar exam without law school. Currently, only California, Virginia, Vermont, and Washington have legal programs that will allow aspiring attorneys to skip law school. Here in New York, you can study under an attorney, but you need at least one year of law school under your belt.

One of the biggest challenges of reading law is that it takes an avid passion for learning to do it, even today. Not many practicing attorneys have time to offer you a curriculum to learn. Much of reading law is self-taught — that’s why we think it’s especially impressive that we have so many presidents who went through that laborious process themselves.

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SOLUTION

Luxurious Vegan Chocolate Mousse



Inspired by WellPlated.com

Making chocolate mousse with avocados may sound strange, but we promise it’s a match made in heaven! This sinfully delicious recipe is a great holiday treat.

Ingredients

- 4 oz vegan dark chocolate, chopped
- 2 large avocados, pitted and skinned
- 3 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup almond milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1-3 tsp maple syrup, to taste
- Fresh berries, for garnish

Directions

1. In a microwave-safe bowl, melt the dark chocolate. Heat in 15-second intervals, then stir and repeat until melted. Set aside to cool.
2. In a food processor or blender, combine the cooled chocolate and other ingredients. Blend until smooth and creamy, adding additional sweetener as desired.
3. Scoop into glasses and refrigerate at least 2 hours. Top with berries and serve!



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THE 11TH HOUR OF THE 11TH DAY OF THE 11TH MONTH

Why Veterans Day and the Number 11 Go Hand in Hand

Veterans Day comes every Nov. 11. It's a national holiday that recognizes veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces and honors those both living and deceased. Historically, the day marks Armistice Day and the end of the Great War: World War I. But what is the significance of the number 11?

The armistice was signed at 5:45 a.m. in France, but it took effect at 11 a.m. that same morning — which happened to be Nov. 11, 1918. The armistice originally lasted 36 days but was extended month after month. This led to the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, when peace was officially declared.

Later that year, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed that Nov. 11 would be known as Armistice Day to honor those who fought in the Great War. This lasted until 1954, when President Dwight Eisenhower signed a proclamation turning Armistice Day into Veterans Day.

The change was made in order to recognize *all* veterans who had honorably served their country. By 1954, the U.S. had fought in more wars — specifically World War II and the Korean War — and hundreds of thousands more Americans had served.

Unsurprisingly, there was some political drama surrounding the day. In 1968, Congress made Veterans Day a federal holiday under the Uniform Holiday Bill. The idea was to increase the number of three-day weekends in the year. Veterans Day became a holiday that would fall on the fourth Monday of October, a far cry from Nov. 11.

However, in 1978, Veterans Day was restored to its original Nov. 11 date. But why?

The answer is simple. It's a number that sticks with you. When the clock strikes 11:11, you *always* take notice. By that same notion, we all remember the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. Because of this, we'll never forget the end of the Great War, nor will we forget those who served.

