



My Child Wants to Be a Lawyer...

by Mary Buettner
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What do you do if your child comes to you and says s/he wants to be a lawyer?

After the initial shock and horror wear off, you might tell them some of the same things that I tell young people who ask me about the profession of law.

First, the practice of law bears little resemblance to what's portrayed on television. Most attorneys do not go to court daily, do not practice in posh, high-rise office buildings, and do not work on glamorous cases. Instead, we spend most of our days (and they tend to be long days) talking on the phone, reading, and writing.

I tell young people to only consider being an attorney if they like to read. Attorneys read voluminous amounts of material everyday, which is why we all wear contact lenses or glasses. If you hate to read, you'd hate being an attorney.

Attorneys also need to be analytical. For people who prefer to not have to think a lot and in logical ways, the practice of law is not for them.

There are misconceptions about what it takes to be an attorney. For example, you don't need to be wealthy to go to law school. I borrowed the money to go, and thought of it as buying my first house. You don't need to be a big mouth to be a good attorney. Being a good listener is more important. You don't need to have a parent or close relative that's an attorney in order to be one (it does help, but I did it without).

Attorneys do work long hours, which probably explains why children of attorneys often choose not to be attorneys themselves. I've observed the same is true of physicians' children.

Overall, it's a good occupation and can lead to diverse career paths. While many of the attorneys I practiced law with early in my career have moved on to other work, I'm still at it and I enjoy almost every day.

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