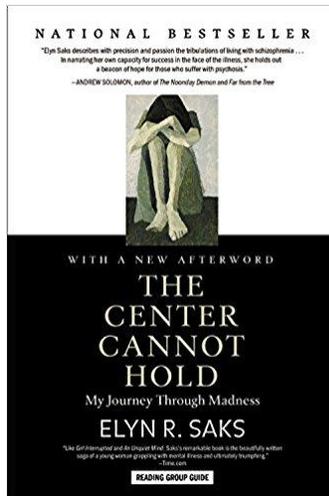


A Counselor's Memoir.



Book Review by Charles D. Mockbee IV

Saks, Elyn R., *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness*, Hachette Books, 2015.

Attorneys have long been referred to in many ways: lawyer, advocate, counselor. Elyn R. Saks' book details her voyage to becoming an attorney and captures her diagnosis of schizophrenia through vivid recollections from her childhood to the present. Ms. Saks describes the continuous mental health counseling she received as she persistently pursued her goal of becoming a counselor at law.

William Butler Yeats wrote the poem, "The Second Coming," in 1919. "The Center Cannot Hold" is a line from the poem which uses Christian imagery to paint a picture of the anarchy in post-war Europe. Early on in her book, Ms. Saks similarly depicts her experiences with her mental illness as "[c]onsciousness gradually loses its coherence. One's center gives way. The center cannot hold."

The book is riveting, providing an in-depth examination of the life of Ms. Saks as she struggles to overcome her situation and make correct choices. One such example can be seen in her decision not to fight civil commitment:

"Unbeknownst to me then, the consequences of being civilly committed to a psychiatric hospital are severe and can be long-lasting. For instance, many application forms (such as an application to sit for the bar exam) ask whether one has ever been civilly committed. I didn't know it then, but there would come a day when I would be very

happy that I wasn't compelled to check the 'yes' box. So, following my dad's advice, I signed the voluntary."

The book is also uplifting as her prognosis was grave, yet Ms. Saks fought to become a professor at the University of Southern California Gould School of Law. She not only coped with her condition, she thrived. In 1986 her Note, "The Use of Mechanical Restraints in Psychiatric Hospitals" was published in the *Yale Law Journal*. She recalled how the Note had been used to form a major class action lawsuit challenging the restraints. "My Note helped someone. My work had made a difference. It helped another attorney and it helped patients who were no different from me. No different at all."

One of Time Magazine's Top Ten Nonfiction Books of 2007, the book has received many honors while becoming a National Bestseller. Non-lawyers and lawyers alike should enjoy this inspiring narration of Elyn R. Saks' "Journey Through Madness." Her advice:

"If you are a person with mental illness, the challenge is to find the life that's right for you. But in truth, isn't that the challenge for all of us, mentally ill or not? My good fortune is not that I've recovered from mental illness. I have not, nor will I ever. My good fortune lies in having found my life."

Purchase your copy of the book, *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness*, [from Amazon here \(insert link: https://www.amazon.com/Center-Cannot-Hold-Journey-Through/dp/1401309445\)](https://www.amazon.com/Center-Cannot-Hold-Journey-Through/dp/1401309445).

Biography

Charles D. Mockbee IV

Charles D. Mockbee IV practices law at Kesler, Nelson, Garman, Brougher & Townsley, P.C. in the firm's Danville, Illinois office. He has taught Criminal Law at Danville Area Community College. He served as an Assistant State's Attorney in Vermilion County, Illinois for over a decade. There in Vermilion County, he and his wife, Rebecca, raise their son, Jonah.

Mr. Mockbee earned his J.D. in 2004 from Southern Illinois University School of Law and his B.A. in 2001 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a member of the Illinois State Bar Association and the Vermilion County Bar Association. He is admitted to the bars of Illinois and the United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois.

