



Trial medicine

The challenges presented by shifting into trial warrior and back again



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BY MILES B. COOPER

It's time to take that medicine, the lawyer thought. Trial's around the corner. Full moon's rising, grab that wolf skin. The dreams were returning. With them, fear. Some of it a healthy concern centered on the coming battle. A greater fear? That yet another dance along the edge dividing human and warrior may tip the lawyer over the edge. "Where did my dad go?" the kids might ask. The answer the lawyer feared: the

lawyer dug deep, doesn't want to come back, and remains forever stuck in warrior mode, fueling the next adrenaline rush.

Through the green fuse

Today we explore the explosive emotions kicked up during trial readiness, and the subsequent reentry. Many of us would sooner fill out stacks of minor's compromise petitions instead of focusing on feelings. Yet feelings drive us, roiling inside. As pressure intensifies, we subconsciously drift into our personal default emotional mode. Like rainwater to a stream, we drop into well-worn grooves. Mine? Fury. Like an alcoholic's poison of choice, my default state powers and consumes me. Fury at the other side for what they did to our person, our charge, our client. Rage that the other side continues the punishment into trial. That heat gets metered, a river pushed through a hydraulic mining hose nozzle. Devastating, with collateral damage that blasts the roots of trees. The energy does not dissipate just because the jury leaves.

In an effort to examine that default emotional state and smooth out some other rough edges following our daughter's cancer battle (yes, she's doing well now, thanks for asking), I took a guided psychedelic journey. I spent hours in a subterranean cavern, battling a dragon, my fury. As it threatened to consume me, I grabbed its tongue between flame bursts, whipping the dragon around until I flipped it inside out. It shrunk down to the size of my hand, a scaly pulsing mass. I slid it into a holster on my hip. I thought this meant I could now deploy holstered dragon anger at will. My next trial taught me otherwise. I found when I reached for it, the dragon still engulfed me, so perfectly fitted and comforting – where have you been, lover? – refusing to slough off.

Drives the flower

On an emotion wheel, fury's opposite is love. With some practice, one can flip one's powerful default emotional mode into its frequently healthier opposite. Picture yourself sheltering under an umbrella on a storm-gusty day – perhaps approaching San Francisco's wind tunnel of a federal courthouse – as a sharp blast turns the umbrella inside out. Try it the next time you find

yourself in default. For me, it takes a few deep breaths and conscious re-channeling. How do you harness your inverse emotion? The same way one gets to Carnegie Hall. Practice, practice.

As I've felt fiery dragon burps tickling my throat, I practice flipping. Love thine enemy as thyself. Yes, but what does a dragon do with love? Before my most effective cross-examination to date, I focused on the expert. I loved him. Deeply. I considered his life in shadow and obstinance. What a loss for someone so skilled, so smart. I approached him with open heart during the examination. Damned if I did not turn him that day.

Drives my green age

Love does not conquer all. I have not turned every expert with this soon-to-be-patented love 'em all method. Yet some of our team's most impactful recent moments came through love instead of fury – including depositions. It doesn't feel natural yet. I'm at conscious competence level. Have I quieted the fear that I'll slip into trial warrior and never return? In some ways. Whether love or fury, these pinnacle trial emotions crackle. Reaching that state feels like one can see around corners, walk through walls, power cities. That's flow.

For now, I typically reach flow in trial, strategic discussion, and on the bike. I continue the work. We know there are no ordinary moments. After an arcing trial day, I got a hand squeeze from our child as we waited to cross the street on the way back from school. That squeeze, that particular moment – it won't ever happen again in that same way. The squeeze shifted me and gave me a window into how to shift back. The warrior decamped, leaving a father behind.

Outro

Back to our lawyer, who – of course – is me. As a youngster, I watched trial greats appear fearless and unflappable, setting what appeared an unattainable bar. Only as I tried more cases did I become aware of the duck-like behavior. Grace on the surface, furious paddling beneath. We all face fears, we're all buffeted by emotion. We all survive. Most return from warrior state. One day, with practice, I'll achieve flow sufficient to phase-shift instantaneously. In the interim, I'll seek out a hand squeeze. For attuned readers – if some of the more poetic phrases here sounded familiar, headers from Dylan Thomas's "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower" were indeed woven into this.

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