In the not-so-distant past, I gave a talk on “Mindfulness and other Meditation Techniques to Get You through Finals” at Southwestern Law School. Afterwards, a student, more or less, asked me: If these techniques were so effective, then how come I had stopped practicing law? That is a legitimate question. I responded that I stopped practicing law because “it was not my calling.” I was settling all my cases. So, I figured I had to be a mediator. Afterwards, I recounted the story to a new colleague J. Kim Wright at a dinner party. Kim was tickled by my response. According to Kim, lawyers as mediators is the new paradigm of the law. Kim penned the aptly named ABA best-seller Lawyers as Peacemakers. As Bob Dylan once said, “Times, they are a changin,” and they are! So it is that the legal profession is adapting and evolving before our very eyes, as systems do. The flip side of that coin, of course, is stagnation and possible decay, and demise.

Evolution and philosophy are subjects in which I have always been interested. Ever since I remember, I have loved learning and growing. I am that curious kid who asks: “Who am I? Why am I here? What was I put on this earth to do?” In this vein, in or around 2006, I started taking a series of personal-growth classes to enhance my self-awareness. In
the course, we would be put into pods of participants to act out various scenarios. At these times, I found myself championing my teammates with words like “You can do it! I know you can!” So much so that my teammates nicknamed me “Coach.” Right then, I had an aha moment. Something clicked inside. I eventually started taking life-coaching classes. I was happy to finally find a career that felt as natural as breathing air.

If am being perfectly honest with myself and with you—I might be too sensitive to practice law. I am one of those “feelers” who went to law school and learned how to “think.” This is not to say that “feelers” cannot be great lawyers. Rather, it is undisputed that law is overwhelmingly composed of “thinkers” (and introverts for that matter). As it stands, the law is primarily a “head-based” field (whereas coaching is considered a “heart-based” field). One problem with homogeneity, however, is that it can lead to groupthink. Simply put, if everyone is busy looking in one direction, they can be blindsided by something that is coming from the other direction. In a career that undervalued my gifts of empathy, intuition, and optimism, I fit in like a round peg in a square hole. By contrast, coaching fits like a glove. When your work is aligned with your life purpose, you know it, you feel it. Your outsides match your insides. You feel integrated. It is undisputable that life prefers balance. There is an exhale for every inhale. A day for every night. We strive for work/life balance. We refer to people as even-keeled or levelheaded. Even Lady Liberty is depicted holding a balanced scale of justice. What would happen if we brought more heart to the law?

Still, notwithstanding my early retirement as a solo practitioner, my soul has somehow always managed to gravitate back to the field. Truth, justice, beauty, and order are values that have resonance for me. Peace, freedom, and creativity are also high on my radar, which might explain why I am such a big proponent of mediation. Coaching lawyers is challenging, stimulating, and rewarding. Lawyers are an intelligent breed. Lawyers are leaders. Lawyers head governments. Even after lawyers leave the profession, it is not unlikely for them to end up in positions of influence and power. Yet it is also no secret that lawyers experience staggering rates of depression, burnout, substance abuse, and even suicide. What is to be done?

Enter coaching. A fledgling in the 1990s, the distinct field of coaching has now flown the coup and is spreading its wings. As necessity is the mother of invention, coaching responded to an unfilled demand
on the part of already high-functioning professionals who want to “take it up a notch.” Yet coaching also satisfies another unmet need when it comes to the field of law. Whereas, in other emotionally taxing jobs such as therapy, therapists are required to see their own during training (and encouraged to do so thereafter), there is as yet no formalized outlet for lawyers to process their experiences. There is a big gap in the law, and coaching fills the gap. In fact, unbeknownst to many in the field, some lawyers have been using coaches as their “secret weapons” for years. As more and more big firms are seeing the benefits of coaching, they are putting coaches on their payrolls. Lawyers using coaching skills with their clients is a logical next step.

Coaching and the law is a powerhouse combination. Like law, coaching has its roots in philosophy. Like the attorney-client relationship, the coaching relationship is one based on confidentiality. Like lawyers, coaches are sometimes referred to as counselors. Like lawyers, coaches support their clients as they make important (and at times uncomfortable), life-changing decisions. The potential for the lawyer-coach crossover is exponential.

Indeed, it is during coaching sessions with my coaching clients that I had a series of epiphanies about the synergy between coaching and the law. First, I realized that by modeling my active listening skills, I was demonstrating to my clients what it is like to be fully present and to practice deep listening. By blurting out an intuitive hunch that landed well, I was giving them permission, in turn, to trust their gut instincts. By exploring a topic from various angles, I was reminding them of the importance of perspective and how it shapes our happiness. By being curious about them and asking questions that they had not asked themselves, I was giving them a taste of the juiciness that comes with out-of-the-box thinking. Through empowering them, they were becoming more powerful lawyers. Thus, indirectly, I was teaching them “how to fish for themselves.” These skills had the potential to transform their relationships with themselves, their clients, their partners, and so on.

One day, I decided to run the idea for this book past my dear friend and mentor, David Burman. David is what I would call “a lawyer’s lawyer.” He is a distinguished gray-haired gentleman who thinks in a linear, logical, rational fashion. He reads the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, daily. David gave me his blessing. When it came down to writing the book, however, I had some reservations. “I do not see how I can write
this book without using the word ‘energy,’” I confided in David over a
drink. “Why? Is the word ‘energy’ copyrighted?” David, the consummate
lawyer, asked. “No, but do you think that the legal community is really
ready for a book that uses the word ‘energy’?” It might have been the
Dom talking, but David’s response was straightforward: “I don’t care if
you use the word ‘voodoo’ in the book as long as you tell me how to keep
my clients happy so I can make more money!” Noted. That is precisely
what I have set out to do.

This book is intended to give you an *amuse-bouche* (or “a taste”) of
coaching. My intention is to create a user-friendly book that shares
practical coaching skills, which can be incorporated into your legal
practice immediately, without being tedious. I learned most of these
tools and techniques through the Coaches Training Institute, the oldest
and largest coach training school in North America. In most cases, I have
put my own spin on them. This book also sets forth my own personal
observations, insights, and experiences by virtue of having orbited the
sun as often as I have thus far. It further incorporates relevant research
(including on neuroscience) about which I have been curious. If you do
your best to keep an open mind to new ideas, concepts, and theories,
I will do my best to give you a good read. Here we go.

At its core, coaching is an advanced form of communication.
Coaching balances right-brain thinking (deep listening, metaphors,
intuition) with left-brain thinking (analysis, brainstorming, strategizing)
for a whole-brained approach to communication. Likewise, it honors who
the person is *being* at least as much as what the person is *doing* out in the
world. Coaching recognizes connectivity, maximizes self-awareness, and
empowers through self-exploration and choice. What would advanced
communication skills make possible or you, your clients, your business,
and your future?