



## **BOOK REVIEW: "The Lawyer's Guide to Balancing Life and Work" by George W Kaufman; Reviewed by Sylvia Low**

George W Kaufman wrote "The Lawyers Guide to Balancing Life & Work" to help lawyers achieve personal and professional satisfaction in their chosen careers. A lawyer with 40 years of practice experience in a large US law firm, Mr Kaufman describes how the legal profession has evolved over the last five years. He provides the reader with philosophical and practical advice in reconciling their expectations with the harsh realities and unrelenting demands of legal practice today.

While work pressures are part and parcel of professional life in almost every field of commercial endeavour today, many lawyers readily admit to difficulty in coping with ever increasing stress levels, and to feelings of disillusionment and isolation from community and self. This is where Kaufman's book is most useful - to help lawyers recognise burnout; and then to bring about positive changes in outlook and achieve balance.

Kaufman draws richly from his own experience of legal practice to illustrate his points. He does not engage in anti-legal profession rhetoric. Instead, Kaufman argues that by becoming habitualised to patterns of thought and behaviour that creates a conflict between our inner life and our outer professional one, we harm ourselves most in the end.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part invites you to trace your history from childhood to the status you currently occupy in your professional life. Through a series of exercises, Kaufman helps you to understand how and in what ways you are a product of your upbringing and environmental influences. This part of the book will help you appreciate who, why and what you are, at home and at work - as an essential first step towards self discovery. Only by knowing who you are and what gives you deepest satisfaction - can you begin to understand the disconnect between your spiritual goals and your outer life.

The second part of the book invites you to reflect on the positive and negative influences from your professional life and how it impacts on your daily interactions and choices. Through these reflections, you can identify the sources of stress and conflict; and begin to develop tools and strategies to cope with them. More importantly, Kaufman argues persuasively that making space for creativity and passion in your professional life yields enormous emotional rewards.

The third part of the book is encapsulated by Kaufman's statement - to discover "*how the law fits in you, not how you fit in the law.*" After reflecting on your inner person as the key to finding out what you need in order to bring meaning back into your professional life, the final chapters on self-empowerment is written to motivate a personal action plan for self-actualisation. This call to action may entail changing the way you practice; the area of law or type of practice specialisation you are engaged in; or even leaving legal practice altogether. All it takes is the wisdom of self-understanding and the courage to change.

Kaufman himself admits that self-directed change is the hardest to undertake, but lawyers who are deeply unhappy with the stress-filled and unsatisfying professional lives they now lead will do well to take up the challenge offered by Kaufman before change is forced upon them by death, disease or divorce.

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***"The Lawyer's Guide to Balancing Life and Work" by George W. Kaufman is available on loan from Bizibody Technology – Call 6236 2848***

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