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Emily Grant & Elisabeth Wilder

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I QUIT: LESSONS FOR EDUCATORS FROM THE GREAT RESIGNATION

Emily Grant* & Elisabeth Wilder**

ABSTRACT

The Great Resignation is the story of millions of Americans who have quit their jobs in search of something different and represents a cultural shift in how people think about work. The demands of the Great Resignation—meaning, better working conditions, and work-life balance—will continue to be present in the foreseeable future. As such, educators must begin to incorporate these cultural shifts into their professional development curriculum and career services.

As educators, we spend so much time trying to help our students find and keep jobs that we often neglect the importance of teaching students how to change jobs. Many of our institutions are not preparing students for the reality that they will likely quit and switch jobs multiple times throughout their careers, especially within the first five years of their career.

This Article explores how teaching students the importance of quitting can lead to a more satisfactory job search and work life. Teaching students to reflect on the reasons they may quit a job will cause students to look for jobs that align with their values. Thus, we propose additions to the professional identity conversations currently taking place in law schools to include discussions about meaningful work, better working conditions, work-life balance, and about when the lack of those values might cause someone to quit a job.

* Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Law, Washburn University School of Law. Many thanks to Washburn University for its financial support of this project and to my colleagues for their encouragement and ideas. Specific thanks to Gillian Chadwick, William E. Foster, and Thomas Sneed for their thoughtful review of this Article.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the world shut down in an attempt to slow the transmission of the novel coronavirus. In response, businesses frantically shifted to remote work to allow their employees to work from home. As vaccines became accessible and the number of coronavirus cases waned, businesses began to request that employees return to the office. To their surprise, many employees sought to stay at home permanently or to split their time between the office and home. Even more surprisingly, some employees chose not to return to work at all.¹

The large number of individuals not returning to work is a part of what experts call the “Great Resignation.”² Largely driven by lockdowns due to the coronavirus, the Great Resignation is the story of millions of Americans who quit their jobs in search of something different—namely jobs that provide meaning, better working conditions, and a work-life balance.³ Indeed, over the course of the pandemic, the most-searched jobs were almost entirely trades and helping professions.⁴

But while thousands of Americans were googling how to become therapists and physical trainers,⁵ many helping professionals were leaving their jobs in droves.⁶ Due

¹ Roughly 69 million Americans quit in 2021, and over two-thirds of those did so voluntarily. John Digilio & Courtney Toiaivao, *The Great Resignation: Obstacle or Opportunity?*, AALL SPECTRUM 20 (June 2022), <https://aallspectrum.aallnet.org/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pnnum=22&edid=01daf59e-2a1b-4ce0-a5a2-5b2820813a7f&isshared=true> [<https://perma.cc/BB3U-V3BG>] (“[O]ver two-thirds of people who left their jobs in 2021 did so voluntarily. . . . The numbers have staggered employers as they try to come up with ways to retain the talent they have, as well as replace the workers who have left.”).

² Frederick Shelton, *Great Resignation & Associate Shortage: Cause and Effect*, ATT’Y AT L. MAG. (Dec. 21, 2022), <https://attorneyatlawmagazine.com/the-great-resignation-associate-shortage-cause-effect> [<https://perma.cc/NY3D-YCPA>]; Corinne Reichert, *Amid the Great Resignation, These Are the Top Searched Jobs on Google*, CNET (Feb. 9, 2022), <https://www.cnet.com/personal-finance/amid-the-great-resignation-these-are-the-top-searched-jobs-on-google/> [<https://perma.cc/QB79-LNC4>]; Nancy Watson, *The “Great Resignation” and Its Impact on the Legal Industry*, REUTERS (Sept. 10, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/great-resignation-its-impact-legal-industry-2021-09-10/> [<https://perma.cc/X94D-GHQ7>]. “It was called the Great Resignation, and then a rush of other names: the Great Renegotiation, the Great Reshuffle, the Great Rethink.” Emma Goldberg, *All of Those Quitters? They’re at Work*, N.Y. TIMES (May 13, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/business/great-resignation-jobs.html?smid=em-share> [<https://perma.cc/LX7Q-LC49>].

³ Shelton, *supra* note 2.

⁴ Reichert, *supra* note 2.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Rayna M. Leoumeau, *Nurses Are Leaving the Profession, and Replacing Them Won’t Be Easy*, CONVERSATION (Sept. 17, 2021), <https://theconversation.com/nurses-are-leaving-the-profession-and-replacing-them-wont-be-easy-166325> [<https://perma.cc/C7CS-NY4B>]; Elizabeth Heubeck, *Teachers Are*

to the onslaught of coronavirus patients and lack of support, healthcare workers quit by the dozens.⁷ Similarly, teachers who struggled to adjust to remote learning or who were tired of fighting with parents or students about mask mandates left the profession entirely.⁸ For many of these helping professionals, their working conditions had altered so fundamentally even providing meaning to their jobs was not enough to sustain them.⁹

Helping professionals are not alone. Both blue-collar and white-collar workers have similarly been demanding better pay and working conditions in response to increased demands and stress due to the coronavirus.¹⁰ This has led to a rise in online communities that promote work reform.¹¹ The largest online work reform community is Reddit's r/AntiWork community, which has approximately 2.5 million members.¹² These communities are riddled with people who are looking for better,

Quitting Midyear. It's Leaving Some Schools in the Lurch, EDUC. WK. (Mar. 8, 2022), <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/teachers-are-quitting-midyear-its-leaving-some-schools-in-the-lurch/2022/03#:~:text=Teachers%20exiting%20the%20profession%20break%20from%20stereotypes&text=The%20National%20Education%20Association%20this,than%20they'd%20originally%20planned> [<https://perma.cc/SBW5-SUJC>].

⁷ Leourneau, *supra* note 6.

⁸ Heubeck, *supra* note 6.

⁹ *Id.* (“[Mr. Miller] also said the job had come to feel more like babysitting than teaching. Since returning to full-time in-person learning last fall, [Mr. Miller] spent time and energy constantly reminding his students to wear their masks, turn in their assignments, and behave appropriately in the classroom.”).

¹⁰ Ben Casselman, *More Quit Jobs Than Ever, but Most Turnover Is in Low-Wage Work*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 4, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/04/business/economy/job-openings-coronavirus.html> [<https://perma.cc/J8BH-D3S3>]. In addition:

For every 100 workers in hotels, restaurants, bars, and retailers, about five of them quit. Low-wage workers aren't the only ones eyeing the door. In April [2021], more than 700,000 workers in the [Bureau of Labor Statistic's] mostly white-collar category of “professional and business services” left their job—the highest monthly number ever.

Derek Thompson, *What Quitters Understand About the Job Market*, THE ATLANTIC (June 21, 2021), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/06/quitting-your-job-economic-optimism/619242/> [<https://perma.cc/J789-2SX2>].

¹¹ Anna Codrea-Rado, *Inside the Online Movement to End Work*, VICE (Dec. 22, 2021), <https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3vwjw/inside-the-online-movement-to-end-work-antiwork-sub-reddit> [<https://perma.cc/B8PF-P2RP>].

¹² Oliver Whang, *Hating Your Job is Cool. But Is It a Labor Movement?*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 15, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/magazine/antiwork-reddit.html?smtyp=cur&smid=li-nytimes> [<https://perma.cc/R7HG-GC4N>].

more fulfilling work.¹³ People ask for advice, tell stories, and—in classic internet form—share screenshots of employees quitting their jobs and telling their bosses to “shove it.”¹⁴

The legal profession has yet to see the impact of the Great Resignation, but experts suggest that it is on the way.¹⁵ Experts predict that, like teachers and healthcare workers, many lawyers who work in not-for-profit legal services will begin to resign and look for jobs with better pay and a more sustainable work-life balance.¹⁶ Large and medium law firms are similarly seeing more turnover of associates.¹⁷ Most of these associates, however, simply choose a different law firm rather than leaving their field entirely.¹⁸

¹³ Codrea-Rado, *supra* note 11. “[T]he community wasn’t just complaining about mean bosses. At least as much energy seemed to be devoted to discussions about improving pay and working conditions.” Whang, *supra* note 12; *see also* Brian O’Connor, *The Rise of the Anti-Work Movement*, BBC (Jan. 27, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220126-the-rise-of-the-anti-work-movement> [<https://perma.cc/R5KP-Y4B5>].

¹⁴ Farhad Manjoo, *Opinion, Even With a Dream Job, You Can Be Antiwork*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 22, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/22/opinion/work-resignations-covid.html> [<https://perma.cc/JKV3-4KFM>]; Codrea-Rado, *supra* note 11; Whang, *supra* note 12.

¹⁵ Watson, *supra* note 2.

¹⁶ Sateesh Nori, *The Great Resignation: Nonprofit Law Edition*, REUTERS (Dec. 29, 2021, 10:13 AM), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/legalindustry/great-resignation-nonprofit-law-edition-2021-12-29/> [<https://perma.cc/5PMV-BHRK>].

¹⁷ Vivia Chen, *Big Law’s Great Resignation: Why I Don’t Believe the Hype*, BLOOMBERG L. (Nov. 12, 2021), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/big-laws-great-resignation-why-i-dont-believe-the-hype> [<https://perma.cc/CB6H-Y2CC>]. Pre-pandemic attrition rate in Am Law 100 firms was 16%; up to 27% in 2021—“a staggering 61% increase.” William Dougherty, *The Winners in Law’s ‘Great Resignation’ Will Be Firms That Focus on Innovation, Not Compensation*, ABA J. (Feb. 22, 2022 3:06 PM), <https://www.abajournal.com/columns/article/the-winners-in-laws-great-resignation-will-be-firms-that-focus-on-innovation-not-compensation> [<https://perma.cc/S9N5-7QJY>].

¹⁸ Chen, *supra* note 17.

BigLaw partners and associates joining the Great Resignation are not so much rejecting the legal industry as they are embracing new possibilities and bidding for greener pastures. Maybe the term should instead be referred to as the ‘great Reshuffling,’ as lawyers are voting with their feet against job discontent and optimistically seeking new paths.

John Roemer, *Much Ado About Nothing? When It Comes to Lawyers, Is the “Great Resignation” Really Just the “Great Reshuffle”?*, ABA J. (Apr. 1, 2022), <https://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/much-ado-about-nothing-when-it-comes-to-lawyers-is-the-great-resignation-really-just-the-great-reshuffle> [<https://perma.cc/5B74-LFDY>].

These rapid changes over the last two years have caused some experts to posit that the Great Resignation is the beginning of the next labor movement.¹⁹ The Great Resignation may or may not be the next labor movement, but it clearly is the product of a cultural shift in how people think about work. The demands of the Great Resignation—meaning, better working conditions and work-life balance—will continue to be present in the foreseeable future. As such, educators must begin to incorporate these cultural shifts into their professional development curriculum.

As educators, we spend so much time trying to help our students find and keep jobs that we often neglect the importance of teaching students how to change jobs. We want students to find a job in a field that they are interested in and that pays enough to make a living and to cover student loan payments. The institutions of which we are a part devote countless resources—career services, career fairs, networking events—to ensure that students have a job lined up by graduation. What many of our institutions are not doing, however, is preparing students for the reality that they will likely quit and switch jobs multiple times throughout their careers, especially within the first five years of their career.²⁰

This Article explores how teaching students the importance of quitting is an integral part of the professional development of new lawyers. To develop competent lawyers, educators must help law students assess their strengths, weaknesses, and values in relation to the job market. Conversations around quitting provide opportunities for law students to assess what they value most in a job because law students must determine under what circumstances they would leave a job. These quitting “deal-breakers” thus serve as a starting point for conversations to help students find a firm, organization, or agency that best fits their strengths and values. Discussion regarding these deal-breakers also helps prevent students from landing a job that they are bound to quit, much to the frustration of themselves and their employers.

¹⁹ Codrea-Rado, *supra* note 11.

²⁰ Guy Berger, *Will This Year's College Grads Job-Hop More Than Previous Grads?*, LINKEDIN (Apr. 12, 2016), https://blog.linkedin.com/2016/04/12/will-this-year_s-college-grads-job-hop-more-than-previous-grads [https://perma.cc/H7EW-H9SA].

Our parents and grandparents believed you should stay at a job for five years, ten years, or even your whole life. But in a world where companies come and go—where they grow from nothing to the Fortune 500 and then disappear, all in a few years—that’s just not possible.

SETH GODIN, *THE DIP: A LITTLE BOOK THAT TEACHES YOU WHEN TO QUIT (AND WHEN TO STICK)* 62 (2007).

Part I of this Article discusses professional development in the context of law school and law school curriculum as well as why conversations about quitting are needed in law school. Part II focuses on some of the reasons people leave their jobs—meaning, working conditions and work-life balance—and suggests that these three things are a good framework to help students develop the self-awareness and self-knowledge to know when to leave a job. Finally, Part III provides practical guidance for students on quitting, staying, and advocating for changes in their employment before they quit.

Three caveats: First, for purposes of this Article, we are cabining our discussion to employees in the legal field—likely early- or mid-career attorneys²¹—who have options, both in terms of finances and logistics, for their employment. Second, we recognize that during the Great Resignation, people quit jobs for reasons often unrelated to a personal choice about the acceptability of the workplace: people retired,²² working mothers were unable to find childcare, hourly workers could not make ends meet in a particular job, and pandemic workers faced burnout or unsafe working conditions.²³ Our conversation and advice to the legal academy are directed toward educating students who have the freedom and flexibility to quit or stay in a particular job. Finally, we do mean quit. Although there are other words we could use to indicate that someone is moving from one job to another—restart, transfer, move, shift, relocate—we think it is important to use the word “quit” to emphasize that quitting is not a bad thing and is often necessary to advance in a career.

I. PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING IN LAW SCHOOLS SHOULD INCLUDE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT QUITTING

Fifteen years ago, the Carnegie Report encouraged law schools to address students’ professional identity formation.²⁴ Law schools responded to that call in a variety of ways. Over one-third of law schools have a learning outcome specifically

²¹ In regard to law firm attrition: “it’s largely juniors who are choosing to move on.” Dougherty, *supra* note 17.

²² “Baby boomers who didn’t need to retire are choosing to finally do so because they don’t want to be bothered with the hassle of hybrid co-workers, plus, many worry about COVID-19 protocols in the workplace. . . .” Watson, *supra* note 2.

²³ Digilio & Toiaivao, *supra* note 1. “Parents (often women) left jobs to manage childcare needs; employees left the labor market due to COVID concerns; older employees retired early thanks to extra savings from being in quarantine or perhaps thanks to skyrocketing house prices that enabled some to sell at profit . . .” *Id.* at 26–27.

²⁴ WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN ET AL., EDUCATING LAWYERS: PREPARATION FOR THE PROFESSION OF LAW 130 (2007) [hereinafter Carnegie Report].

focused on a commitment to professional development.²⁵ Some created a required course in the first-year curriculum focusing on professional development;²⁶ others have a required upper-level course addressing the topic.²⁷ Some law schools offer elective skills courses that include professional identity formation.²⁸ Many law schools, perhaps even the majority of them, do not address the issue at all in their curriculum.²⁹ The American Bar Association, however, has recently revised Standard 303(b) to require law schools to “provide substantial opportunities to students for: . . . (3) the development of a professional identity.”³⁰ The ABA defines professional identity as:

[F]ocus[ing] on what it means to be a lawyer and the special obligations lawyers have to their clients and society. The development of professional identity should involve an intentional exploration of the values, guiding principles, and well-being practices considered foundational to successful legal practice. Because developing a professional identity requires reflection and growth over time, students should have frequent opportunities for such development during each year of law school and in a variety of courses and co-curricular and professional development activities.³¹

²⁵ Neil Hamilton, *Leadership of Self: Each Student Taking Ownership over Continuous Professional Development/Self-Directed Learning*, 58 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 567, 599–600 (2018).

²⁶ *Id.* at 590.

²⁷ “Over forty law schools already require courses for credit that include some aspect of professional formation or professional development in their first-year curriculum, and nearly twenty more schools require students to learn about professional identity or professional values before graduating.” David A. Grenardo, *The Phantom Menace to Professional Identity Formation and Law Success: Imposter Syndrome*, 47 U. DAYTON L. REV. 369, 370 (2022); *see also* Neil Hamilton, *Mentor/Coach: The Most Effective Curriculum to Foster Each Student’s Professional Development and Formation*, 17 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 836 (2021).

²⁸ Benjamin V. Madison, III & Larry O. Natt Gantt, II, *The Emperor Has No Clothes, but Does Anyone Really Care? How Law Schools are Failing to Develop Students’ Professional Identity and Practical Judgment*, 27 REGENT U. L. REV. 339, 380 (2014).

²⁹ *Id.* “[M]ost law schools have either ignored or responded insufficiently to the [Carnegie Report’s and Best Practice Report’s] appeal to concentrate on professional formation as fully as on legal analysis and skills.” *Id.* at 342.

³⁰ AM. BAR. ASS’N SECTION OF LEGAL EDUC. AND ADMISSIONS TO THE BAR, REVISED STANDARDS FOR APPROVAL OF LAW SCHOOLS 4 (2022), <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/news/2022/02/midyear-hod-resolutions/300.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/5L3K-SURF>].

³¹ *Id.* at 5 (quoting Interpretation 303-5).

Thus, professional identity formation emphasizes students' "personal legal morality, values, decision-making process, and self-consciousness in relation to the practices of the legal profession."³² It is how students see themselves in the role of attorney³³ and how their own viewpoints and values will impact their practice of law.³⁴ "[P]rofessional identity engages lawyers at a deeper level [than the notion of professionalism] because it challenges lawyers to internalize principles and values such that their professional conduct flows naturally from their individual moral compass."³⁵ "A lawyer with an ethical professional identity is able to exercise practical wisdom and to live a life of satisfaction and well-being."³⁶

To that end, professional development curricula have some common features: many assist students in the job search process. Some help students find personal fulfillment in the profession. Many emphasize the development of basic lawyering skills, such as client interviewing and counseling. "A few present the students with ethical dilemmas, while some seek to help new law students learn how to succeed academically in law school."³⁷

A. *Quitting Is an Integral Part of Professional Development*

These programs should also include discussions about when, why, and how students should contemplate quitting a job. From a practical standpoint, it is nearly impossible to imagine a current law student navigating a forty-year career without quitting at least one job. Millennials, currently the largest generational group in the workforce, have a reputation for "job-hopping."³⁸ According to a Gallup report, "21% of millennials say they've changed jobs within the past year," and only 50%

³² E. Scott Fruehwald, *Developing Law Students' Professional Identities*, 37 U. LA VERNE L. REV. 1, 3 (2015).

³³ Patrick E. Longan et al., *Professional Identity Formation and Its Pedagogy: A Virtue Ethics Approach to Professional Identity: Lessons for the First Year and Beyond*, 89 MERCER U. L. REV. 645, 647 (2021).

³⁴ Grenardo, *supra* note 27, at 3.

³⁵ Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 354.

³⁶ Daisy Hurst Floyd, *Practical Wisdom: Reimagining Legal Education*, 10 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 195, 202 (2012).

³⁷ Longan et al., *supra* note 33, at 653.

³⁸ Sarah Landrum, *Millennials Aren't Afraid to Change Jobs, and Here's Why*, FORBES (Nov. 10, 2017, 11:47 AM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarahlandrum/2017/11/10/millennials-arent-afraid-to-change-jobs-and-heres-why/?sh=227d27ab19a5> [<https://perma.cc/F89J-TG9Z>].

of them plan to be with their same employer one year from now.³⁹ Gen Z, the newest generation to join the job market, “is changing jobs at a rate 134% higher than they were in 2019,” and 25% of them are planning to leave their current employer within the next six months.⁴⁰ Even the Baby Boomer generation, whom many imagine to be life-long employees of a single company, have, on average, over twelve different jobs during their working life.⁴¹ Nonetheless, “upcoming and recent grads are likely going to job-hop more than previous generations.”⁴² And these younger generations do not see quitting as a bad thing:⁴³

Quitting gets a bad rap in life, as it’s associated with pessimism, laziness, and lack of confidence. In labor economics, however, quits signify the opposite: an optimism among workers about the future; an eagerness to do something new; and a confidence that if they jump ship, they won’t drown but rather just land on a better, richer boat.⁴⁴

Indeed, sometimes the only way to advance professionally is to quit a job and move to something new.⁴⁵ Changing jobs can also increase pay, on average, by 8–10%, and sometimes up to 20%.⁴⁶

³⁹ Amy Adkins, *Millennials: The Job-Hopping Generation*, GALLUP, <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/231587/millennials-job-hopping-generation.aspx> [<https://perma.cc/MTR2-VCXE>] (last visited Aug. 20, 2022).

⁴⁰ Erica Pandey, *The Great Resignation Generation: Gen Z Wants to Job Hop*, AXIOS (Feb. 25, 2022), <https://www.axios.com/2022/02/25/gen-z-great-resignation-generation-job-hopping> [<https://perma.cc/RK8J-UVSS>].

⁴¹ U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., *Number of Jobs, Market Experience, Marital Status, and Health: Results from a National Longitudinal Survey*, U.S. DEP’T OF LAB. (Aug. 31, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/J7VP-NHTV>].

⁴² Berger, *supra* note 20.

⁴³ Landrum, *supra* note 38.

⁴⁴ Derek Thompson, *What Quitters Understand About the Job Market*, THE ATLANTIC (June 24, 2021, 4:21 PM), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/06/quitting-your-job-economic-optimism/619242/> [<https://perma.cc/Z5PU-FD8N>].

⁴⁵ “[W]inners are smart quitters who quit often, like when they realize their current path and decisions cannot get them any farther toward their goal.” Stephanie Lee, *Sometimes You Have to Quit to Get Ahead*, N.Y. TIMES (June 5, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/05/smarter-living/when-to-quit.html> [<https://perma.cc/EVD2-MD8L>].

⁴⁶ Landrum, *supra* note 38; *see also* Goldberg, *supra* note 2 (“When workers switched jobs, they often increased their pay.”).

B. *Quitting Has a Bad Reputation*

If quitting can lead to professional advancement and a higher salary, why don't people quit more often? One reason is that quitters are not favored in the United States and are often seen as lazy or unambitious.⁴⁷ The phrase “[q]uitters never win and winners never quit”⁴⁸ is common among many communities. This is likely because perseverance is viewed as more virtuous than quitting, even when it is better or more advantageous to quit.⁴⁹ In addition, people who are highly motivated and have a knack for perseverance also often do not know how or when to quit things that are not good for them.⁵⁰

Perseverance and high motivation are not the only reasons that people do not quit. There are a number of logical fallacies, such as the sunken-cost fallacy and status quo bias, that also keep people from quitting.⁵¹ For instance, thanks to the sunken-cost fallacy, when people are deciding whether to quit or persevere with their goal, people will persevere because they have invested a significant amount of time and money in that goal.⁵² Because they have invested time and energy, people will continue working at a dead-end goal because those resources have been “sunk” into that investment.⁵³ Similarly, because of the status quo bias, people underestimate how much happier they could be in an alternative position.⁵⁴ People tend to believe that the current “status-quo” is always better than any other alternative.⁵⁵

There are many structural reasons that people choose not to quit as well. Even when people are deeply unsatisfied with their work, people may not be able to quit

⁴⁷ Landrum, *supra* note 38; see Brendan Tapley, ‘Grit’ Isn’t Always Good. Here’s How to Know When to Persist and When to Surrender, WASH. POST (June 2, 2015, 12:00 PM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/inspired-life/wp/2015/06/02/grit-isnt-always-good-heres-how-to-know-when-to-persist-and-when-to-surrender/> [https://perma.cc/Q8VP-8PCD].

⁴⁸ GODIN, *supra* note 20, at 3.

⁴⁹ *Id.* (“Most of the time, we deal with the obstacles by persevering. Sometimes we get discouraged and turn to inspirational writing, like stuff from Vince Lombardi: ‘Quitters never win, and winners never quit.’ Bad advice. Winners quit all the time. *They just quit the right stuff at the right time.*”).

⁵⁰ See Tapley, *supra* note 47.

⁵¹ See Lee, *supra* note 45.

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ Emma Goldberg, *You Quit. I Quit. We All Quit. And It’s Not a Coincidence*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 23, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/21/business/quitting-contagious.html> [https://perma.cc/5YGV-RM2H].

⁵⁵ *Id.*

due to family concerns, geographic reasons, or lack of economic opportunity.⁵⁶ Some businesses and organizations, too, are just easier to quit than others.⁵⁷ If people work in a firm that has high turnover, it is easier to leave the firm because there is already a culture of quitting within the firm.⁵⁸ It is more difficult to leave firms or organizations that have a lower rate of turnover because people may feel like they are abandoning their coworkers by quitting.⁵⁹

C. *Students Often Need to Learn to Persevere Before They Quit*

The other primary reason that law schools have refrained from having conversations about quitting is because law schools are trying to teach students how to persevere in a tough and demanding career. The legal profession is known for being competitive, challenging, and even cutthroat at times. Being a good lawyer, too, requires lots of dedication and hard work. In order to prepare students for the profession, law professors often push students to challenge themselves—to persevere and keep studying when students would rather be doing other things. In doing so, however, law professors may inadvertently negate teaching the value of quitting.

Thus, it is important to keep in mind that perseverance and quitting are not opposites, but rather two equally important skills that students must learn how to utilize under different circumstances. Most things in life—like law school—require hard work, but just because something is difficult to obtain does not mean that it is worth the work put into it. Not every student needs to be on a publication, in moot court, or the leader of a student organization. And even though those are all valuable experiences, they may not be worth the time and energy a student puts into them when they could be devoting energy to other things. So, conversations about quitting and perseverance must happen in tandem with one another—because both are equally valuable depending on the circumstances. For the law student with big dreams of clerking for the Supreme Court, she should absolutely try to get on a publication. Alternatively, for the law student who wants to start their own firm, their time may be better served working at a small law firm rather than trying to get on a publication.

⁵⁶ See generally Digilio & Toiaivao, *supra* note 1 (elaborating on why most people switch jobs and decide to quit).

⁵⁷ Deborah Maranville, *Workplace Mythologies and Unemployment Insurance: Exit, Voice and Exhausting All Reasonable Alternatives to Quitting*, 31 HOFSTRA L. REV. 459, 478–79 (2002). “A subsequent 1985 study indicated that blacks, women and youths are quit-prone because ‘they are disproportionately employed in periphery industries where institutional arrangements and employment conditions render quitting more feasible than striking.’” *Id.* at 497–98.

⁵⁸ Goldberg, *supra* note 54.

⁵⁹ *Id.*

It is not one or the other—quit or persevere—but rather learning when to quit and when to persevere. And for most students in law school, the answer is going to be persevere, persevere, persevere. Students are likely not going to be harmed by studying an extra hour, taking a class over a subject they find boring, or doing moot court or a publication. But they can be, and that is where conversations around quitting can start. When students begin to sacrifice things that are important to them in the name of perseverance, whether that be their relationships, their mental health, or even their own values, it is time to quit.

D. *Teaching Students to Quit Helps Solidify Their Values*

In addition to the likelihood that current law students will change jobs several times over the course of their careers, thinking about quitting before even having a job can help students solidify the values that are integral to their professional and personal identity. “Law students who do not develop a sense of their internal values and honor those as part of their judgments in practice are far more likely to lose their sense of self.”⁶⁰ Thus, starting a career or a specific job having already thought about its potential end can clarify for students what is important to them as professionals, what situations or feelings in a work environment are deal-breakers, and when a particular job might be in conflict with their needs and desires.⁶¹ “The best quitters . . . are the ones who *decide in advance* when they’re going to quit.”⁶²

Doing the work now to identify values and desires that are important to students will set them up to be happier professionals later, and specifically will help them know when to get out of a harmful, unproductive, or unfulfilling job. Overall, as a profession, lawyers are well-known to be unhappy, often struggling with mental

⁶⁰ Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 348.

⁶¹ Stephen R. Covey, in his book, describes this concept as “beginning with the end in mind.” STEPHEN R. COVEY, *THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE* 95 (2004). Although he refers to one’s funeral as the endpoint to envision, the benefit of clarifying personal values now is equally applicable to a potential work situation:

To begin with the end in mind means to approach my role as a parent, as well as my other roles in life, with my values and directions clear. It means to be responsible for my own first creation, to rescript myself so that the paradigms from which my behavior and attitude flow are congruent with my deepest values and in harmony with correct principles. It also means to begin each day with those values firmly in mind. Then as the vicissitudes, as the challenges come, I can make my decisions based on those values. I can act with integrity. I don’t have to react to the emotion, the circumstance. I can be truly proactive, value driven, because my values are clear.

Id. at 105–06.

⁶² GODIN, *supra* note 20, at 66.

health or substance abuse issues.⁶³ One suspected source of the dysfunction within the profession is the “disconnection between lawyers’ internal values and their actions.”⁶⁴

We have too much evidence showing the link between the degree to which law students develop skills associated with professional identity—including the ability to make judgments consistent with their internal values—and the extent to which they are either fulfilled in practice and live healthy lives or are unfulfilled and develop unhealthy, dysfunctional means of coping with their dissatisfaction.⁶⁵

Thus, professional identity conversations that include a discussion about important values, the absence of which might lead a student to quit a future job, can help “guard against the dangerous path of ignoring internal dissonance and will help maintain integrity.”⁶⁶

II. WHAT WOULD YOU QUIT YOUR JOB FOR?

The three demands that have been at the forefront of the Great Resignation—meaning, better working conditions, and work-life balance—are a useful framework for cultivating discussions with students around their professional identity and preparing students to practice law. Preparing students for the practice of law requires alerting them to the practical difficulties of the work. With every job there will be costs and students will have to decide whether those costs are worth the benefits that their job brings.⁶⁷ Perhaps a better work-life balance outweighs the need for prime working conditions and a high sense of meaning; perhaps a need to fulfill a higher calling outweighs work-life balance and a need for pristine working conditions. Either way, preparing students to answer these difficult questions and decide what aspects of their work are most important to them can help students feel more satisfied

⁶³ Laura Rothstein, *Law Students and Lawyers with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Problems: Protecting the Public and the Individual*, 69 U. PITT. L. REV. 531, 532 (2008).

⁶⁴ Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 352. “[P]rofessionalism and life/career satisfaction are essentially inseparable within the nature of human beings, and . . . quality of life and professional reputation both manifest from the choice of optimal goals, values, and motives.” Lawrence S. Krieger, *The Inseparability of Professionalism and Personal Satisfaction: Perspectives on Values, Integrity and Happiness*, 11 CLINICAL L. REV. 425, 438 (2005).

⁶⁵ Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 348.

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 349.

⁶⁷ Lee, *supra* note 45 (“No matter your goal, you have to pay in money, pain, relationships, effort or time. And these costs aren’t always obvious.”).

in their careers.⁶⁸ When law students feel that there is a connection between their values and the work they are doing, they experience more satisfaction in their profession because they feel like they belong in the profession.⁶⁹

Money is no substitute for doing this internal calculus.⁷⁰ Over the course of the Great Resignation, major law firms raised associate salaries to combat poor attrition rates.⁷¹ But this approach is like “rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic” because the real reasons that associates are jumping ship are going unaddressed.⁷² Associates are not unsatisfied because they are underpaid; they are unsatisfied because they want a more “reasonable lifestyle, real mentoring and meaningful work.”⁷³ Associates are staying at these jobs long enough to pay their student loans and then leaving for work that better suits their values.⁷⁴ Job satisfaction really is not about the money; it is about the how and why someone does the work.⁷⁵

A. *Meaning Is About How Your Values Align with What You Are Doing*

“Meaning” in the context of work is often synonymous with purpose—people need to understand why they are doing their job.⁷⁶ If new lawyers understand why they are doing their job, they are more likely to stay in that job even when things become difficult.⁷⁷ Because new associates want to pay off their student loans, they can tolerate high billable hours and mean bosses. Because attorneys who work in

⁶⁸ Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 348.

⁶⁹ *See id.* at 348–51.

⁷⁰ Dougherty, *supra* note 17.

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ Shelton, *supra* note 2.

⁷⁴ *Id.* (“Even the firms who are paying associates the new pay scale will be in for a rude awakening because I’m hearing a phrase every day. . . . ‘Once my student loans are paid off, I’m outta here.’”).

⁷⁵ Arthur C. Brooks, *The Secret to Happiness at Work*, THE ATLANTIC (Sept. 2, 2021), <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/09/dream-job-values-happiness/619951/> [<https://perma.cc/98UA-ZLW8>] (“Job satisfaction comes from people, values, and a sense of accomplishment.”).

⁷⁶ Barbara Bradley Hagerty, *Quit Your Job*, THE ATLANTIC (Nov. 5, 2014), <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/quit-your-job/471501/> [<https://perma.cc/2ZKB-3KHK>].

⁷⁷ Lawrence Krieger, *The Surprising Master Key to Happiness and Satisfaction According to the Lawyer Research*, 92 FLA. BAR J. 16 (2018) (“[I]f our work feels separate or detached because it does not provide us meaning, interest, or enjoyment, we suffer.”).

legal services want to help other people, they can tolerate being underpaid and overworked.

But new lawyers do not want to feel like a cog in the machine;⁷⁸ they want to know that what they are doing matters and fits into what their employer is doing overall.⁷⁹ For new lawyers, job satisfaction is closely tied to how they feel they fit into both the culture of the firm and society in general.⁸⁰ Workers are most satisfied with their jobs when they feel that their values align with the values of their employer.⁸¹ Specifically, workers are most satisfied when the values of their employer have “special moral, philosophical, or spiritual significance.”⁸² In other words, workers feel like their work is meaningful when they get to practice their values.

Law schools often shy away from discussions about values to emphasize the importance of following the Rules of Professional Responsibility and following one uniform code of ethics.⁸³ The overemphasis on the Rules of Professional Responsibility teaches students that their own values do not matter and are second to

⁷⁸ Dougherty, *supra* note 17 (“Associates too often feel like a cog in the wheel: undervalued, overworked and overlooked when exciting opportunities and on senior lawyers’ desks.”).

⁷⁹ Adkins, *supra* note 39 (“[T]he reality is that they just want a job that feels worthwhile.”).

⁸⁰ Hagerty, *supra* note 76; Digilio & Toiaivao, *supra* note 1, at 21 (“Newly self-aware of their own value [during pandemic work], workers made it clear that they want to feel valued by their organizations. . . . More important [than money] was the desire to feel noticed, appreciated, and recognized by employers.”).

⁸¹

[P]olls of recent college grads have consistently showed that an organization’s culture and values are considered equally as important to graduating seniors as the compensation offered. Not only does the rising generation want to be recognized at work, but they want their workplace to align with their personal values and take a stand on the issues of the day.

Digilio & Toiaivao, *supra* note 1, at 21.

⁸² Brooks, *supra* note 75.

⁸³

Again, although some authors had already suggested as much, the *Carnegie Report* and *Best Practices Report* affirmed that law schools’ method of emphasizing legal analysis and dismissing other considerations such as fairness, morality, and social consequences sent a depressing message to law students; in essence, students’ maladjustment began in law school. In other words, rather than helping students develop as healthy professionals, law schools have encouraged the opposite.

Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 349–50.

the values of the profession.⁸⁴ This value-neutral approach can set students up for professional failure because “it fails to provide students with the opportunity to explore how their individual values fit within the frame of professional values.”⁸⁵ The Rules of Professional Responsibility do, however, provide a helpful framework for discussing values. For decades, there has been an almost unanimous consensus about the values that the ideal lawyer should possess.⁸⁶ They are:

(1) competence (excellence) in the craft of lawyering, which includes knowledge, skill, diligence, and judgment; (2) fidelity to the client, including confidentiality, communication, and loyalty; (3) fidelity to the law, which includes not assisting clients with crimes or frauds as well as compliance with the limits of proper advocacy; (4) public spiritedness, including providing equal access to justice for all, representation of unpopular causes and clients, and self-regulation in the public interest; and (5) civility, which includes courtesy, cooperation, and truthfulness.⁸⁷

These traits undoubtedly arise from and are in line with Rules of Professional Responsibility. These values are the values that experts have consistently emphasized as imperative to job satisfaction.⁸⁸ Students do not have to pick between following the Rules of Professional Responsibility or their own conscious, they must only decide how they want to live out their values under the framework of the Rules of Professional Responsibility. And we should encourage students to follow their conscious within the framework that the Rules of Professional Responsibility provide because it helps students feel more connected to their communities and work:

As we look to our ideals for attorneys, we see again that the preferred professional behaviors will tend to fulfill these basic human needs and hence support a satisfying life experience. The truly professional lawyer will be competent in legal

⁸⁴ *Id.*

⁸⁵ Mary Walsh Fitzpatrick & Rosemary Queenan, *Professional Identity Formation, Leadership and Exploration of Self*, 89 UMKC L. REV. 539, 539 (2021).

⁸⁶ “What virtues does the ideal lawyer possess? There is remarkable consensus within the legal profession about that. Since the 1980s, dozens of bar committees, court commissions, and other organizations have set forth in various rules, codes, and creeds how lawyers should conduct themselves in order to be ‘professional.’” Longan et al., *supra* note 33, at 647.

⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁸⁸ Brooks, *supra* note 75.

skills, but beyond that she will feel closely connected to others in her community because she respects and is respected by them. She will experience the authenticity and integrity that comes from loyalty to her deepest values, and she will feel good about herself for all of the above reasons.⁸⁹

B. Evaluating Working Conditions Is a Part of Assessing Whether Work Is Meaningful

But meaning alone cannot always compensate for the practical realities of practicing law under intense working conditions and without work-life balance. Sometimes the new associate cannot keep missing birthdays and weddings to bill hours. Similarly, the new lawyer working in legal services still must pay her bills and cannot always afford to do the work she most enjoys. No matter why someone took the job, sometimes the working conditions of the job are just too much to keep anyone in the job.⁹⁰ That is also why preparing students for difficult working conditions is important for socializing new lawyers to the profession and teaching them how to quit.

Because law is a prestigious profession, it may seem odd to think about working conditions when lawyers are sitting in corner offices in skyscrapers overlooking major cities. But evaluating working conditions is not limited to where and when you work; it can also include evaluating how many hours you work, the pay you receive, who you work for, the culture of where you work, and other soft benefits. For instance, many students are unaware of the work it will take to meet a billable hour requirement and how that requirement may impact their personal lives.⁹¹ The difference between 1,800 hours and 2,000 hours may not sound like a lot to the unsuspecting law student until she learns that she can only bill about 80% of her time

⁸⁹ Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 354.

⁹⁰

Nonprofit lawyers are learning that their jobs won't love them back. For too long, we believed that our work, like caffeine, would fuel us throughout our careers. During the pandemic, we learned that we were wrong. Like with caffeine, we will eventually run out of pep, crash, and burnout. Eventually, if things continue in the way they were going before the pandemic, our senses of self and self-worth may melt away into our professional identities, leaving us empty.

Nori, *supra* note 16.

⁹¹ Jerome M. Organ, *What Do We Know About Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction of Lawyers? A Meta-Analysis of Research on Lawyer Satisfaction and Well-Being*, 8 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 225, 245 (2011).

in the office.⁹² One professor found that “66% of [new lawyers] believed billable hour pressure had taken a toll on their personal lives.”⁹³ Similarly, students might erroneously believe that a larger paycheck will compensate for a high billable hour requirement without realizing the sacrifices that they will have to make to get that higher salary.⁹⁴

The people you see in that corner office matter as well. Students must be prepared to deal with difficult clients who they find repugnant,⁹⁵ coworkers who do not abide by the Rules of Professional Conduct,⁹⁶ and bosses who might overlook their skills.⁹⁷ New lawyers are often assigned mundane work rather than receiving

⁹² See Yale L. Sch. Career Dev. Off., *The Truth About the Billable Hour* 1–2, https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/department/cdo/document/billable_hour.pdf [<https://perma.cc/6EHW-FG93>] (last visited Aug. 22, 2022). Assuming the lawyer takes about two full weeks off a year, if a lawyer can only bill about 80% of her time, then she would need to work a minimum of forty-five hours a week to meet an 1,800-hour billable hour requirement. *Id.* Under the same principles, a 2,000-hour billable requirement means a new lawyer will work a minimum of fifty hours a week. *Id.*

⁹³ Organ, *supra* note 91, at 245.

⁹⁴ Josh Hafner, *Does Money Equal Happiness? It Does, but Only Until You Earn This Much*, USA TODAY (Oct. 1, 2020, 11:45 AM), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/nation-now/2018/02/26/does-money-equal-happiness-does-until-you-earn-much/374119002/> [<https://perma.cc/E54G-MAXA>]. Experts have determined that the “happiness” salary is \$105,000 for a single-person household (\$210,000 for a family of four). *Id.* Because stress and increased workload typically come with higher salaries, \$105,000 is the happiness sweet spot that allows individuals to pay for all their needs and wants while also allowing for adequate leisure time. *Id.*

⁹⁵

For example, a student who laments that she does not personally agree with a client’s position on a case, but can set aside her views for the purpose of fulfilling professional duties to the client, should be encouraged to evaluate how these divergent values may impact her career satisfaction in the future and how she might prepare herself mentally and emotionally for these challenges. In the midst of the pressures of practice, characteristics such as self-awareness, courage, resilience, emotional intelligence, and judgment are crucial.

Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 85, at 544.

⁹⁶ Goldberg, *supra* note 54. Bad behavior is often cultivated in bad environments:

The office has long been a petri dish for infectious behavior. Lying, cheating and job satisfaction all tend to spread from desk to desk. Financial advisers, for example, are 37 percent more likely to commit misconduct if they encounter teammates who have done so, what researchers refer to as ‘peer effects,’ noting that one case of misconduct results on average in an additional 0.59 cases.

Id.

⁹⁷ Dougherty, *supra* note 17.

work that allows them to exercise their judgement and skills.⁹⁸ When lawyers are overlooked by their bosses for major assignments and are put in a position where their skills are not fully utilized, they are more likely to feel dissatisfied with their work.⁹⁹ On the other hand, when lawyers have more autonomy in their work and feel that they are challenged and supported by their bosses, their satisfaction with their job increases.¹⁰⁰ Of course, new, inexperienced lawyers cannot expect to have total autonomy when they generally do not know what they are doing, but they are mindful of what other attorneys do or do not do to keep them included.

Groups of people who have historically been underrepresented in law practice—women, people of color, immigrants, and members of the LGBTQ community—are particularly vulnerable to being overlooked for important job assignments.¹⁰¹ This is because these groups of people are underrepresented in the legal profession, and due to implicit bias, partners and managers prefer to give work to people who are similar to them.¹⁰² Thus, these groups are more likely to be assigned remedial tasks—like planning the office Christmas party or organizing the office food drive—which do nothing to advance their careers.¹⁰³ For people in these underrepresented groups, selecting a working environment where they are represented has significant advantages.

C. *Job Satisfaction Is also Dependent upon How Much Time You Have for Things Unrelated to Your Job*

Finally, even the best, most interesting job is not enough to keep people from quitting if people do not have enough free time to do the things that they enjoy. When people do not feel that they have time for the things that are most important to them—

⁹⁸ *Id.* (“Another common source of tedium for junior lawyers is administration. . . . Lacking a sense of career progression, it’s unsurprising that a heavy workload of administrative tasks gives juniors cause to consider their future at the firm.”).

⁹⁹ *See id.* (“Associates too often feel like a cog in the wheel: undervalued, overworked and overlooked when exciting opportunities land on senior lawyers’ desks. Associate satisfaction and retention are plummeting as a result.”).

¹⁰⁰ Ronit Dinovitzer & Bryant Garth, *Lawyer Satisfaction in the Process of Structuring Legal Careers*, 41 L. & SOC’Y REV. 1, 8 (2007).

¹⁰¹ Dougherty, *supra* note 17.

¹⁰² *See* Bron Williams, *How our Personal Bias Sabotages the Teams We Lead*, LINKEDIN (Feb. 24, 2020), <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-our-personal-bias-sabotages-teams-we-lead-bronwyn-williams/> [<https://perma.cc/AC3P-JG34>].

¹⁰³ Dougherty, *supra* note 17; *see also* Jessica Bennett, *Welcome to the ‘No Club,’* N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 6, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/us/welcome-to-the-no-club.html> [<https://perma.cc/QG94-JJ26>].

to exercise, to play with their kids, or even just to sleep¹⁰⁴—people are more likely to leave their job.¹⁰⁵ So, job satisfaction is also contingent on the balance that people have between their work and personal lives. In the legal profession, there has been a growing chorus of voices calling for more work-life balance within the profession.¹⁰⁶ The pandemic amplified this chorus as people lost physical boundaries between the home and the office.¹⁰⁷

Recognizing that work-life balance is not possible due to the ebbs and flows of both a work life and a personal life, wellness experts have begun to emphasize work-life harmony as opposed to work-life balance.¹⁰⁸ Work-life balance implies that each individual is balancing her time between work and home or must allocate a percentage of her time to work and personal life based on what is most satisfying to her.¹⁰⁹ Due to work and personal demands, though, it is not always possible to give 60% of your time to work and 40% of your time to your personal life. Sometimes, one area of life must dominate the other. For that reason, experts suggest that work-

¹⁰⁴ “Some 20% of [junior corporate lawyers] are reporting extreme exhaustion, leading them to reassess their work-life balance.” *Id.*

¹⁰⁵ Karen Miller-Kuwana & Linda Ouyang, *Analysis: Attorney Well-Being Declines, with Burnout on the Rise*, BLOOMBERG L. (Mar. 3, 2022, 5:00 AM), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/analysis-attorney-well-being-declines-with-burnout-on-the-rise> [<https://perma.cc/7GK3-KXEH>]. “Attorneys who reported a decline in well-being were almost three times more likely to report that they are actively seeking other opportunities and nearly 20 percentage points more likely to report that they are open to offers of new employment, compared with attorneys who reported no change or an improvement in well-being.” *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ Leslie A. Gordon, *Work-Life Balance: Not Just a Women’s Issue but a Human Issue*, 39 S.F. ATT’Y MAG. 46 (2013) (“These days, work-life balance is no longer just a women’s issue. Men—particularly in this generation, which focuses more on cooperative parenting than ever before—want choices too.”).

¹⁰⁷ Watson, *supra* note 2 (“Employees say they want their life back and want to shift to ‘work to live’ not ‘live to work . . .’ employees are feeling burnt out. The lack of work/life separation over the pandemic has caused more fatigue.”).

¹⁰⁸ Patti Fletcher, *Work-Life Balance is Over: Let’s Talk About Work-Life Harmony*, FORBES (Nov. 13, 2020 7:00 AM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2020/11/13/work-life-balance-is-over-lets-talk-about-work-life-harmony/?sh=6aedd2b85b48> [<https://perma.cc/8F6U-JCUM>]; Iona Lupu & Mayra Ruiz-Castro, *Work-Life Balance Is a Cycle, Not an Achievement*, HARV. BUS. REV. (Jan. 29, 2021), <https://hbr.org/2021/01/work-life-balance-is-a-cycle-not-an-achievement> [<https://perma.cc/2KZE-JFKZ>]; Sara Berger, *Jeff Bezos Doesn’t Like the Idea of ‘Work-Life Balance’—Here’s What He Swears by Instead*, CNBC: MAKE IT (Aug. 9, 2018, 12:19 PM), <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/08/09/what-jeff-bezos-does-instead-of-work-life-balance.html> [<https://perma.cc/UG34-2HYV>].

¹⁰⁹ Ryan Behan, *Work-Life Balance—A Mislabeled Concept*, LINKEDIN (May 4, 2018), <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/work-life-balance-mislabeled-concept-ryan-behan/> [<https://perma.cc/53Q3-Y7BE>]; Fletcher, *supra* note 108.

life harmony is a more useful framework than work-life balance.¹¹⁰ Focusing on work-life balance can lead to the misconception that your personal life and work life are both competing for your time and must stay within delineated boundaries. Alternatively, focusing on harmony acknowledges that both are important and either one may dominate at any time.

D. Teaching Students to Assess Meaning, Working Conditions, and Work-life Balance in Their Careers

In searching for a prospective job, students will have to weigh and consider these factors—meaning, working conditions, and work-life balance—as they are applying for and interviewing for jobs. Taking time to reflect on these factors gives students the opportunity to contemplate their own values and how they may exercise these values in the profession.¹¹¹ Experts posit that this is one reason that students who choose to work in the public interest sector report higher levels of job satisfaction than those in the private sector—students in the public interest sector have already had to evaluate the benefits and tradeoffs of working in the public sector.¹¹² One scholar notes:

“[T]he law is a career in which understanding one’s own personality and predilections can help to produce a satisfying career. Those who know themselves well are more likely to find a job that suits them.” To foster greater career satisfaction for law students, law schools should encourage students to assess their individual values and decipher how those values align with different types of practice.¹¹³

Professors cannot force students to do this type of deep reflection on their own, but they can provide resources and opportunities for students to do it.¹¹⁴ One way to encourage this type of reflection is to have students write a letter to themselves

¹¹⁰ Fletcher, *supra* note 108.

¹¹¹ Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 85, at 543–44.

¹¹² *Id.* at 544–45.

¹¹³ *Id.* at 545 (internal quotations omitted).

¹¹⁴ Martin J. Katz, *Teaching Professional Identity in Law School*, 42 COLO. LAW. 45 (2013). “As Professor Thomson points out, [y]ou cannot teach someone to form their identity. Rather, we as teachers need to create ‘situations’ in which our students can be confronted with ethical questions and reflect on the decisions they make, and be guided by as they form their own professional identities.” *Id.* at 45.

describing the circumstances under which they would be willing to quit a job.¹¹⁵ When people are told to give advice as if they were giving advice to a friend, people tend to give better advice.¹¹⁶ Another exercise to encourage reflection is to use the “story of self.”¹¹⁷ The story of self is a narrative approach in which students discuss how their values have played out across the “story” of their lives.¹¹⁸ Students discuss how these values have been present in law school and how they wish to manifest these values throughout their career.¹¹⁹

Another option is to have students write “a personal mission statement.”¹²⁰ Much like a business mission statement, a personal mission statement can be used as a frame of reference to help guide students about decisions about their careers. Stephen Covey states that:

¹¹⁵ GODIN, *supra* note 20, at 55. “If quitting is going to be a strategic decision that enables you to make smart choices in the marketplace, then you should outline your quitting strategy before the discomfort sets in.” *Id.*

¹¹⁶ Kara Chin et al., *Here’s Why We Give Better Advice to Our Friends than We Give to Ourselves*, BUS. INSIDER (Jan. 10, 2019, 11:46 AM), <https://www.businessinsider.com/cognitive-biases-solomons-paradox-adam-grant-why-are-we-all-so-stupid-2018-3> [<https://perma.cc/8SNM-R9G4>].

As one way of promoting such decision-making, all students in Regent University School of Law’s required Professional Responsibility course must write their personal philosophy of lawyering, an assignment adapted from the discussion of developing a philosophy of lawyering in the Professional Responsibility casebook authored by Nathan Crystal. In the paper, which is graded and counts as a percentage of each student’s final course grade, students are instructed to set forth a decision-making framework that will guide them as they: (1) integrate their personal and professional lives; and (2) approach ethical issues in their practice as lawyers.

Madison & Natt Gantt, *supra* note 28, at 376 (internal quotations omitted).

¹¹⁷ Fitzpatrick & Queenan, *supra* note 85, at 539–40 (internal quotations omitted).

¹¹⁸ *Id.* at 540.

¹¹⁹ *Id.*

Using the ‘story of self’ frame allows students to reconcile their individual values with professional values by exploring how their ‘story’—formed before and during law school—informs their personal values, allowing them to make self-directed decisions about ethical and other conflicts and how they represent their clients and contribute to the legal community as lawyers, leaders, and professionals.

Id.

¹²⁰ COVEY, *supra* note 61, at 106–07.

A personal mission statement based on correct principles becomes the same kind of standard for an individual. It becomes a personal constitution, the basis for making major, life-directing decisions, the basis for making daily decisions in the midst of the circumstances and emotions that affect our lives. It empowers individuals with the same timeless strength in the midst of change.¹²¹

Like a business mission statement, too, personal statements may need to be amended over time as identity and goals change.¹²² Finally, encouraging conversations about quitting can also be as simple as having local attorneys come in and tell their stories about how they ended up at their current job. Every attorney has quit something at some point in their life to get where they are, and their stories can be informative to students as they think about navigating their careers.

III. YOU HATE YOUR JOB, NOW WHAT?

It is incumbent on legal educators to teach students what to do when they find themselves in a job that no longer aligns with their professional and personal values. There are usually a few options, though being in the right frame of mind to evaluate those options is critical. When employees are panicked or overcome with the stress of the moment, they are not in a thoughtful and deliberative space in which to make important choices about potentially quitting a job.¹²³ Additionally, we should caution students to be cognizant of the psychological domino effect of seeing someone else quit a job.¹²⁴ Although someone else's decision to leave a work environment can be confirmation about negative working conditions, each employee should evaluate for themselves whether to stay or leave.

Making the decision about whether and when to quit is complicated and difficult. Professional identity conversations about quitting can force students to contemplate this question outside of the stress and pressures of a specific work environment. Students can focus on their own self-reflection and self-awareness and can consider their motives for staying or leaving a hypothetical job.¹²⁵ Albert

¹²¹ *Id.* at 108.

¹²² *Id.* at 129.

¹²³ GODIN, *supra* note 20, at 50. “[Q]uitting as a short-term strategy is a bad idea. . . . Never quit something with great long-term potential just because you can’t deal with the stress of the moment.” *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted). Additionally, “[q]uitting when you’re panicked is dangerous and expensive. . . . You can always quit later—so wait until you’re done panicking to decide.” *Id.* at 52.

¹²⁴ *See* Goldberg, *supra* note 54 (“Quitting is contagious.”).

¹²⁵ *See* Tapley, *supra* note 47. “Healthy perseverance, and healthy surrender, are first and foremost tied to healthy motive. . . .” *Id.*; *see also* Goldberg, *supra* note 54.

Hirschman in his book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* argues that this kind of mental calculus is already used by consumers when they are deciding whether or not to continue using a product.¹²⁶ The idea that new lawyers have three options—exit, voice, and loyalty—when they feel dissatisfied with their jobs is also useful for teaching students how to contemplate when to quit a job.

A. Loyalty

Teaching students to be loyal to a workplace is about teaching students to stay and persevere when work is difficult, but still worthwhile. There are plenty of problems that will arise in the workplace that, although annoying, generally are not quit-worthy. New lawyers likely are not going to like everyone that they work with, they will get work that they find boring, and they will have to deal with supervisors that they disagree with at times. Not every problem is a problem with the workplace itself, and students need to learn to differentiate between structural problems that will not get better and problems that will likely follow them no matter what firm, organization, or agency they choose. Students should learn the importance of trying to resolve problems like these on their own before they start looking for a different job.

Frankly, sometimes it is simply easier and more efficient to ask not to work with a certain attorney or to ask for a change in the workplace than to look for a new job. Although quitting and moving from job to job is becoming more acceptable, employers are still weary of people who are “quit” prone—or people who seem to change jobs rapidly. In addition, some estimate that it takes anywhere from three weeks to two years to become accustomed to a job,¹²⁷ and some even suggest more

¹²⁶ See ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN, EXIT, VOICE, AND LOYALTY: RESPONSES TO DECLINE IN FIRMS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATES 1 (1970). In addition:

Much of Hirschman’s project was focused on identifying both the circumstances that lead consumers to exercise voice in the economic realm rather than exit, and the circumstances in which the exercise of voice is needed for maximum economic efficiency, because the feedback generated by declining sales would come only after the firm declines beyond recovery. Hirschman’s initial focus on the economic realm broadened as he realized that his framework has important applications throughout society.

Maranville, *supra* note 57, at 484.

¹²⁷ Galin Kolev, *How Long Does it Take to Learn a New Job?*, OFFICE TOPICS (June 5, 2022), <https://officetopics.com/how-long-to-learn-a-new-job/#:~:text=Don't%20worry%2C%20every%20job,learn%20a%20new%20job%20well> [<https://perma.cc/2DRL-G6LA>]; Kevin Oakes, *How Long Does it Take to Get Fully Productive?*, TRAINING INDUS. Q., Winter 2012, at 40, 40–41, https://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/trainingindustry/tiq_2012winter/index.php?startid=40#p/40 [<https://perma.cc/MX7Z-SG7G>].

time for new lawyers.¹²⁸ Thus, even if the job is not ideal, staying loyal to a less-than-ideal job can be beneficial just to gain some experience, skills, and connections to transition to a better, more fulfilling job.

Indeed, persevering at a less-than-ideal job is sometimes necessary and wise. There is a benefit to sticking with something and overcoming hardships and challenges.¹²⁹ Staying in a job may give an employee motivation and opportunity to make positive changes to the work environment; once an employee quits a job, they will have given up their opportunity and power to use their voice there.¹³⁰ Moreover, advocating for a change in the workplace can improve the profession overall and can positively impact many other people.¹³¹

B. Voice

When jobs transition from less-than-ideal to bad or even a nightmare, students should consider using their voices to make a change. Hirschman defines “voice” as “any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs.”¹³² Teaching students to use voice is teaching students to use their power to make a change in their workplace, because the same unreasonable conditions that would cause a new lawyer to rethink her position at a job will make someone else rethink his or her position. If students do not feel that their work is meaningful, or that they are working under absurd working conditions, or that they do not have enough time for their personal lives, they should consider using voice.

Like loyalty, the benefits of staying and using voice can be more advantageous than quitting. Voice can also be the only option that new lawyers may use to express their discontent when they cannot quit, so it is important for students to become comfortable voicing their grievances with supervisors in a professional manner when

¹²⁸ See William M. McErlean & Howard L. Teplinsky, *Training an Associate: Garbage in, Garbage out*, 24 LITIG. 52, 55 (1998) (indicating that it can take up to seven years for a new lawyer to perform certain tasks); see also Krystal Champlin, *Leveraging a Law Firm's Associates and Paralegals*, RJH CONSULTING (Nov. 9, 2018), <https://www.rjhconsulting.com/blog/leveraging-a-law-firms-associates-and-paralegals> [<https://perma.cc/Q6Q5-ULMJ>].

¹²⁹ Noah Berlatsky, *Teaching Kids to Quit*, THE ATLANTIC (Feb. 10, 2014), <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/02/teaching-kids-to-quit/283707/> [<https://perma.cc/BZ8Z-SGSU>]. “[C]ommitment to a difficult undertaking is worthwhile.” *Id.*

¹³⁰ See HIRSCHMAN, *supra* note 126, at 37. “Voice is . . . defined as any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs.” *Id.* at 30.

¹³¹ Marsha Griggs, *An Epic Fail*, 64 HOW. L.J. 1, 43 (2020) (discussing how institutional legitimacy is both an agent and barrier of change).

¹³² HIRSCHMAN, *supra* note 126, at 37.

the need arises.¹³³ Additionally, voice is important because not everyone has equal power to express their dissatisfaction in the workplace.¹³⁴ Although the new associate may be able to quit her job and move on to greener pastures rather than dealing with an unreasonable supervisor, the young paralegal may not be able to do the same—she may even be afraid to do so.¹³⁵ For this reason, creating a culture of using voice is also important to make sure that workplaces are suitable for everyone, not just those who have the resources and opportunities to move.

C. *Quit*

When a job is so out of line with one's values and goals, quitting is an appropriate option. Despite the connotation of the word "quit," quitting a job is not failing.¹³⁶ Nor is it giving up on a career or the desire to make a difference in the world.¹³⁷ Admittedly, "[q]uitting in itself isn't necessarily a virtue. But neither is stick-to-it-iveness. Giving up something you love because you've hit a bump is a bad idea, but so is keeping a death grip on your own unhappiness."¹³⁸ Contrary to Vince Lombardi's famous notion that "winners never quit and quitters never win," successful people do quit; "[t]hey just quit the right stuff at the right time."¹³⁹

¹³³ *Id.* at 34 ("In this view, the role of voice would increase as the opportunities for exit decline, up to the point where, with exit wholly unavailable, voice must carry the entire burden of alerting management to its failings.").

¹³⁴ Maranville, *supra* note 57, at 487–88.

¹³⁵ *Id.* at 493 ("Workers do not just fear that they will be fired if they raise complaints. They also fear less tangible 'retaliation'—being labeled a 'whiner,' being penalized in pay and promotion decisions, being given less favorable assignments or inconvenient shifts, or losing 'perks.'").

¹³⁶ GODIN, *supra* note 20, at 63.

Strategic quitting is a conscious decision you make based on the choices that are available to you. If you realize you're at a dead end compared with what you could be investing in, quitting is not only a reasonable choice, it's a smart one. Failing, on the other hand, means that your dream is over. Failing happens when you give up, when there are no other options, or when you quit so often that you've used up all your time and resources. It's easy to wring your hands about becoming a failure. Quitting smart, though, is a great way to avoid failing.

Id.

¹³⁷ *Id.* at 68. "As soon as your job hits a dead end, it makes sense to quit and take your quest to a bigger marketplace—because every day you wait puts your goal further away." *Id.*

¹³⁸ Berlatsky, *supra* note 129.

¹³⁹ GODIN, *supra* note 20, at 3 (emphasis omitted).

In fact, quitting can be empowering; it can be a way to advocate for oneself because it is ultimately a symbol that they are unwilling to do a task under the current conditions.¹⁴⁰ Hirschman notes that “the ideology of exit has been powerful in America. With the country having been founded on exit and having thrived on it, the belief in exit as a fundamental and beneficial social mechanism has been unquestioning.”¹⁴¹ By teaching students how and when to quit, we are providing them tools to defend and protect their own mental well-being in the workplace.

D. *How to Quit Well*

Once an employee has made the decision to quit, it is normal to feel anxiety and fear about the next steps—“[p]erhaps it’s fear of the unknown, fear of burning bridges or disappointing people, or self-doubt about one’s ability to succeed elsewhere.”¹⁴² But those feelings do not mean that quitting is the wrong approach. Instead, students can take solace in knowing that they can leave in a professional and ethical way. “Be confident and comfortable in this choice and know that you are doing the right thing, even if the process isn’t a fun one.”¹⁴³

From a practical standpoint, quitting well includes a simple and direct conversation, hopefully in person rather than via email or voice mail, with a direct supervisor.¹⁴⁴ Students should be prepared for a variety of reactions—supportive, dismissive, angry—and questions about why you are leaving or what your plans are for the future.¹⁴⁵

We can counsel students to be wary of counteroffers a law firm might make to keep an employee from quitting. While an offer accompanied with “what can we do to get you to stay” might feel flattering, it is in reality a sign that the company could

¹⁴⁰ HIRSCHMAN, *supra* note 126, at 21. “As already mentioned, the exit option is widely held to be uniquely powerful: by inflicting revenue losses on delinquent management, exit is expected to induce that ‘wonderful concentration of the mind.’” *Id.*

¹⁴¹ *Id.* at 112.

¹⁴² *The Great (Law Firm) Resignation: How to Resign (Part I)*, LATERAL LINK, <https://laterallink.com/part-one-the-great-law-firm-resignation-how-to-resign/> [<https://perma.cc/3WMH-ZPG5>] (last visited Aug. 21, 2022) [hereinafter *How to Resign*].

¹⁴³ *Id.* “Successful career shifts . . . tend to be less dramatic than the ones we fantasize about. They also tend to be scarier and more difficult than anticipated.” Hagerty, *supra* note 76.

¹⁴⁴ *How to Resign*, *supra* note 142.

¹⁴⁵ *Id.*

have been doing more all along.¹⁴⁶ A counteroffer might include a pay increase or promotion, “[b]ut the work conditions that prompted your job search in the first place—poor partnership prospects, long hours, toxic culture, insufficient access to interesting work, and so forth—are unlikely to permanently change if you stay.”¹⁴⁷ “[W]age increases raise job satisfaction, but only in the short term. The effect decays quickly as time passes. In all careers, regular wage increases are better for happiness than infrequent, larger raises.”¹⁴⁸ A workplace culture cannot and will not change overnight, regardless of promises made to convince you to stay.¹⁴⁹

After making the decision to leave, students should manage the workload to wrap up assignments and leave things as tidy as possible for the next person.¹⁵⁰ Avoid trying to “send a message” with one final “mic drop” on your way out; remain professional so as to not burn bridges.¹⁵¹

IV. CONCLUSION

In the right context, quitting is incredibly empowering.¹⁵² By teaching students to have the courage to say “no,” try something new, and leave a job that they do not feel is a good fit, we are teaching students the importance of standing up for values

¹⁴⁶ *The Great (Law Firm) Resignation: Why You Shouldn't Take a Counter-Offer (Part II)*, LATERAL LINK, <https://laterallink.com/the-great-law-firm-resignation-why-you-shouldnt-take-a-counter-offer-part-ii/> [<https://perma.cc/V4Z3-FF9J>] (last visited Oct. 6, 2022) [hereinafter *Why You Shouldn't Take a Counter-Offer*] (Offering a pay raise or a promotion only when an employee threatens to leave “demonstrates a clear lack of appreciation for [their] contributions.”).

¹⁴⁷ *Id.*

¹⁴⁸ Brooks, *supra* note 75.

¹⁴⁹ *Why You Shouldn't Take a Counter-Offer*, *supra* note 146.

¹⁵⁰ *How to Resign*, *supra* note 142.

¹⁵¹ *Id.*

¹⁵² Maranville, *supra* note 57, at 490.

Evidence suggests that in many settings we human beings function best when we believe that the world operates according to reason and that we have the ability to control our environment. An entire research subspecialty within psychology has developed to investigate the “locus of control of reinforcement.” This research suggests that individuals with an “internal locus of control”—people who believe external reinforcement is contingent on their efforts—are most successful and happiest. Thus, the people with the characteristics we most want to reinforce are the least likely to wait passively to be fired, and being fired is likely to make it difficult for workers to maintain an internal locus of control.

Id.

that matter to them. Teaching students to quit is about showing them the value they can bring to an organization and to find an organization that notices and appreciates them for what they bring. Teaching students to quit is also beneficial to firms, agencies, and non-profits because they are getting better candidates who know what they want in an employer, reducing employee turnover and creating a stronger applicant pool.

Quitting in the wrong context, however, is bad for both the employee and the employer. Sometimes it really is better to stick things out when work gets tough. Like doing an extra lap on the track when they would rather be lounging on their couch, students must understand the importance of perseverance when things get hard. If students are unprepared to deal with work when things get tough, they will quit at a detriment to themselves, their coworkers, and their employers.

That is why teaching students to quit is so important—because we must have frank conversations with students about how they should handle things in the workplace when work becomes hard. This profession is notorious for its high rates of substance abuse and mental health disorders, and it would be a disservice to our students if we did not set realistic expectations for students about the challenges they will face in their careers.¹⁵³ Legal educators have to be honest about how dream jobs can turn to nightmares due to horrible bosses or working conditions. Students need to know that their passion will burn out if they cannot afford to pay their student loans. It is important to be aware that a stable and secure job can become incredibly mundane and boring.

For these reasons, professional development curricula must include conversations on quitting. It should not take a pandemic for people to realize that a job is not serving their needs as an employee. By having conversations about meaning, working conditions, and work-life balance, new lawyers are more likely to end up in jobs that better suit their interests and needs. When students think about the values that are most important to them, they are more likely to act on those values.¹⁵⁴ And, when people think with the end in mind, people take steps to ensure that their ending is a happy one, because all good things must come to an end—including first jobs, internships, and clerkships. Conversations about quitting will not guarantee that students will find a perfect job, but we are positive it will be more

¹⁵³ *New Study on Lawyer Well-Being Reveals Serious Concerns for Legal Profession*, AM. BAR ASS'N (Dec. 2017), <https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/publications/youraba/2017/december-2017/secrecy-and-fear-of-stigma-among-the-barriers-to-lawyer-well-bei/> [https://perma.cc/R8AM-9MNG].

¹⁵⁴ *See generally* Barbara L. Frederickson, *Positive Emotions Broaden and Build*, 47 *ADVANCES IN EXPERIMENTAL SOC. PSYCH.* 1 (2013) (discussing the concept that positive emotions promote action).

likely. Although careers are long, life is short; and the pandemic gave us an abrupt reminder that life is too short to spend too much time in a job you hate.