As we learn mindfulness, we will drop in on the experiences, thoughts, feelings, and sensations of seven fictional law students who attended a mindfulness presentation at law school.

**Alex** is a motivated and proactive 1L. A hard worker, she is productive and enjoys law school, although the intense pace leaves her feeling anxious at times. While her anxiety is not debilitating, she frequently experiences an uncomfortable tightening in her chest, tension in her shoulders, and shortness of breath. None of this is new, and she attributes it all being a Type-A person. Alex learned at the workshop that mindfulness can be helpful for anxiety, and she is keen to learn techniques for becoming less anxious.

**Rick**, in his second year, is passionate about human right’s law. He has received constructive criticism on how his bursts of anger could compromise the quality of his advocacy. None of this is news to him; he is aware that he tends to become frustrated and angry when things do not go his way…but cannot seem to help himself. Rick is hopeful that mindfulness can help him cool the flames of his anger so he can be a more effective advocate and not push people away.

**Shanice** has a job lined up with her dream law firm. The only things left to do are writing a few papers and passing the bar exam. Even though she is a superstar, feelings of doubt have always gnawed at her. She feels good about herself with each success, but then inevitably worries about whether she can keep it up. The bar exam weighs heavily on her. She does not want to let down her parents, and is afraid that if she does not pass, the firm will not want her anymore. She frequently wakes up in the middle of the night unable to fall back asleep. Shanice hopes that mindfulness can help build confidence and get a better night’s sleep.

**Junko** was introduced to meditation as a teenager. Her mother, who had been injured on a ski trip, had learned mindfulness mediation to help with chronic pain. Junko always found it a bit hokey, but her mother said it helped. Although she did not meditate in college, the mindfulness presentation brought back fond memories of spending quiet time with her mother. Now in her second year, Junko feels like she is in constant motion and unable to slow down. She easily gets bored and restless, and then ends up busily doing something—anything—just to feel like she is getting something done. Exhausted, she hopes to reclaim the ability to settle down and feel a little calmer.

**Bobby** is a 2L with plans to become a public defender. They describe themself as going with the flow and taking things in stride, but as also easily distracted. Bobby becomes bored easily, whether in class, while studying, or when working on an assignment. Having heard that mindfulness can help improve focus, Bobby wants to see if it can help them stay on task longer.
Darius is one of the best-liked students in the school—funny and always willing to help classmates. The excitement that brought Darius to law school waned in his second year, and while he is motivated by the prospects of a successful career, he has also felt a lack of purpose. Feelings of sadness and even despair have been popping up and sapping his energy, and some mornings he has trouble getting out of bed. Darius sees how excited his classmates are to graduate and wonders if something is wrong with him. His interest was piqued when he learned about mindfulness potentially helping with depression.

Fareed cannot get enough of law school. His 1L year is all he hoped it would be. He loves his classes, admires his teachers, and respects his classmates. Having taken a few years off before law school, he knows he is there to learn, not to impress. Fareed studies hard, comes to class prepared, and feels like he is on top of things. At the same time, he sometimes finds himself feeling overwhelmed from the weight of all of the work. To keep up, he often sacrifices sleep, exercise, and spending time with friends—which generally leaves him even more stressed and exhausted. Fareed is interested in seeing if mindfulness might help him find a little more balance, as the all-work approach is taking its toll with the semester barely yet begun.

Do you connect with any of these students and their interest in mindfulness? If so, there is a good chance the practice of mindfulness will be helpful to you. If you found yourself relating to all of the students in one way or another, you are not alone. Anxiety, distraction, anger, insomnia, sadness, and overwhelm are all part of the human experience. While mindfulness is not some miracle cure or panacea, it can be helpful in each of the areas raised above.

What Alex, Bobby, Shanice, Junko, Fareed, Rick and Darius may not yet realize is that in addition to the benefits they hope to receive from mindfulness training, they will also benefit in other ways. While this book addresses the practical concerns of finding emotional balance and success in the law, it was not written solely for these reasons. For any problem or concern mentioned above, you can find another approach with targeted treatments to help find relief. But consider the possibility that many of the ubiquitous maladies in our culture can be addressed at a deeper level, one that gets closer to the root.

Mindfulness taps into this possibility and the tools and insights you will learn can be applied across a wide range of situations that will come your way. The saying that “you can’t change the waves, but you can learn to surf” is a mindfulness lesson that points in this direction. Also, mindfulness practice can elevate and enrich even those aspects of your life that are already going well.
Like you, these students will be learning to surf the waves of life—and of law school. As you follow their experiences, you will learn with them and have an opportunity to apply their lessons and practices to your own life. To maximize the benefits this opportunity provides, play as active a role as you can. This involves field testing what you learn—in the day-to-day circumstances of your own life—and developing a regular mindfulness practice. Doing so will take time and commitment, and you may feel resistance. What will see you through is leadership. Not the leadership of a teacher, the author of this book, an attorney mentor, or even a wise friend, but the self-leadership that is yours alone to claim.
Chapter One

Leadership

Lawyers are leaders. Sometimes this leadership role is apparent: consider the managing partner of a law firm, the president of a corporation, or a member of the student senate. At other times—especially during emergencies—the need for a courageous and steady hand can suddenly and spontaneously arise. Here people often surprise themselves and others with their leadership and inspirational capacities.

You are a leader. And you are entering a profession that calls for high-level leadership across many domains of influence, from the client meeting to the courtroom, and from the boardroom to the chambers of Congress. At stake are matters ranging from the affairs of individuals to local, societal, and even global concerns.

It may well be that you have not yet taken on any discrete leadership roles—at least none traditionally viewed as being such. But if you take a more granular look, you will likely recognize some of the ways in which you are already leading others. For example, you may share ideas and lend moral support to friends and family to help them make decisions or solve problems.

At bottom, leadership requires decision making, and as lawyers we are continually making decisions that greatly impact not just our own lives, but the lives of others. At the very heart of being a lawyer we find the attorney-client relationship, which necessitates a complex and nuanced form of leadership. Consider the following conversation with Lee, a longtime client and founder of a family-run business. Lee urgently requested a meeting with his attorney after learning that a competitor’s deceptive ad campaign had significantly hurt his company’s bottom line and was causing ongoing damage to its reputation.

* * *

Lee: I can’t believe this is happening! These ads are lies and they need to stop. Not tomorrow, but today—now!

—I’m really sorry, Lee. Is it possible for me to see the…

Lee: See the ads? Just turn on the TV! Who knows when they’ll broadcast next? And that’s the point. I need you to take action…immediately! Can’t you see that this can ruin us? We’re not a deep-pocket national conglomerate.
—Let me call in my assistant, Kenny, to start tracking down what’s going on…

Lee: Go ahead and do that, but make sure you stay on top of this. I didn’t hire Kenny. I hired you.

—Was this ad a surprise to you?

Lee: What a nightmare! When I see my neighbors, they think we’re cruel employers and some of my best employees have quit. When’s the next shoe going to drop? Just getting them to stop isn’t enough—they have to make good for all we’ve lost! I just can’t believe this is happening.

—I understand. Was it an out of the blue surprise or did it come from somewhere?

Lee: I just told you it was a nightmare—yes it was a surprise! This isn’t the first time this has happened and you’re supposed to be here to protect us and avoid these kind of things in the first place. What are we supposed to do? Sorry, I don’t mean to take this out on you. I’m just so outraged, I can’t help myself! What do we do next? What do we do now?

* * *
Client meetings run the gamut from enjoyable and celebratory to straightforward and pragmatic, from challenging and frustrating to satisfying and healing. Mindful lawyers understand what makes their clients tick. Whatever the matter—whether it involves responding to a simple question, helping negotiate a promising business venture, or defending against a corporate blunder—clients, like all of us, have desires and emotions, and can become upset and confused.

Lee, in the above conversation, is clearly angry, wants prompt action, and is uncertain about what happens next. The mindful lawyer understands this. Even more, she appreciates that Lee is also anxious, scared, and overwhelmed. She knows that Lee’s push for action may be motivated as much by wanting to feel relief from emotional and physical overwhelm as by a desire to protect the business. And she knows that Lee is likely confused, which can exacerbate the spiraling of emotions, prompt unreasonable demands and expectations, and make it difficult to have a productive discussion.

For the mindful attorney, this is all par for the course. Truly effective lawyering—along with involving legal competence—involves attuning to the client’s inner world. When this happens, communication is strong and trust flourishes: clients feel heard, are less guarded, and are better able to understand the significance of questions and advice.

Depending on the specific client and matter (and even the time of day), these and many other
skills can be called upon and adapted in real time. Rather than have a pre-packaged solution for every situation, a mindful attorney possesses sufficient wisdom and compassion to be responsive to the needs of the moment. There are times to listen and times to speak. Times to act and times to pause. Times to join in with the client’s righteous outrage and times to hold the emotional center steady.

You already possess many of the skills required to navigate this complex terrain of personality, pain, and perspective. Yet most of us can develop these skills even further, especially in the domains we find most challenging. Some of us can benefit by becoming more comfortable being on the receiving end of anger, or experiencing another’s panic with equanimity; the challenge might be understanding how to manage the disappointment and sadness of others. Or our task may involve learning how to stay focused on what a client is saying when they are saying so much so quickly.

Although these aspects of mindful lawyering may at first appear to be focused on the client, the true focus is on turning inward. For the ability to size up a client and notice what they are experiencing—to keep attuned to their needs while remaining the wise and steady counsel they are counting on—involves attending to yourself in much the same way. Just as the client has needs and emotions, and can be upset and confused, you may often find yourself in the same boat.

Did you notice the U-turn we just made, shifting the focus from leading a third party to leading oneself—to self-leadership?

**Mindful Lawyering and Self-Awareness**

Take a few breaths…and a few moments…to consider your experience as Lee’s attorney. What needs might you have? You no doubt want to offer good advice and help solve Lee’s problem. How about your desire to please Lee or have him think you are smart? And then there is the ever-present financial need of keeping Lee as a client.

What emotions and feelings might this experience have evoked for you? Perhaps the emotional contagion of Lee’s fear? Perhaps frustration, or defensiveness in what you perceived to be an attack on you? And if in this situation you would be uncertain or confused (and why wouldn’t you be?), how might your own state of uncertainty further influenced your wants and emotions? And how might being pulled into this reactive state affect the quality of your legal services, not to mention your own well-being?

In this way, the mindful lawyer is as attuned to themselves and their internal experience as they are to their client’s. To really know another person—to have the capacity to connect with their
experience—and to meaningfully size up the external factors and conditions at play, it is crucial to have the self-awareness to not just see the big picture, but to be able to manage it. This calls for leadership: managing your clients in real time—helping them see things more clearly—while also managing yourself through the ups and downs of the many client (and personal) relationships you will experience during your one precious lifetime and career in the law.

The mindful lawyer is also able to manage the great volume of work that crosses their desk, keep track of deadlines, efficiently gather and organize facts, maintain a steady focus when reviewing materials and listening to clients and witnesses, and present information in a cogent and accessible way to different audiences. Even more, the mindful lawyer is able to experience joy and satisfaction at even the most challenging and stressful of times.

It is not hard to imagine a successful businessperson becoming less effective when overwhelmed and confronted with unexpected and disturbing events. Similarly, smart and caring lawyers can succumb to the pressures and stresses of their work, client relations, court decisions, and personal lives. Add into this mix the inherently adversarial and often hostile climate of law practice, and it is understandable why performance can suffer, well-being can become compromised, and the satisfaction of practicing law can become a distant memory. (Whether glimpsed within yourself or within your classmates’ lives, you may have already experienced some of this dynamic in law school.)

**Self-Leadership**

As CEO of Medtronic, Bill George evolved this midsize heart-device maker into one of the world's largest medical technology corporations. In 2018, Medtronic was the number one ranked medical device company in the world based on total revenue. Today, George is a senior fellow at Harvard Business School where he has taught since 2004. One of the world’s most respected business leaders, he has authored over seven books on leadership and has received numerous awards honoring his vision and integrity.

In “Mindful Leadership: Compassion, Contemplation and Meditation Develop Effective Leaders,” published in 2010 in The European Financial Review, George bemoans the lapse of leadership in some of the world’s most powerful companies, and the concomitant plummeting of public trust in business and political leaders. He attributes lapses in leadership to a lack of self-awareness, and points to mindfulness as a means to develop greater self-awareness. Speaking for himself, he notes:

I have meditated regularly for more than thirty years, not as a religious or spiritual practice, but as a personal discipline to relieve stress. Meditation has been the single most important thing I have done to improve my leadership. It has helped me...
become more self-aware and more compassionate toward myself and others. It has also enabled me to remain calm and clear-thinking in the face of pressure and uncertainty.

Reflect for a few moments on what being “self-aware” means to you. The cultivation of greater self-awareness is a central feature of many wisdom traditions and a core component of emotional intelligence. Yet it can often be easier to objectively observe, assess, analyze, and problem solve issues than to apply a similar type of inquiry to ourselves. Janice Marturano, author of *Finding the Space to Lead: A Practice Guide to Mindful Leadership* (2015), writes:

> We are not very good at acknowledging the difficulties in our lives, but quite good at denying and ignoring those parts of our lives that are painful.

Indeed, we sometimes shy away from the very information that can help us better understand ourselves—our motivations, decisions, and actions—and the thoughts and feelings that influence them. As George writes:

> In the process of becoming more self-aware, leaders learn to accept their weaknesses, failures, and vulnerabilities, just as they appreciate their strengths and successes. In so doing, they gain compassion for themselves and the ability to relate to the world around them in authentic ways. This frees them from the need to adopt pretenses to impress other people. In understanding themselves and who they are at a deeper level, people learn how to reframe their failures and negative experiences into positive growth opportunities.

In emphasizing the value of self-awareness, George is pointing to the importance of self-leadership as our capacity to lead others is inevitably constrained by the limitations we have in leading ourselves.

Paul S. Singerman, a business law attorney who specializes in restructuring corporations, was flipping through The New York Times Sunday Business Section when something caught his eye, an article that would meaningfully changed his life and the lives of many members of the legal profession. Chade-Meng Tan, an engineer who was among Google’s first employees, had been bitten by the mindfulness bug and written an influential bestseller with the catchy title *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace)* (2012).

Singerman was so taken with The New York Times assessment of the book that he invited Meng (as he likes to be called) to speak at the Berger Singerman law firm’s annual “Business Talk” event. Attended by the firm’s attorneys, clients, and family members, the annual event is an
opportunity to express gratitude to firm members and clients, and to have thoughtful conversations about business conditions and topics of public importance.

Shortly after the event—and again two years later—Berger Singerman offered a series of mindfulness trainings to all firm members and their family. Singerman himself has since become a prominent voice and speaker for mindfulness in the law nationwide and we will learn more about his approach to listening in Chapter 11. A nuts and bolts pragmatist, here is an excerpt from him on the connection between self-awareness and leadership from “The Return on Investment from my Study and Practice of Mindfulness,” which he wrote for the Florida Bar Journal’s 2016 Special Mindfulness Issue:

Perhaps one of the most valuable benefits from the study and practice of mindfulness that I have enjoyed is developing a greater awareness of when I am off task. I have found it immensely useful—and sometimes absolutely frightening—to be aware of when I am regretting the past or worrying about the future. Only with the enhanced awareness of when I am not in the present can I make an effort to return to the present—the only place I can make a difference and the place that contains all the data—free for the observation of it—that allows me to be more knowledgeable and powerful in advancing my mission.

**Mindful Leadership**

There are many points of natural connection between mindfulness and leadership. To begin with, the series of mindfulness practices found over the course of this book will serve you as a reliable means of cultivating greater self-awareness. Therefore, one of your first self-leadership challenges involves leading yourself to develop an ongoing personal practice. In practicing mindfulness, you lead yourself through the challenging and fascinating terrain of your own inner experience. For it is through this inner journey—one that very much also embraces the outer world—that self-awareness and the qualities that flow from wisdom and compassion are borne.

Bear in mind the two-way relationship between mindfulness and leadership. As Bill George notes:

Meditation is the best thing I have ever done to calm myself and separate from the 24/7 connected world. By centering into myself, I can focus my attention on the important things, develop an inner sense of well-being, and gain clarity in making decisions. My most creative ideas come from meditating, and meditation has built resilience to deal with difficult times. No doubt it has helped me become a better leader.
Here George establishes the ways that meditation has helped him become a better leader. Taking the time to sit and meditate directly requires self-leadership. In “The Power of Mindful Leadership,” published in the Harvard Business Review, George concludes with this tip:

The best time to start a mindful practice is now; but don’t take the word “practice” lightly. Maintaining the self-discipline of your practice isn’t easy. To become a mindful leader, you need to make this a daily introspective act. As you do so, you’ll worry less about day-to-day problems and focus on what’s most important. As you become more mindful, you will be a more effective, successful and fulfilled leader. That’s worth 20 minutes a day, isn’t it?

You probably agree with Professor George that 20 minutes a day would be worth it. But as you may know from your own experience, wishing it so doesn’t make it so. As we embark on the journey of learning more about mindfulness and engaging in regular periods of practice, you will find there to be times when practice comes easy and others when you experience an impulse—sometimes irresistible—to resist practice.

A less appreciated aspect of self-leadership is self-compassion. In anticipation of this important subject, try not to be hard on yourself as you embark upon the path of mindfulness. It is far more important that you clearly see—and remain curious and interested in—your own path than it is for you to judge it. The former is the basis of self-awareness. The latter can all too quickly descend into self-criticism, self-doubt, and self-deception.

**Leading Yourself to Practice**

This book and the mindfulness training program it sets forth can point the way, but it is up to you to take charge and lead yourself. While skillful leadership may entail gathering the information necessary to evaluate available options, more often than not the options are already known, and instead the challenge is selecting and sticking with a chosen course of action. As our personal lives amply reflect, it can be quite challenging to manage the onslaught of impulses and desires that can get in the way of having our actions match up to our intentions.

Examples include following through on regularly exercising, taking a break from social media time-sucks, getting more and higher quality sleep, being kinder to relatives and friends, and refraining from texting while driving. The list is endless, and each decision—each commitment that you do or do not follow through on—is an opportunity to examine and reflect upon self-leadership in action.

An effective leader has a vision for where they are going. They know that to get there they will want to continually assess the situation, open to changed circumstances and the need to pivot.
They appreciate the importance of being honest with themselves: comfortable with their strengths and open about areas that need work. The leader also appreciates that effective self-leadership translates into not only leading those in their charge but being of service to their community and profession.

Now is a good time as the leader of your life to take stock of some of the things that matter to you, and that connect to your reasons for learning mindfulness. Look over the below questions and make note of answers that are pertinent to you at this time in your law school career. What you write here can serve as benchmarks over the course of your training in mindfulness.

Self-Leadership Inventory

1. What prompted you to learn about mindfulness?

___________________________________________________________________

2. What areas of your professional life are you interested in developing?

___________________________________________________________________

3. What areas of your personal life are you interested in developing?

___________________________________________________________________

4. What strengths do you bring to these endeavors?

___________________________________________________________________

5. What factors might prove to be obstacles?

___________________________________________________________________

6. Who else in your life—now and in years to come—might benefit from your study and practice of mindfulness?

___________________________________________________________________

Reflecting on the above questions call for self-awareness and self-trust and helps set expectations for the journey ahead. While much is unknown or even unknowable, an effective leader acquires a roadmap that makes that which can be known explicit. The next section offers you a roadmap
Mindfulness for Law Students

for this book. The many ways mindfulness is shared with you are intended to be accessible, memorable, and enjoyable. As everyone has their own style, learning preferences, and personal experiences, a variety of teaching devices are used to introduce you to mindfulness and its practice. We will turn to these shortly, so that when you come across them, you will have a sense of how they all fit together and reinforce the same fundamental lessons.

A Road Map for the Journey Ahead

Our exploration of mindfulness is akin to embarking upon a trip. There will be moments that are relaxing and restful, as well as periods that are exciting and stimulating, and you will learn many lessons along the way. As with any journey, while the map is not the territory, it is helpful to have a sense of where you are going, what you will encounter, and what you can expect to take away from your experience.

Where You Are Going

You are off on a grand adventure, to be sure. A significant part of the terrain that you will be traveling through is an interior one. Even though this interior terrain is as close to you as it can possibly be, the beauty, complexity, and ever-changing nature of your inner world may be more of a mystery to you than you realize. Most people are used to spending a great deal of time attending to the world around them—people, places, and events—an exterior terrain that is familiar and one which you already have significant experience in navigating. As a result, at times it can feel awkward and uncomfortable to explore the interior realm of our being, which consists mainly of thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. Here are some examples from each of these categories:

- **Thoughts:**
  - Judgments, Interpretations, Biases, Assumptions, Preconceptions
  - Beliefs, Ideas, Narratives, Analyses, Projections, Self-Talk

- **Feelings:**
  - Happiness, Sadness, Anger, Fear, Anxiety
  - Jealousy, Doubt, Frustration, Overwhelm, Grief

- **Body Sensations:**
  - Tension, Tightness, Itchiness, Soreness, Numbness
  - Heart Palpitations, Stomach Pangs, Heat, Tingling

All day long, thoughts, feelings, and sensations have been arising, changing, and passing away within you, some subtle, some intense. Much of the time, these take place in the background of
awareness. They are so commonplace that you may not even notice them at all. In contrast, external stimuli—such as the news, someone’s opinion, and the work you have before you—likely receive most of your attention. While it makes good sense to be focused on the external world, consider for a moment how the internal dynamics of thoughts, feelings, and body sensations can powerfully affect how you experience the external world and with it your performance and well-being.

On the figurative roadmap of your upcoming journey, the first sign you see is a “U Turn,” offering you the invitation to turn attention inward. Your instincts and habits may automatically shift back, again and again, to what’s playing out before you externally—but you will be given many pointers (road signs) as to what it means to turn attention inward, how to effectively do so, and why doing this is important and useful.

What You Will Encounter

One of the reasons some people are reluctant to make this U-Turn is that the landscape, close as it may be, is not always easy to discern. We can externally approach a sunset or a glacier and marvel at its beauty, or see before us signs of quicksand or a thorny path to avoid and treat with caution. The inner terrain is filled with the same types of wonders—both of great delight and of great concern—although they are (at least at first) less visible and harder to detect. To help clarify this inner landscape, you will be introduced to a collection of metaphors, techniques, and mindfulness practices.

Metaphors

You will learn a variety of metaphors that will help the seemingly invisible become more apparent. These include:

- The Puppy Dog
- The Flashlight
- The Lightbulb
- The Snow Globe
- The Spiral
- The Spotlight
- The Balcony

Each metaphor will help you to make sense of and navigate your inner landscape with greater confidence. Also, since each metaphor contain layers, each will open you to new ways of seeing things as you continue on your journey. We will return to them time and again, and you will be
able to immediately apply them both to your life and your developing understanding of mindfulness.

**Techniques**

Techniques are short exercises and reminders that can help you to feel more relaxed and centered when stressed, scattered, agitated, or overwhelmed. These include:

- Relaxation Exercises
- Affirmations
- Self-Care Practices
- Moments of Observation

There is no shortage of methods for feeling greater calm and relaxation. You probably have already learned one or more *relaxation techniques*, like breathing exercises, and perhaps you draw upon various *affirmations*—pearls of wisdom—to get you through challenging times. For example, you may appreciate how taking several slow deeper breaths can reliably bring about a more relaxed state of mind and body.

You may also have experienced how reflecting on *affirming* and insightful passages like, “This too shall pass,” and “I can do this,” can offer a measure of support and validation amid stressful moments. And, as you probably know, healthy habits like spending time with a pet, walking in nature, and otherwise undertaking *self-care practices* can be helpful for reducing stress. So too, *observing* as a witness—as opposed to reacting at challenging moments—is sometimes just what the doctor ordered.

Although these methods are not, technically speaking, mindfulness practices, they work well with mindfulness practices and are an important part of the larger project of becoming more mindfully aware. As techniques, their primary purpose is to help you feel differently than you presently feel: to feel better, less stressed, more in control, happier, and so on. They tend to be constructive quick fixes.

Mindfulness practices, on the other hand, have a different end, one that, at first, may seem counterintuitive. Rather than doing something to feel, think or act differently, mindfulness practices create the space to become more aware of what you are feeling and thinking and how you are acting. Applying these techniques will help you to feel less stressed and better able to navigate (step-by-step) challenging moments such as disturbing news, unhappy people, and crunch assignments. It will also help you navigate your own interior terrain.

**Mindfulness Practices**
The term “mindfulness” is often misunderstood. Standing alone, it refers to a quality of presence that will be explored in Chapter 5. As part of a mindfulness training, the term more often refers to one of a handful of mindfulness practices that involve following a set of instructions for working with attention, relaxation, awareness, and compassion. These include:

- Focused Attention
- Body Scan
- Open Monitoring
- Connection

Each practice has its own set of variations and can go by different names. For example, the focused attention practice involves focusing your attention on an object, like the breath, and then directing attention back to that object when you notice that your attention has wandered. This popular practice is sometimes referred to as “breath awareness” or “focused concentration.” The names used in this book are commonly used in research and popular mindfulness training programs, including the Mindfulness Based Attention Training (“MBAT”) that I co-developed have been researching and teaching for many years.

**The Big Picture**

The diagram below offers a big picture look at how mindfulness practices and techniques and work together, each having their respective strengths and roles to play. Like a map at a theme park, you’ll notice the marker, “You are Here,” which is always where “Life Happens.” We all want to be better equipped to handle life’s unpleasant moments but because we spend a lot of time on automatic pilot, we can be caught unaware. Then, rather than respond effectively, we may overreact, which often exacerbates matters.
Mindfulness practices prepare us for when “Life Happens” which is why they appear on the far left of the diagram. We allocate a little time each day to practice “being present” for our experience as it is—whatever it is—so that we might become better equipped to do just that during challenging times: to see things more clearly and wake up out of automatic pilot sooner. As a result, rather than getting swept up in a spiral of reactivity, as is all too often the case, we are more likely to respond in an effective manner, skillfully drawing upon the wide variety of wise and compassionate options that are always at our disposal.

The path to a more optimal response—one that helps resolve conflict, offers what’s needed, and reduces suffering—can be direct and indirect. Sometimes, we are equipped—through life’s hard lessons, experience, good modeling, and yes, mindfulness training—to see things clearly and we respond effortlessly. More often, amid our struggles, we are able to appreciate that we have a choice. That awareness enables us to look for what is needed in the moment—the right technique at the right time—to help us navigate our way to a better response.
We will return to this diagram along our journey. As you learn the four primary mindfulness practices and come to appreciate the importance of various techniques, this image will become more intuitive as you experience a greater freedom to more skillfully respond to things that do not go your way.

**But-For Pause**

We will refer to the few moments taken to draw on a technique—whether during a challenging time or for no reason in particular—as a “But For Pause.” You will learn a handful of these that you can easily apply in daily life. The name refers to the “But For” test found in torts and criminal law that determines causation in the sense that “But For” one’s actions, harm would not have occurred. In a related sense, but for your pausing in a deliberate and useful way during a difficult and confusing moment, who knows what otherwise might have happened—how much worse it might have been.

**What You Will Need**

Before taking off on any adventure, it is helpful to have a packing list of necessary items. For our journey together, these include:

- Awareness
- Attention
- Intention
- Curiosity
- Kindness

Fortunately, you already possess all of these items, so there is nothing you need to go out and get. While you may doubt that you have enough of each of these, rest assured that a little bit of each is all that is needed. As the journey continues, you will develop these qualities within yourself, coming to know them not only as concepts, but as fundamental aspects of your own nature. These innate tools will help you thrive in law school, in the practice of law, and in life itself.

**What You Can Expect to Take Away**

An advantage of taking a trip that traverses your inner terrain is that the voyage can be personalized to suit your specific needs and interests. Over the course of this book, you will learn about many benefits associated with practicing mindfulness, and likely make headway on a good number of the ones that matter most to you. As for more tangible take-aways, from among the
relaxation techniques and mindfulness practices you will learn, a small handful will emerge as radiant gems particularly responsive to you at this time in your life. Most importantly, you will realize that these tools are merely assisting you in drawing upon the great gifts you already possess.

One of these gifts is your attention, which is just what we will turn to next turn as it is a basic building block of mindfulness. Before we do, let us set the stage for a regular mindfulness practice routine.

Chapter One Mindfulness Practice: Setting the Stage

We begin by setting the stage for your mindfulness training by selecting a good time and place to practice. As a rule, mornings work well. The day will become busier and unexpected situations can arise that lead to forgetting or believing that you do not have enough time. As it can be difficult to begin any new routine, a helpful game plan will include items like:

- Placing it on your calendar
- Waking up a little earlier
- Leaving yourself a reminder
- Not looking at your phone, watching videos, or checking e-mail beforehand
- Practicing in an area separate from where you work
- Letting others know what you are doing and requesting you not be interrupted

For many people, the hardest part of developing a mindfulness practice can be shifting gears, so start by devoting three minutes a day to establish a daily routine. The instructions below will help you settle in for a period of practice. To help instill an authentic sense of intention within you, reflect each day on your answers above to the Self-Leadership Inquiry. (If you have not yet written down your responses to these questions, you will want to do so now, before getting into the daily practice.)

Instructions for 3-Minute Practice

- Sit
- Take a few slower deeper breaths
- Observe your setting, the weight of your body sitting, and breathing.
- Then, reflect on the day’s question until the timer goes off
- Proceed with your day

If you finish early, wait until the 3-minutes passes. Afterward, in the space below or in your journal, note some of your observations of the experience of sitting for 3 minutes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>3-Minute Practice and Self-Leadership Reflection</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What prompted you to learn about mindfulness?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What areas of your professional life are you interested in developing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What areas of your personal life are you interested in developing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>What strengths do you bring to these endeavors?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What factors might prove to be obstacles?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Who else in your life—now and in years to come—might benefit from your study and practice of mindfulness?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Takeaways**

- Leadership—not just of others, but of ourselves—is at the core of the practice of law; by practicing mindfulness we learn to lead ourselves better, and thereby become better lawyers.
- By beginning our mindfulness journey with a self-inventory of where we are now, later on we will be able to effectively establish how far we have come and where we want to head next.
- While we will work our way through quite a few metaphors, techniques, and practices, in the end they will come together in a seamless Big Picture—depicted in this first chapter—that you will be able to make increasing powerful real-world use of over time.
- Even when starting out with just a 3-minute practice, you will need a game-plan to successfully build a new habit, and a number of suggestions are provided.