

## I Was Never Afraid of Public Speaking — Thanks to My Mom

### *A Tribute to My Biggest Inspiration*

It turns out that International Women's Day is in March, and when I think of a woman who deserves all the credit in the world, I definitely think of my mom.

As kids, we don't assume we're learning major life lessons along the way. Yet, under my mother's wing, I learned just how important a positive attitude can be.

I could've assumed it was mainly her work ethic that kept her going at first. She started her own business as a property manager for large scale associations and communities, which were essentially mini cities in Arizona. She'd meet with the associations' board of directors and elected officials all the time.

In fact, I didn't realize people were normally afraid of public speaking until I was older. I'd seen my mom do it so comfortably and confidently that it never crossed my mind to be afraid of doing that. She had a wonderful way of weaving in information without being intimidating so anyone could understand what she was saying. Nobody ever felt excluded when she spoke. (That's definitely helped me as an attorney.)

She had a big job and did it very well, yet she was always present in our lives. We used to go with our dad to Borders (remember that book store?) and sit in the coffee shop until my mom's meeting was over. Then, we'd all run to get dinner. My mom always strategically planned it so the family was always together, from when we got out of school to when we went to bed. And when we'd get up in the morning, she'd be there in her home office. She's a real work-life balance mastermind.

As I grew older, I realized it was much more than her work ethic that kept my mom strong — it was also her incredible, positive attitude for life. She maintained her business while married with two kids and kept going strong even as her husband (my dad) was dying of cancer.



Those years were rough. She was under a lot of pressure and never buckled. I can't tell you how inspirational that is to our family today. I thank God every time that she had such a smart, strong head on her shoulders. If she didn't know how to make a living, my trajectory in life would've been very different. My mom allowed me to do things I needed to do to overcome grief, get an education, and exceed in life. If there were more pressure on me to support the family, it would've been much tougher to become an attorney and finish law school.

Honestly, it was a really cool experience to see my mom working while growing up. We were friendly with the employees and saw adults interact in a professional setting all the time. You could say my professional mannerisms were ingrained early on!

My mom doesn't always get the credit she deserves, but I hope this article (once she sees it!) helps serve that purpose a little more. Thank you so much, Mom, for always being an inspiration.



*-Michael J. Mills*

# IMPROVE YOUR ATTENTION SPAN



Since the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world last year, many things have gotten shorter, like school days and our patience. But perhaps the main thing that's grown shorter for all of us is our attention spans.

In 2019, researchers from the Technical University of Denmark reported that our collective attention span is indeed narrowing — and it may be because we're bombarded with tons of information that we don't want to "miss out" on, whether we're scrolling through Facebook or finding new videos on YouTube.

Unfortunately, a poor attention span can affect us in many ways. It may impact our performance at school or work or cause communication difficulties in relationships. It may even result in poor health related to self-neglect and an inability to practice healthy habits.

How do you fix it? Is it even possible to improve your attention span? Yes, you can! But it will take time. Here are a few ways you can get started.

**First, accept that you may make yourself a little mentally uncomfortable while expanding your attention span.** It simply won't feel natural to focus on a single task for a longer period of time than normal, but, with a routine, it'll get more comfortable as time goes on.

**Second, give the Pomodoro method a try.** Named after a tomato-shaped timer that its creator used, the Pomodoro method has gained a lot of attention over the years as a brain workout, and it's a great way to slowly expand your attention span while accomplishing tasks.

To get started, think of a small task. Then, set a timer to 25 minutes (or longer, if your attention span will allow). Work on your task for 25 minutes straight. Then, take a five-minute break. After the break, repeat the process. After four rounds, take a break of 15–20 minutes.

Congratulations, you've used the Pomodoro method, which you can repeat as many times as you want. It's very handy for getting your tasks finished in a flash, despite any attention span issues!

**Third, meditate, work out, or adopt new educational interests.** Anything that keeps your brain, body, and spirit engaged can help you learn how to focus better. There's plenty of research that shows the benefits of meditation and exercise to your focus — the trick is exploration. Not every form of meditation, exercise routine, or hobby will work for you, so don't give up right away! Stay curious and keep exploring.

We're living in a technological age where we can learn almost anything and reach almost anyone at the tap of a button, so we have to learn how to create opportunities for ourselves. We hope these tips help you get started!

# Renters Tip: Always Give Your Landlord Written Notice



One aspect of injury law is maintenance gone wrong or simply did not occur in a tenant's apartment, and that neglect caused injury to the tenant. New York courts have held that in order for the landlord to be responsible for an accident caused by a defect in a tenant's apartment, the landlord must have "actual notice" or "constructive notice" of the defect before the accident occurred. This article focuses on "actual notice," and provides tips for tenants on how to ensure that a maintenance issue is properly documented. If you've reported a maintenance issue beforehand, great! But if you can't prove you did, it can cause real issues with your case.

Let's say a faulty oven caused an injury, but you spoke to the landlord about the defective oven before the accident. How can we prove that this conversation happened? Did the landlord document this conversation? Was a workorder created? Even if a workorder was created, did the landlord keep a copy? There are steps that you, as a tenant, can take to ensure that there is proof that a defect in your apartment was reported (or any other issue with a landlord for that matter).

In our experience, many landlords have faulty or non-existent filing systems for recording your face-to-face complaints and even complaints made by telephone. It should always be assumed by the tenant, that the person who took your complaint (who may or may not still work for the landlord when this issue is raised) might've not recorded it properly.

So, consider writing an email to go along with your call. **Whatever you do, as a tenant, get a written, official form of your maintenance notice.**

There are huge benefits to making sure you have the "receipt" of every interaction with your landlord and your repair requests. In one of our recent cases, the client did everything right. She had an issue with the floorboard, filed complaint, received a work order, and confirmed issues through email. When the work was not completed, she followed up through email, and eventually, she took it to landlord tenant court, and then the court gave an order that the landlord **must** repair the floorboards. But they didn't — and the client injured her knee one morning through the same very floorboard.

We had so much evidence to prove the landlord was in the wrong.

Nobody could deny it! It was the perfect scenario, and it played an important part in the excellent result that we were ultimately able to win for our client.

Nobody knows when the worst could happen, but we can ensure we're prepared in case it does. From everyone at Friedman & Simon, we hope you stay safe this month!

# HOW TO TRAIN YOUR BRAIN TO BE MORE OPTIMISTIC



Even in the legal field, optimism is a key tool to success and bouncing back from challenges that can intimidate or knock us down. But how can you remain optimistic when it feels like everything is so ... flawed?

You might have met certain bubbly people in your life and become convinced that optimism is simply an inherited trait. You're not wrong — optimism is only about 25% inheritable from our parents and early childhood environments. The rest is up to us.

Seeking out personal purpose is a great place to start, says Leah Weiss, Ph.D. and Stanford professor specializing in mindfulness in the workplace: "When we work with purpose or live with purpose, we feel more fulfilled and better equipped to see the glass half-full."

That's only one component to becoming more optimistic, though. Many experts also believe the real difference between optimists and pessimists isn't in their level of happiness or how they perceive scenarios, but in how they cope with successes and failures.

This means the first step toward optimism isn't ignoring negative events but, instead, acknowledging them as temporary. Optimists avoid putting

too much blame on themselves, accept setbacks as momentary, and expect positive events in the future.

It might feel uncomfortable to make these conscious changes to our thought process because we may be working against the natural way our brain is wired. Research shows that negative and positive thinking occur in distinct parts of our brain, and we can fall into habitual thought patterns.

The researcher responsible for these findings is Dr. Davidson, director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin. And he has good news: It's possible to rewire your brain.

In one study, workers in high-stress environments were given mindfulness meditation training up to three hours a week, and it made a promising difference in how these workers responded to negative events. They were able to change how they responded to their experiences.

An easy mindfulness meditation is a simple breathing exercise: Inhale over five seconds, hold your breath for five seconds, then exhale for five seconds. Studies show it biologically forces your blood pressure to come down in response to breathing more fully.

By practicing mindfulness meditation and consciously choosing to process negative events in a different way, you can train your brain for a more content, positive outlook on life!

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SOLUTION

## Green Goddess Smoothie



Inspired by AmbitiousKitchen.com

If you're looking to get your green on, why not try this light smoothie?

### Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1 1/2 cups fresh organic spinach
- 1 organic apple, peeled and chopped
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 medium frozen banana
- 1/2 medium avocado

### Directions

1. In a large, high-powered blender, add in all ingredients.
2. Blend on high for 1-2 minutes, or until all ingredients are well combined.
3. If necessary, add in more almond milk to thin the smoothie.
4. Serve immediately and enjoy!



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## GET YOUR SEASONAL ALLERGIES BEFORE THEY GET YOU!

Spring brings with it many wonderful things, like longer days, picturesque scenery, and spring break, but right alongside those good things is something most people suffer from: allergies. While beautiful, the blooming trees and flowers make you want to stay away from the great outdoors for fear of nonstop sneezing or puffy, watery eyes. If you suffer from allergies caused by pollen, grass, or other spring plants, take these steps to breathe a little easier.

When outside, avoid walking through areas with weeds, shrubbery, or lots of trees as much as possible. Grass and weeds are notably problematic. The slightest breeze can send particles flying through the air in the blink of an eye. When you walk through grassy areas, pollen will get on you, your clothes, and your hair. It's best to stick to trails, sidewalks, and other paved areas.

If you do find yourself inundated with pollen or other allergens, your next best bet is to establish an at-home decontamination protocol. Take your shoes off at the door and make sure your clothes don't come in contact with soft surfaces such as carpet, upholstery, or bedding. Take care to wash your "pollinated" clothes as soon as possible and wash your sheets and pillowcases weekly. Next, head for the shower. The sooner you can wash away the allergens, the better.



Finally, don't forget to replace the air filter in your home's air system in the spring. Consider using an air filter designed to capture allergens. If your allergies are particularly troublesome, invest in a dedicated air filtration system or unit. While you can opt for portable, stand-alone air purifiers, there are larger systems that can be incorporated into your heating and air system that keep your entire home's air free from most, if not all, common allergens.