



A REPORT TO MEMBERS OF
THE SOUTH CAROLINA BAR
YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION

At the Base of the Mountain: Looking Forward to Lifelong Learning



By Crawford Krebs,
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After taking the LSAT, being admitted to law school, surviving 1L finals, attending virtual classes during a pandemic, enduring the agony of bar prep, and finally being sworn in, I felt like I had *done it*. I had mastered law. I had climbed the mountain and could face any legal challenge that arose, equipped with immense knowledge acquired through years of toil.

Imagine my shock and dismay when I discovered—shortly after starting at Murphy and Grantland—that I hadn’t conquered the practice of law quite yet. In fact, I knew almost nothing about how to practice law. Sure, I could recite the Rule Against Perpetuities (without understanding it), but surprisingly that didn’t prepare me for interacting with a client or arguing a motion. There was a much larger, and much more daunting, mountain ahead of me.

Shortly after this troubling revelation, an attorney at my firm gave me one of the best pieces of advice I have ever received: “Commit to lifelong learning.” In the practice of law there is an ever-expanding and ever-evolving body of jurisprudence to learn, and that doesn’t even begin to touch on the ‘soft skills’ like client and case management or interacting with opposing counsel. There is that mountain looming ahead of you. What seems at first glance like an obvious statement, “you should try to keep learning throughout your life,” becomes a mindset that can alter the entire way you approach your career. Committing to lifelong learning is not just the art of climbing that mountain; it is finding joy in the Sisyphean nature of the task.

There are three principles of learning which I have found particularly helpful:



1. Treat Everything as a Learning Opportunity

When you approach the legal profession with the attitude of lifelong learning, you start to see every piece of work as an opportunity to learn and to grow. This principle can be summed up in one word: “curiosity.” Consider yourself to be a scientist, testing different hypotheses and experimenting to see what works best. Soon you will start to see that there is a lesson to be learned in almost every piece of work product that you produce. Even in the most routine tasks you complete, search for the details that can be perfected in every case.

This principle is especially helpful in a stressful and challenging profession like the practice of law because it allows you to be less critical of your mistakes or shortcomings. Errors cease to be failures; they become ways to grow and improve. A lack of knowledge in a particular area doesn’t mean you aren’t capable; it means that you have new territory to explore.

2. Focus on the Process

We work in a profession where there are a lot of variables that are out of our control. This requires us to focus on the process rather than the outcome. Focusing on the outcome can lead us to the false belief that

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our work was either genius or abysmal based solely on the result of that work. Focusing on the process allows us to dial in on the work product itself, which helps us avoid the temptation to congratulate ourselves on dumb luck or criticize ourselves for something beyond our control. Of course, looking at the outcome can be helpful in evaluating the process, but we must remain mindful of the factors that could lead to results not always reflecting the quality of our work.

3. Ask Good Questions and Welcome Feedback

We often hesitate to ask questions out of a fear of asking a “dumb question,” but asking questions is essential. I’m not advocating that we fire off every minor query that we may have with reckless abandon. Think through the issue, do your own research, and spend time formulating the question that will be the most helpful for you moving forward. Think of ways to make the questions you ask helpful not only for the issue at hand, but for your continual learning process.

One of the most important things we can ask for is feedback. As much as we would like to believe that we can objectively and rationally evaluate our own work, we can’t. There are countless studies on human bias that could be cited here but suffice it to say that having someone else give you honest feedback is crucial. Having someone challenge us and point out the mistakes in our blind spots gives us the ability to improve in ways that we never could alone. Doing this requires us to find others that we trust to give us feedback and then having thick skin and accepting the constructive criticism. This is much easier when you view feedback as something that will help you grow.

After implementing these principles in my own practice, I have found the mountain ahead to no longer be daunting, but exciting. Though it’s impossible to completely eliminate stress or hardship, making a commitment to enjoy learning means that there is a bright side even in the most challenging of work. We have long careers ahead of us. The mountain may be large, and the path may be challenging, but I hope we can look forward to the climb.

What’s Been Happening?



The Young Lawyers Division and Professional Responsibility Committee jointly presented to SC Bar members on how to ethically use social media for advertising purposes.



Students at Meadow Glenn Middle School enjoyed the Protecting Our Youth Through Legal Education panel.



The 2023 SC Legal Feeding Frenzy was a huge success. Thanks to the generosity of our bar members more than \$13,000 was raised. A special shout out goes to the overall winner and recipient of the President’s Cup, Burnette Shutt & McDaniel, PA.



Top, above: In March, YLD members collaborated with Habitat for Humanity by hosting a Wills Clinic for new homeowners.

YLD representatives at the Families Forever Fair on February 25 at Charleston County Public Library.

Letter from the President



Dear Young Lawyers:

It's hard to believe we are approaching the halfway mark of 2023! The YLD has been very busy the past four months hosting incredible events and programming for young lawyers and our communities. We hosted Cinderella Projects across the state (and our very first Prince Charming Project in Greenville), launched the annual Legal Feeding Frenzy food drive, held a family night at a Charleston Stingrays hockey game, and teamed up with the Bar's Professional Responsibility Committee to put on an Ethics CLE addressing allowable social media use under the Rules of Professional Conduct—to name a few.

I continue to be impressed with our members on a daily basis! Thank you for leading the way in both planning, and attending programs meant to make you a better lawyer and projects that make our community a better place to live and raise families. Although the Bar year is over in a couple of months, the YLD has no intention of slowing down. Rather, we are just hitting our stride. Be on the lookout for the YLD announcements emails, which provide all the information you need about our upcoming events and happenings.

In last quarter's "SC Young Lawyer" I briefly touched on the importance of taking care of oneself and taking time to relax around the holidays, which can be particularly hectic. While I certainly believe the holiday season and new year can be a uniquely stressful time, I've come to realize I have been operating under a much higher level of stress ever since the pandemic started, and I suspect many of you feel this way too. Recent studies have shown that lawyers between the ages of 26 to 35 experience the highest burnout rate. Young lawyers also experience the highest rates of depression and problematic alcohol use. We must prioritize our mental, emotional and physical well-beings—take time off; set boundaries; spend time with friends and family; exercise; get fresh air; make sure to get enough sleep; drink plenty of water; and talk to someone about how you're feeling, whether it's a colleague, friend, family member or professional.

As members of the South Carolina Bar, we are fortunate to have access to services like Lawyers Helping Lawyers ("LHL")—a free and confidential

resource for lawyers experiencing challenges with substance abuse, mental health and/or stress-related issues affecting their professional and personal lives. When you contact LHL, you will talk with an LHL team member who will direct you to the appropriate service to help you deal effectively with your particular challenges. LHL provides access to resources such as peer support, mental health and wellness CLEs, and recovery support, among others. To learn more about LHL services, call 866-545-9590 or visit www.scbar.org/LHL.

The LHL program offers all Bar members up to five free counseling sessions per year. Attorneys interested in utilizing the free counseling sessions should call 1-(855)-321-4384 to be referred to a counselor in their area for help with any issue that diminishes their productivity and/or quality of life. The referral line is accessible 24 hours a day/seven days a week.

I am grateful to be a part of a bar that is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of its members and prioritizes lawyer wellness by providing services like LHL, educating Bar members about wellness issues and resources, and promoting programs in the areas of physical fitness, nutrition, mindfulness, social engagement and mental health.

I truly love the practice of law, but it can really take a toll on one's well-being. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you are struggling or if you suspect a colleague may be struggling. No matter what you may be going through, there are members of this community—Bar members and Bar staff—who care about you and will do whatever they can to provide the help and support you need. Take care of yourself, check on your loved ones and colleagues, and look out for one another's well-being. As always, I am here to serve and assist you, so do not hesitate to contact me by email (PCOrnduff@gwblawfirm.com) or phone (843-414-8114) to get involved with the YLD or share comments, questions or concerns.

Warmest regards,

Paige Chamberlain Ornduff
YLD President
Gallivan, White & Boyd, PA
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YLD members assisted young women in saying "yes to the dress" with the Midlands Cinderella Project.

Stars of the Quarter

Shelby Herbskerman

Ryan Pasquini

Samantha Albrecht

Renee Ballew

Hanna Lapp

Phylicia Coleman

Taylor Owens

Megan Feltham

Lucius Laffitte

Ashley Johnson

Kelley Leddy

Jessica Ferguson

Adair Patterson