



# The Unhappy Lawyer: A Roadmap to Finding Meaningful Work Outside of the Law

By Monica Parker

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*"Parker has done an outstanding job of demystifying how any lawyer can make the transition into a new career that offers more potential for success and more importantly, personal satisfaction."*

**- Don E. Hutcheson, Author, Don't Waste Your Talent: The 8 Critical Steps to Discovering What You Do Best**

**The Unhappy Lawyer** will help you uncover exciting alternative careers with a unique step-by-step program that will make you feel like you have your very own career coach. With chapters containing real letters from lawyers who are desperate to leave the practice of law, tales from lawyers who have shut the door on their legal careers, and powerful exercises, The Unhappy Lawyer provides a witty, no-nonsense roadmap for finding and pursuing engaging work outside of the law.

*The Unhappy Lawyer will show you, step-by-step, how to:*

- Figure out what you really want from your work and life
- Discover several career possibilities that excite you
- Immerse yourself in career possibilities that allow you to use your natural talents
- And much, much more.

The Unhappy Lawyer provides you with the escape route you are seeking. This book helps you ask and answer the hard questions about what you really want from your work and life and will help you successfully pursue your career goals.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### About the Author

Monica R. Parker is a career coach who helps lawyers find alternative careers that they enjoy doing. She earned her law degree from Harvard Law School and practiced law for five years before starting her own company. She currently lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

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#### Excerpt from Chapter 1

For Desperate Lawyers Who Don't Have a Clue What They Want to Do

#### LETTER FROM A DESPERATE LAWYER

Dear Monica,

Maybe I could get hit by a bus and end up in a coma. I don't want to be permanently injured, just incapacitated. Six months to a year would be good. That should give me plenty of time to think about what else I want to do.

Rose

Sound familiar? Step away from the curb. This chapter will guide you to meaningful work that excites you, allows you to be yourself, and gives you your life back - rather than taking it away, which is where you're headed with the getting-hit-by-a-bus strategy.

The first step to leaving the law is usually the most challenging part for lawyers - figuring out which options catch your eye. The trick is to distract the left brain so that the right brain can come out and play in an uninhibited fashion.

How do you do that? I've got solutions to that problem in this chapter. It is full of exercises designed to circumvent the left brain and let you dream, imagine, and create, just like when you were a kid.

#### WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Figuring out what you want is a crucial first step in finding fulfilling work outside the law. It reminds you of who you were before law school. When I ask my clients, "What do you want?" their first response is often silence. Most of us don't have a clue. We knew we wanted to go to law school, but after that it gets hazy. Once we got there, the law school mentality and competitiveness took over and the focus became getting good grades, getting interviews with the best, highest paying firms, and getting offers. Any other dreams and desires took a backseat to this narrow definition of success.

All that is fine until you're sitting at your desk at the firm one day and realize you're desperately unhappy with what you do. You can tell me what you don't want, but you don't have any idea what you do want.

Grab a notebook and a pen, and let's get started.

Answer these questions.

- What do you want for yourself?
- What are you willing to do to have it?

These are open-ended questions. Tell me what you want for your work and your life. My clients, when given the go-ahead, tell me absolutely anything they want—they share what they want from work, from life, from love, from the bully who stole their lunch box in third grade. Take a few minutes to jot down your answers.

To help you get started with your own answers, look at what Margaret, a fifth-year associate at a large firm, wrote:

I just want to know that my work has meaning. That I'm helping individuals improve their lives, not corporations improve their bottom line. I'd like some laughter, to get up in the morning looking forward to work. To work with people I love and who care very deeply about me.

Are you surprised by what you wrote for your own answers? Dismayed that your life as it is now doesn't remotely reflect your dreams? These are common, expected reactions.

Post your answers somewhere you can see them every day—on your refrigerator, in a (locked) desk drawer at work, on a bulletin board in your home office, in your secret candy stash drawer.

Why? Because once you begin dreaming about the possibilities, your internal voice begins its attack: "Are you sure you want to do this? What are you thinking? You can't leave your job. Are you kidding?" Don't try to argue with your internal voice. Instead, reread your answers to these questions. They will remind you what is important to you and why making this change is worth it.

#### WHAT'S YOUR IDEAL DAY, OTHER THAN CALLING IN SICK TO STAY IN BED ALL DAY?

No, you can't have your ideal day every day. On the other hand, you're probably going to continue to have nothing but less-than-ideal days if you don't at least try to figure out what your ideal day looks like.

Now is the time to do some free writing. Get comfortable, set a timer for fifteen minutes, put your pen on the paper, and write what your vision of your ideal day is without lifting your pen until the timer buzzes. If you don't know what to say, go ahead and write, "I don't know what to say," over and over again until you do know what to say. Write in the present tense (i.e., "I wake to the sound of birds chirping in my backyard rather than my alarm clock").

Here are a few questions to get you started.

- What time do you wake up?
- Where do you live? (Describe your home and your neighborhood.)
- What do you do when you get up?
- What time do you go to work?
- Who are you working with, if anyone?
- What does your work space look like?
- Are you at your office all day, or are you going other places?
- What do those other places look like?
- Do you have clients? What are they like?
- What time do you leave work?
- What do you do after you leave?

- What time do you go to bed?

Be colorful. Be descriptive. Create a vivid picture with your words- something you can see, smell, taste, and touch.

Post your answers to these questions where you can see them every day, as well. Your ideal day description can be so inspirational to reread, especially on a bad day.

My clients also use it to evaluate a career change. If the new career you're contemplating doesn't give you the opportunity to live out a good chunk of your ideal day, that realization should tell you something.

### WHAT INTERESTS YOU OTHER THAN EARNING AN INCOME?

I like this exercise because it goes back to the basics - what engages you? Don't know anymore? That's okay. We'll figure it out. This exercise requires patience because it takes at least six to eight weeks. Get a small notebook - one that will fit in your pocket or your purse. You want to have it with you every day.

Let's start with the past. Remember your childhood, adolescence, and college years. What interested you? Write it all down in your notebook. If your memory isn't so good, check in with your family. They'll be delighted to remind you of the theatrical productions you directed, produced, and starred in when you were 8 years old wearing your Wonder Woman costume, your older sister's red boots, and a cape.

Then, write down what interests you now. Write down five to ten things in your notebook. Then continue with the exercise because we'll need a lot more to work with than that. Aim for fifty interests over the next several weeks. For the next six to eight weeks, every time something catches your interest, pull out your notebook and write it down. Here are some ideas.

- Jealous of a pastry chef you read about in a magazine article who has a dessert café and travels around the world for sweet inspiration? Write it down.
- Interested in signing up for a kickboxing class? Write it down.
- Saw a commercial about the white sand beaches of Turks and Caicos and started drooling?
- Bought a new book that you couldn't put down, so you ended up oversleeping the next day?
- Overheard a conversation at Starbucks and almost fell out of your chair trying to eavesdrop?
- Enamored with a TV show?
- Daydreaming about owning that beautiful flower shop that just opened around the corner?
- Saw Cirque de Soleil yesterday, and keep having thoughts that you wish you could be involved with the company in some way?

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**Christian Fowler:**

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**Christopher Morton:**

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