

Practicing Well: Give Yourself Credit!

Patty Beck | *A Balanced Practice, LLC*

“Are we *there* yet?” All of us have undoubtedly heard or said this at some point in our lives. It’s easy to focus on the destination above all else, especially when it involves something you want or need. I’ve noticed recently that when it comes to our goals, focusing on the fact that we’re not *there* yet makes it easy to feel stuck and to overlook all that we’ve accomplished along the way. I’ve also noticed that it’s easy to feel undeserving of credit for how far we’ve come, especially if we have not yet reached our goal. Let me explain.

I was recently working with someone who said she wanted to change jobs but had no idea what she was interested in doing or how to find that out. Fast forward to four weeks later, she had identified a few areas she thought were intriguing and four lawyers to contact for networking coffees to learn more. I applauded her progress, and she instantly recoiled and said, “Well, I’m not there yet and haven’t applied for anything, so don’t give me too much credit!” I responded by pointing out the growth I’d witnessed and how far she’d come in such a short period of time. She paused, considered what I said, and responded with, “Thank you for saying that—I hadn’t thought of it that way and I really appreciate you saying that.” She went on to share a few more comments about her recent journey and how it differed from past attempts at a job change. The more she shared, the more her body physically relaxed, her face lit up with a smile, and a tone of giddiness permeated her voice as she planned her next steps.

I had a similar conversation with another woman who said she wanted to be more present with her spouse when she got home from work since she’d recently

felt like her brain was “mush” at the end of the workday. She came up with a few ideas, and the following week said she was disappointed because those ideas hadn’t been successful. Noting her struggle mid-week, she explained that she’d tried another idea that she was hopeful about. I applauded her for pivoting to try something new. At this, she visibly shifted her posture and said, “Well, I haven’t figured it all out yet, so don’t give me too much credit.” I disagreed and said she deserved credit for noticing that her brain was “mush,” for being thoughtful about wanting to be a better version of herself for her spouse, and for taking

feeling can be frustrating and demoralizing at times. I’ve been there myself on many occasions! I often set a goal and then get fixated on reaching it without paying any attention to the progress I’ve made along the way. The longer it takes, the more anxious and frustrated I get. At times, depending on the goal, it can also feel insurmountable to the point where trying seems futile. Being the work-in-progress that I am, I’m *slowly* learning how to shift my perspective to focus on my growth. When I look at that, I can’t help but feel an incredible sense of accomplishment, optimism and motivation to keep going.

So, if you’re like me (or either of the women in my stories above), and you find yourself feeling discouraged, frustrated, or like you don’t deserve any praise until you’ve reached your goal, I encourage

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steps to make that happen even if she hadn’t figured it all out yet. She paused, considered that, and with a tone of realization in her voice thanked me and said she hadn’t considered that perspective. Similar to the story above, she had a newfound passion behind her voice as she began brainstorming how to build on her momentum.

This is all a long way of saying that when we focus solely on whether we’ve reached our goal, it’s easy to feel like we haven’t accomplished anything yet. This

you to take a moment and consider where you’re at in your journey—are you contemplating doing something, going back to the drawing board for new ideas, or taking steps to map out your plan? Have you passed a mile marker (or two or three) on your way to the finish line? Can you identify one thing you’ve done to move the chains forward, even if it’s just a centimeter?

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that keeping a list of steps I've made toward reaching certain goals is helpful in reminding me that I deserve to acknowledge what I've accomplished, even if I'm not *there* yet. I'm grateful to have found that with this mindset comes the opportunity for feelings of joy, satisfaction, and hope for continuing to move forward (which I much prefer to the discouraging feelings that plague me when I lose sight of the bigger picture!).

As always, if you're struggling with mental health, stress, anxiety, or the like, please reach out to your state's confidential lawyers' assistance program for help (information is available in the PLDF 50-State Survey of Lawyer Mental Health & Well-Being Resources located on the PLDF website). Wishing you all the courage and drive to keep putting one foot in front of the other, and to give yourself credit along the way for doing so! ■



About the AUTHOR

Patty Beck is the President & Owner of *A Balanced Practice, LLC*, where she teaches attorneys, judges, and legal professionals practical strategies for incorporating well-being into their personal and professional lives. She presents CLEs, workshops, and other programming focused on how "little things" like practicing mindfulness, self-compassion, and setting boundaries with clients and colleagues can help improve our relationship with stress and satisfaction with our careers. She became a Certified Mindful Health & Wellness Coach in 2023 and continues to participate in additional training programs with the goal of finding new ways to make well-being accessible to the legal profession. She can be reached at patty@abalancedpracticellc.com.

Sabrina, Sandra and our annual meeting committee members who scoured Denver's offerings, debated logistics (no goat yoga this go, sorry), reviewed proposals, and solicited sponsorships. Thank you also to our board members who work every month to strengthen the PLDF and lay plans for an even stronger future. As I have said before, we are better because of all of you.

Prior to kicking off our virtual board retreat, our Managing Director Sandra Wulf requested that each of us share a favorite quote. We were given a chance to wake up a bit and get to know one another better with this entertaining and simple exercise. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing our board members' quotes and learning more about these remarkable leaders. I hope you took time to read the PLDF's LinkedIn posts featuring their diverse submissions.

Admittedly, when Sandra's emailed request arrived, I hesitated. I was intent on keeping the board meeting upbeat, light, energetic, but my life at that time had been anything but and if I truly chose one of my favorite quotes, the tone might leave us a bit weary. We would be ready to wrap up the day before it had begun. At the last moment, I chose to go light, an amusing line from the unconquerable Cher. But for those who have visited our Minneapolis headquarters in the last few years you may know I keep three of my more favored quotes on my office door. One from Maya Angelou on lessons learned. Another from F. Scott Fitzgerald on the courage to start over. And a third taken from Margery Williams' *The Velvet-reen Rabbit*.

You become. It takes a long time. That is why it does not happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you

are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But those things do not matter at all because once you are Real you cannot be ugly, except to people who do not understand.

Whatever speaks to you, from an inspiring friend to a poignant quote, may it motivate, support and encourage you.

See you in Denver! Countdown on!

Kathleen



About the AUTHOR

Kathleen Buck is the Vice President of Claims at *Minnesota Lawyers Mutual Insurance Company (MLM)*.

She manages a team of experienced claim attorneys who specialize in handling complex lawyers professional liability lawsuits. Over the course of her career, Kathleen worked for multiple international commercial carriers holding various senior positions as a claim consultant, claim attorney, coverage counsel, and state affairs analyst. During her earlier tenure at MLM, she served in the roles of claim attorney, regional sales director, and supervising claim attorney. Kathleen is a frequent lecturer on topics of legal ethics, avoidance of legal malpractice, and enhancing civility in the profession. She received her J.D. with distinction from the University of Iowa College of Law, and her B.A. *magna cum laude* from Clarke College. She is the President of the Professional Liability Defense Federation (PLDF), as well as an active member of the International Association of Defense Counsel and the American Bar Association. She has also served on several nonprofit boards over the past two decades.