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Good advice can go a long way, say lawyers interviewed by the ABA Journal. (Image from Shutterstock)

Please Advise

It's been a hard year for many; here's some advice that got lawyers through it

BY STEPHANIE FRANCIS WARD, AMANDA ROBERT, JULIANNE HILL AND ANNA STOLLEY PERSKY

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2025, we had the longest federal government shutdown in history, various natural disasters and White House executive orders seen by many as attacks on the rule of law.

Meanwhile, many lawyers are trying to do more with less, coupled with varying opinions on new technology. And the demands of business development remain high.

Through it all, the profession showed resilience—and sometimes simply talking with each other brought comfort. Considering all that, the ABA Journal asked lawyers for the best advice they received in 2025, and we selected 20 thoughts to share with readers.

Making friends and keeping boundaries



Always make friends before you need them, Kevin Gooch says.

1. Always make your friends before you need them.

*Kevin Gooch, financial services partner, Holland & Knight
Atlanta*

2. The best advice to lawyers now is to embrace and leverage technology, find a niche, leverage social media, and find your community and mentorship circles. It's never been easier to be your own boss and have fun doing it.

*Robert T. Simon, trial lawyer and co-founder of the Simon Law Group
Torrance, California*

3. The best advice I received this year was from the *Hidden Brain* podcast: Instead of telling someone what to do, ask them what they should or shouldn't do, empowering them to make their own decisions. I've successfully applied this in various contexts, including with my kid, and the results have been very positive.

*Mathew Kerbis, founding attorney, the Subscription Attorney
Deerfield, Illinois*

4. Justice matters, but not at the cost of our souls or the souls of those we serve. Sometimes it is more important to be kind than to be right, for the truest victories are those that honor compassion and integrity. When law is practiced with heart and higher purpose, it becomes more than advocacy—it becomes a path of awakening, healing and grace.

*Atara Twersky, securities lawyer and principal owner, Twersky Law Group
New York City*

Kindness in personal and professional realms

5. Be kinder to yourself and others.

*Ellen Freeman, managing partner, Ellen Freeman Immigration Law Group
Pittsburgh*

6. The personal and work aspects of life important to me in which I have not achieved my goals are not failures or imperfections, but are instead just incomplete; works in progress."

*John Dacey, executive director, Abolish Private Prisons
Phoenix*

7. The best advice I received recently was drawn from a quote from *Meditations* by Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius: "The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way."



"Be kinder to yourself and others," Ellen Freeman says.

*Toby Butterfield, intellectual property partner, Moses Singer
New York City*

8. The best advice I received this year was to ask AI how to improve my prompts. It reminded me that progress starts with clarity. When we add context, define our goals and ask smarter questions, we get better answers, whether from AI or in leadership.

*Ryan Garka, vice president and associate general counsel, the IRONMAN Group
Tampa, Florida*

Inboxes and AI



Embrace AI, but remember it didn't go to law school, Ben Raybin says. (Photo courtesy of Raybin & Weissman)

Los Angeles

12. Your inbox is a to-do list created by other people. Your calendar reflects what you decide matters.

*David Jones, immigration lawyer and regional managing partner with Fisher Phillips
Memphis, Tennessee*

Love, friends and moms

13. The best advice I received in 2025 came from my mom. She is always worried about me doing too much, working too hard. This year in particular, I have been overloaded teaching, publishing more scholarship and trying to help administrators in higher education deal with ongoing uncertainty due to shifting federal mandates. My mom's advice: Whenever you can, take a moment for yourself. Staying grounded also means you'll be able to give more long-term without burning out.

*Meera E. Deo, Southwestern Law School professor and director of the Law School Survey of Student Engagement
Los Angeles*

14. A colleague mentioned to me that in current political times, if we all just got off our gadgets and spoke more civilly, we could obtain agreement with respect to our differences. I listened, and I've been talking more with people with different views than mine and in most situations have found common ground. It's good advice as a lawyer as well as in life.

9. Embrace AI, but always remember it didn't go to law school. Despite being a valuable resource, it can be wrong on the most basic things and does not incorporate your own knowledge and experience.

*Ben Raybin, criminal defense partner, Raybin & Weissman
Nashville, Tennessee*

10. Remember to treat everyone with the same respect, honesty, and kindness that you crave for yourself—clients, adversaries, colleagues, and the court alike. With so much turbulence in our culture and the deterioration of courtesy and dialogue, there's never been a more important time to stay connected to core values and raise the level of interaction and debate.

*Margaret Donohoe, family law partner, Donohoe Talbert
New York City*

11. The best advice I received this year actually wasn't from a lawyer. It was from a leadership coach and motivational speaker named David Suson. He offered a strategy called "LB/NT," which stands for "Liked Best/Next Time." The idea is that in giving feedback, it is helpful not only to start with something positive, but to phrase it in terms of the thing you "liked best." This implies that there are multiple aspects of the work that you liked, some of which you particularly appreciated, and that you are focusing on the very best among numerous positives. The listener is then more likely to be receptive to constructive criticism, which should be stated in terms of what they could do "next time" to make their work even better.

Martin Pritikin, dean, Purdue Global Law School

*Jason Karlov, partner and entertainment, media and sports practice group chair, Barnes & Thornburg
Los Angeles*

15. Make the coffee date when you're traveling. I travel a fair amount for speaking engagements around the country, and each time I drop into a city, I make sure to reach out to my contacts there to see if they'd like to grab coffee. There's nothing like meeting up in real life to nurture those relationships, and I've had many online business colleagues turn into friends through these small encounters. It makes the entire work travel thing a win-win-win.

*Jessica Medina, lawyer and accredited financial counselor
Asheville, North Carolina*

16. "Never for money, always for love." That lyric from the Talking Heads' "This Must Be the Place (Naïve Melody)" has been a guiding principle throughout my career. I saw David Byrne perform this year, and it reminded me why that advice endures: When your work is rooted in love and authenticity, success tends to follow. A career demands time, energy and conviction—without love for what you do, it's hard to sustain any of them.

*Vivek Jayaram, intellectual property lawyer and founding attorney, Jayaram Law
Miami Beach, Florida*



Meera E. Deo says the best advice she received in 2025 came from her mother.

Talk less, listen more



Being productive isn't about staying busy, it's about being intentional, Jenny Bradley says. (Photo by RTP Photo and Video)

17. At a conference this year, I heard a piece of advice that reframed how I think about productivity: eliminate, automate, delegate, procrastinate — in that order. It reminded me that being productive isn't about staying busy, it's about staying intentional. Since then, I've applied it to how I lead my team and run my firm, and it's made a huge difference in how I protect my time and focus on what truly matters.

*Jenny Bradley, family law attorney and firm owner, Triangle Smart Divorce
Cary, North Carolina*

18. The best advice I've received this year is to "embrace change and adapt." It has been such a year of change across the ABA and across our law practices. We must learn to embrace these changes and view them as an opportunity for transformation, not disruption. We must challenge ourselves to try new things, adapt and keep fighting for a system that embraces mobility with empathy. We must continue to advocate for inclusive systems that strengthen economies and expand human potential.

*Michelle Jacobson, immigration partner at Fragomen and chair of the ABA Commission on Immigration
Chicago*

19. Rest, boundaries, and joy aren't rewards you earn after grinding yourself into dust. They're the infrastructure that makes your best work possible.

*Bryson Malcolm, lawyer, founder and CEO, Mosaic Search Partners
New York City*

20. It's more important for a judge to listen than to talk.

*Sebastian Patti, retired judge of the Cook County Circuit Court and the Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review
Chicago*

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