

# Student Newsletter

February 2015

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## **What Keeps Me Motivated**

By Katherine Schilling

Staying motivated is probably one of the hardest things for a student to do while in court reporting school. The constant testing and failing (or simply “no-pass,” as we should think of it) can drain one’s enthusiasm for school. Before even discipline or hard work, motivation is the driving force that keeps you attending classes, reminds you of why you should sit through that extra dictation, and gives you reason to improve your writing. This is why motivation is one of the most important tools a student can hold onto to survive school. The question is, then, where can you find it?

*“If something is possible for humans, believe that it is possible also for you.” – Marcus Aurelius*

Whenever I entertain that terrible little thought: “Maybe I can’t do it,” I stop and look around at all those who have come before me and achieved the same thing that I am striving to do. I remember how every working reporter has gone through the very trials and tribulations that I have and usually with more hardships than myself before accomplishing it. All around me students with demanding family obligations, debilitating illnesses, and countless other hurdles attend class without complaint and get certified. These students are an inspiration and a testament that there is no excuse I could ever cook up that can’t be overcome.

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*“Take pride in how far you have come and have faith in how far you can go.” – Christian Larson*

Despite our perfectionist streak, court reporting students tend to have awful short-term memory. It seems the minute one passes a test, he allows himself a maximum of five minutes to enjoy it before turning back to his machine and working towards that next test pass. Looking ahead is the way to go, but beginning a new speed often hits students' motivation the hardest. Rather than bogging yourself down with trepidations about climbing the next mountain, look back to all the previous summits you've reached. Remember how 80 words a minute once seemed insurmountable? If you were able to pass all those levels to your present goal speed, then what's to stop you now?

Take this a step further and think about all the other things you've accomplished in life that once seemed impossible. It may have been finally learning how to drive stick shift or surviving a particularly grueling academic class or even conquering your fear of public speaking. Draw strength from knowing all that you've accomplished so far to spur on your progress. It reinforces your confidence and security to know that you can tackle any obstacle.

*“Be strong enough to stand alone, smart enough to know when you need help, and brave enough to ask for it.” – Ziad K. Abdelnour*

If you've ever felt down on yourself, then you know how we can sometimes be our own worst enemies. We can sabotage our own progress with unchecked negativity and doubt. This is why sometimes we have to look outside ourselves for a source to reignite our emotional energy. One place this can be found is from those within the court reporting industry where there is no shortage of passionate and generous mentors. Motivational quotes from philosophers and successful businesspeople can be just as powerful and help you through your own obstacles. Marcus Aurelius has a way of reminding me not to sweat the small stuff. Steve Jobs's Commencement speech to Stanford graduates in 2005 offers new nuggets of motivational gold every time I hear it. Keep your ears open to the savvy advice of those who share it and it can serve as a candle in the darkness.

*“People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing -- that's why we recommend it daily.” – Zig Ziglar*

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You can't expect to wait until you've finished school to pat yourself on the back. In order to keep your motivation up, you need to find reasons to celebrate your accomplishments wherever you can get them. Whether you've passed a speed test or beat a personal best for a particular category, each and every accomplishment is a significant step in your progress and should be celebrated. It not only serves as a way to track your progress but reminds you that, "Yes, you can do this! Yes, you are worth it!"



I know of students who celebrate a test pass with a new piece of clothing to add to their professional wardrobe -- talk about looking ahead! -- or by taking a day off of school to revel in their recent victory. Myself, it's sushi. I commemorate the passing of each test pass with a dinner out to my favorite sushi restaurant. It's where I reflect on completing yet another small step in my journey, and it pushes me to keep going strong to pass that next test. After all, sushi awaits!

*"People with goals succeed because they know where they are going." – Earl Nightingale*

Little rewards throughout school provide a regular pick-me-up, but long-sustaining sources of motivation are what lead to success. Certification is the ultimate carrot on a stick that we must keep in mind to keep us going -- the knowledge of what awaits us once we're out in the field. We've heard stories from working reporters about the excitement their job gives them, the flexible work hours...the pay! Whatever your reasons for starting school, don't forget them. Keep your goals at the forefront of your mind and latch onto them whenever you feel your motivation faltering. Visualizing your end goal with as much detail as you can will solidify that goal into an inevitable reality. With that target in mind, you'll be equipped with a long-burning fuel to guide you through to the end.

It's never too early or too late to be mindful about what personally motivates you. When things get tough, you'll have to draw on those sources for inspiration and energy to make it through. The tricky thing about motivation is that it's so deeply entwined with one's own goals that it's not always a one-size-fits-all idea. While everyone draws motivation from different sources, hopefully some of the insight I provided in this article can spark a motivational force within you.



## **The 500-Pound Phone**

By Alisa Church



Sometimes, my phone feels like it weighs 500 pounds. Picking it up to call someone that I met at a convention or through another networking source somehow makes lifting it feel almost impossible.

One of my instructors gave me the phone number of a highly respected veteran reporter who lives only a few blocks from me and told me that I should call her. She told me that she was expecting my call. She told me that she would be a great resource for me. She told me that she was a very positive, high-energy person who would love to hear from me. If I knew all of this, why was it so hard to make that call? Would I be bothering her? What if I interrupted something important? What would I say? I really didn't even have a reason to call her other than the fact that my instructor asked me to. I mustered all of my courage, picked up that 500-pound phone, and dialed her number. We talked for a short time, and she was everything that my instructor said and more. She even invited me to sit with her for a couple of days on a job that she had that was writing interviews with all sorts of television personalities. If I had shied away from that initial discomfort and decided not to call, I would not be able to say that my first experience sitting with a working reporter included Kobe Bryant, Jon Voight, John Goodman, and the Jackson family. How many other students can say that? More importantly, I would have missed out on getting to know an excellent reporter and the wisdom that she so generously shared with me while I was with her.

While picking up the phone is very daunting, sending an email seems like it should be much more comfortable. It feels a little less intrusive on the other person's life because they are free to read it and respond at a time that works best for them. This method is not as powerful or personal, and it comes with its own set of "what-ifs." What if the person was only being polite when they told me that I could contact them? What if I make a punctuation or spelling error? That could be the kiss of death in our world. What if they think it is junk and never read it? What should I say? What if they don't remember who I am? What if they don't respond? Maybe the 500-pound phone is the better option.

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Meeting fellow students should be a bit easier on the nerves. I have had students approach me at two different conventions to say that they recognized my name or my face and wanted to introduce themselves. I was thrilled! Why is it so difficult for some of us to do that with other students? Don't we all want to meet others who can identify with our struggles? Court reporting school is a very lonely process. No one truly understands what it is like except someone who has been through it. We must give up our social lives and time with family and friends in order to do what needs to be done. I am an online student, so that adds to the isolation. It has been a tremendous help to build relationships with other students who are going through the exact same things that I am going through. We share our highs and lows. We cheer our successes, and we lend an understanding ear for the tantrums and tears. Forming new relationships with current students and newer reporters has been a very unexpected and pleasant side effect to my willingness to simply put my hand out and introduce myself.

Networking can be very distressing, but it is getting easier for me. I now have a handful of professionals that I feel I can contact when I have questions and a support system of other students. I overcame that initial uneasiness just long enough to meet them, and they have been kind enough to introduce me to others, and it has grown from there. They encourage me when I need it, and some of them have even given me a much-needed kick in the pants at times. I have gotten loads of tips and tricks, briefs and spreadsheets, and tax advice and warnings from the very generous people that I have met since I have decided it was in my best interest to ignore the discomfort of networking. One person even sponsored me to attend a local convention! What a nice surprise!

Someone once told me that most people don't really understand the true purpose of networking. He told me that many business professionals think that success is about who you know, but they don't understand that that is not as important as who knows you. There are so many accomplished reporters with vast amounts of knowledge and experience that I know only through social media. I recognize their names instantly as being some of the best in the field. I have been lucky enough to build friendships with a few of them, but most would have no idea who I am or what my name is. As I applied my friend's interpretation of the networking process to my own situation of being a court reporting student who will one day need someone willing to employ me, I realized the brilliance of his words.

My phone still weighs 500 pounds, but I pick it up anyway.



## *Jade's Purely Self-Observed Tips for Realtime Excellence, Part 1*

-Fingerspelling. Be a crazy fiend at it. Being as fast at fingerspelling as you are on a QWERTY keyboard gives you the ability to turn out near-perfect realtime no matter what comes up. It takes time to learn to fingerspell as fast as you can QWERTY. So get working on that now, if you're still a student. Even now, when we have interpreted or slow evidence, I will randomly fingerspell normal words all the time just to keep my speed up. Know how to use your force space and delete space and stitching, and how to spell in upper and lower case.

For what it's worth, I use:

abcd etc = letter plus /RBGS

ABCD etc = letter plus /RBGS\*

Fingerspelling is usually done in mixed case, for names etc, and I have found keeping my fingers fixed in the one position (just adding in the asterisk as required) minimises the chance of stacking or stuffing it up. There's a lot going on in your mind when you're fingerspelling, usually, like trying to work out how you're going to spell an unfamiliar term, plus trying to retain the speech continuing "in the background", so anything you can do to minimise fumbling around is good.

I mainly use those two fingerspelling alphabets. The only other one I use regularly is (a), (b), (c) = /A\*FPLT, /B\*FPLT, /KR\*FPLT etc. These bracketed letters of course come up all the time in quoted material.

-Formatting. What saves you time with editing? Getting everything as right as you can in the first place. Have quick ways to write (a), (b) etc so you can get citations like 23B(c) in quickly – I use, for example, /A\*FPLT for (a), instead of FPLT-SKWR/PW-RBGS/FPLT-SKWR/FPLT-SKWR (my strokes for open bracket, b, close bracket). Know how to write Roman numerals (I use /RO\*EM/#1 etc). Have a quick way to write bracketed numbers (for example, I do /PWRA\*BG/#1 for (1)). Know how to do square brackets so you can accurately take down quotes, including excisions or deviations from the text (I just use /SKWAEURB to open and double it up to close). We write "per cent" out in full in our transcripts, which for me is /POEURS. I use the good old R-R (/POEURS/R-R) to make the % symbol so I can use it in quotes if it appears. Same for the plus sign, equals sign, @ sign, all sorts of other symbols. Some of these, it may be easier to just use the asterisk – for example, /AT for "at", but /A\*T for @. Getting all these little things right lifts your transcript/captioning output from just words to a properly edited live representation of what's happening. This is one of the main differences between average writers and great writers, I think. Getting all these little things right takes your output to another level. It's impressive to be able to take down all the words – it's even more impressive to take it down live like a properly edited and formatted document. It takes time to get all these things nailed and it's definitely worth working on them right from the start.

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-General knowledge. This one is so important. Go out of your way to really learn stuff all the time. Read newspapers and world news sites every day and actually take in the content. Make lists of political names and terms and geographical terms in particular. This is just as relevant for CR as captioning. This stuff comes up. Celebrities du jour, moments in sport, all of it. That's just general building of knowledge. But then also...

-Accumulating specific knowledge. I did this a lot as I was studying. Research particular areas you don't know about. Medical, building, physiological, anatomical, chemical, food, history, maritime, automotive, the animal kingdom, science, computers, etc etc etc to infinity and beyond. Try to get a grounding in as many areas as you can. I have tons of lists somewhere from when I was doing this and I still do it sometimes. And it really helps. In this case I'm doing at the moment, for example, about boats, an expert randomly mentioned "bowsprit". This is a word I wouldn't have known if I hadn't read an adventure book about five years ago, specifically with the aim of getting my head around some older literary terms. Stuff like this happens EVERY DAY – random things pop up that you remember from the study you've put in. Never stop reading and making lists and REMEMBERING! Again, I find this equally as relevant to court reporting as captioning – especially here, where the cases aren't all personal injury or car accidents or whatever.

-Study literature. Words are the basis of what we do, and law can be old-school. Learn basic Latin and how it works – it's quite simple to work things out on the fly if you have an understanding of its predictable structure. Learn old English terms, which constitutes much case law. Read classic literature, even if it's boring. Quotes and off-the-cuff references to these things come up all the time. Being able to get them out there in the realtime feed is another impressive thing to clients. History and literature are two of the things I really studied hard and would definitely recommend.

The great thing is that all this stuff can be done yourself, in your own time. No need to spend money on books and classes!

This is the sort of stuff that will serve you in getting the best realtime jobs – and getting them faster. I have focused intensely on being good at all these things and they've certainly proven more valuable to me than getting through school in 18 months and THEN trying to incorporate them all, or spending my time memorising families of briefs. Having a solid theory that you know inside out, that can let you write anything that comes up with automation, gives you the brain space to stay on top of these other things – that will put you on top of the realtime game in CR and captioning alike.



## Scholarship to Be Presented at Luncheon

DRA is proud to announce the recipients of this year's [Zandonella Scholarship](#): Jessie Frey and Celeste Poppe. Jessie is currently in the 200 wpm class at South Coast College, and Celeste is



currently in the 180-225 wpm class at Bryan University - Online

Division. Both Jessie and Celeste are active DRA student members, attending student functions as well as our annual convention and seminars and upon graduation will be a great addition to this profession. These two recipients will be presented their scholarship awards at the convention luncheon on Saturday, February 21.



***Congratulations, Jessie and Celeste!***

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19th ANNUAL CONVENTION

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### ***The Deposition Reporters Association of California's Mission Statement***

**DRA strives to preserve and enhance the freelance stenographic reporting profession, ensure its integrity, and maintain its high standards and impartiality wherever stenographic services are required. DRA is committed to ensuring that the freelance stenographic reporting profession remains a viable and integral part of the legal system.**

## **SAVE THE DATE !**

DRA Board of Directors  
Meeting  
Saturday, 2/19/2015  
10:00 a.m.  
Monterey Plaza Hotel

**DRA 19<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Convention**  
Fri. 2/20/15 7:30 a.m. – Sun.  
2/22/15 4:00 p.m.  
Monterey Plaza Hotel & Spa  
400 Cannery Row, Monterey,  
CA

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