

The Hidden Strength in Seeking Help

The State Bar of Wisconsin exists to support and assist lawyers, the legal system, and the public. Don't hesitate to ask for help.

BY JILL ROTHSTEIN

I attended my first University of Wisconsin football game last month when the Badgers took on – and beat – the University of Washington. I got the full experience: Badger Bash, game-time snowfall, and, of course, I jumped around. I was very impressed with the U.W. Marching Band. They were simultaneously exuberant and disciplined. And, I noted the leadership of the band's drum major. She was amazing at both marching on the field and at musical direction.

I was a band nerd in high school (and I say that with great pride and affection). At one point, I, too, had aspirations of being the drum major. I was excellent at drill – I could march with precision, complete a series of complex drill commands (double to the left to the right flank move), and land on a mark 30 yards away without looking down.

What I could not do, however, was direct the music well enough to compete for the top spot. I practiced on my own and watched videos of other drum majors over and over. What I did not understand, however, was that I could ask someone with more experience to help.

It took me until well into my adult life and my career practicing law to understand that, sometimes, the most courageous, most intelligent action I can take is to seek the wisdom, support, and assistance of others. It's been a revelation.

What I've learned is that, in seeking assistance from another, I am able to get more than an answer. I am able to deepen my human connections. The act of requesting assistance can begin to build a bond of trust that is mutually beneficial: The asker shows faith in another's goodwill, and the helper discovers purpose in being relied upon. In that exchange, both are strengthened.

This time of year is lovely, overwhelming, exciting, exhausting, comforting, lonely, busy, loud, quiet, and joyful – sometimes in turn and sometimes all at once.

There are several pressures associated with the waning months of the year that can compound the chaos of holidays – impending taxes, end-of-year wrap-up, crazy court calendaring, and clients who come to us with problems to solve and expect us to both alleviate their stress and assist them with their problems – usually immediately.

Practicing law is, on its best days, a welcome challenge we meet with confidence and knowledge. On some of the less great days, it can be difficult to manage alone.

Ask us for help. We are here to serve you, to support you, to connect with you. When you reach out to us, just say, "I'm with the band." **WL**

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