

# PUBLICATION

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## No Pressure Meditation with "*The Anxious Lawyer*" by Jeena Cho

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I have just come back from maternity leave, have a trial looming in my first month back, lots of very busy clients I am excited to catch up with after being away for a few months, and my fair share of mommy-guilt about leaving my precious baby boy. Anxious? No, not me! Time to meditate? Definitely not me! Then there it was, an article in the March 2019 issue of the *American Bar Association Journal* with the title, "Self-care for Mommy Lawyers" by Jeena Cho. The article talked about self-care for working mothers and how the idea of self-care is not selfish but necessary. As I read through the article, I realized this advice was applicable to all lawyers and I wanted to know more. That's when I turned to Jeena Cho's book, *The Anxious Lawyer*, which she co-authored with Karen Gifford.

*The Anxious Lawyer* sets out an eight-week guide to help lawyers build a practice of mindfulness and meditation. Those steps include:

1. Beginning to meditate
2. Mindfulness
3. Clarity
4. Compassion toward others
5. Self-compassion
6. Mantra repetition
7. Heartfulness
8. Gratitude

Cho and Gifford start the book by sharing how they each came to meditation and the benefits they have experienced from that practice. They acknowledge that people meditate for many different reasons, including stress or anxiety management, increased focus and productivity, quitting bad habits, and dealing with difficult events, just to name a few. Whatever your reason for turning to meditation, Cho and Gifford offer an eight-week, self-guided, flexible program that allows the reader to explore various exercises to help cultivate their own meditation practice.

While set out as a step-by-step guide, the authors acknowledge that each step may not be helpful or natural for everyone. As a result, there is no pressure. You can choose your own adventure by using the book and the steps in any way that works. The recommendations start with breathing exercises, setting an intention, actually finding time each day to devote to the practice, and then walk the reader through the ways to meditate and practice mindfulness throughout your regular day. The personalized stories of Cho and Gifford are helpful because they demonstrate how they use the meditation practices in their legal practices. Through these stories, we are able to see how these steps may fit into our daily law practices, and even our personal relationships and interactions.

While the steps presented are not necessarily unique to this book, the authors recognize the roadblocks many lawyers face when starting a meditation practice. The idea of another obligation distracting from the billable hour, the unnatural feeling of focusing on yourself, and the artificial feeling of meditation all make the idea of mindfulness and meditation a true challenge for lawyers. As the authors point out, however, it is clearly a

worthy endeavor. Lawyers rank fourth among professionals with highest suicide rates, and suffer from depression at twice the rate of the general population. While we all deal with our own stressors, anxiety, or pressures, finding a little time to carve out for meditation might be well worth it. The authors found that meditation supports a more effective and enjoyable legal practice, and who doesn't want that!