



# Book Review: *Perseverance* by Margaret J Wheatley

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## ABSTRACT

*Perseverance* is an introspective guide that offers the reader direction on how to overcome obstacles and persevere through them. The individual essays, poems and quotes include provocative questions and viewpoints which can challenge current mindsets through reflection. An Organizational Ombudsman can use the series of excerpts for self-care, or as a coaching conversation starter with all visitors that might be anchored in their perspective.

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## KEYWORDS

Ombudsman, Self-Care, Tenacity, Overcoming, Determination, Reflection



## ABOUT *PERSEVERANCE*

Margaret Wheatley offers the reader a spiritual reference guide to help navigate through emotional journeys and creating a contemplative space for transcendence. The layout of the book includes quotes from thought leaders, Zen masters, teachers, industry leaders and CEO's that spark a cathartic reflective process. If you are looking for support or direction when you face challenges, the short essays and quotes can serve as a roadmap to help jumpstart the path of working through the issues, promoting introspection and examining the obstacles from a different viewpoint.

The book is not meant to be read in one sitting, and would benefit the reader who chooses a passage, poem or excerpt which can invoke an inward exploration of their fears, motivations, and strengths. The readings provide opportunities to reflect upon the obstacles which may interfere with forward progress, allowing the reader to examine the reality of the situation and alternate solutions. "Tenacity, steadfastness, persistence, doggedness" are used as synonyms for perseverance, as a frame of reference for how we may all overcome roadblocks.

*Perseverance* is laid out in five parts, which can serve as separate reflective journeys. Although *Perseverance* does not expressly reference the practice of being an Ombudsman, as an Organizational Ombudsman, I can attest to the fact that it would be particularly helpful for Ombudsman in their professional practice as well as for them personally. The first three parts of the book were helpful as I navigated the journey of being in COVID-19 quarantine while supporting visitors' questions concerning; "finding their place," "letting go" of what they cannot control, accepting what is presented, and to not take things personally. Part four and five provides an opportunity to reflect on overcoming a mindset or attitude of feeling stuck, seizing opportunities and "banishing the word struggle" as we examine how to pave the path forward and accepting a new normal during these complex times.

In Part one: *Here is a River* I took note of questions that may help visitors move forward in my role as an Organizational Ombudsman. Part one also provided validation of how empathy plays a critical role as Ombudsman, being "aware of others struggles, pain and perseverance." Other excerpts triggered thoughts of how an Ombudsman engages in active listening, considers all stories rather than one perspective as a neutral party, and may be considered a "spiritual warrior" to our visitors as we help them along their journey.

Part two, *Let go of the Shore* essays support the role of being an Organizational Ombudsman as an advocate for fairness when others present their position, taking into consideration the complex data points presented. In the work of an Organizational Ombudsman, we may confront anger and highly emotive dialogue from our visitors with a sense of urgency that may spiral into crisis. The essays offer encouragement for Ombudsman to keep their "head above the water" when a visitor may present their darkest journey and experiences. Part three, *Take Nothing Personally*, categorizes essays based on emotions of failure, fear, aggression, grief and guilt along with ideas for discovering within ourselves the skills to persevere. The poems and essays are deliberately placed and can serve as a coaching conversation starter for the Ombudsman practitioner.

If you have not experienced positive feedback and you find yourself questioning your commitment to help resolve conflict on a daily basis, have an overwhelming caseload or are engulfed in organizational bureaucracy, then Part four, *Banish the Struggle* is the chapter for you. The essays offer a path on how to confront challenging times, how to not give up and trust the process, which are especially impactful concepts for an Ombudsman. The thought-provoking situations presented in the essays have the ability to lead the reader through a path of self-analysis while recognizing the possibilities available to overcome challenges. Frequently, visitors who may be on the edge of chaos will reach out to an Ombudsman to share an emotionally



paralyzing experience with the hope of getting unstuck. I was re-inspired to continue asking questions of myself and others, while acknowledging the present moment and embodying fortitude and faith in Part five, *For We Are the Ones*.

Being an Organizational Ombudsman can be an overwhelming role and *Perseverance* can be a resource for any Organizational Ombudsman with a desire to sift through the emotional issues which may surface daily. As I read through *Perseverance*, the words of wisdom reinforced ethical aspects of the IOA Standards and Practices of Neutrality, Impartiality, Independence and Confidentiality.

This book can serve multiple purposes to the practicing Organizational Ombudsman and to the Ombudsman's visitor. For the Organizational Ombudsman that consumes the hours of their day with issues, concerns and interest-based requests from visitors, *Perseverance* can facilitate a mental mind shift from tension or stress to hope and possibilities. The *No Big Deal* essay can serve as a reminder of the importance of self-care, ensuring that Ombudsman don't spiral into the crisis that is presented by our visitors. If you are seeking thought provoking questions to examine your role of neutrality as an Ombudsman, I encourage you to read the essay entitled *Middle*, which offers insight on behavior justification, and being open to possibilities when we hear the scripted experience of the visitor from their perspective. Many of the essays could be applied to various situations for a visitor or a practitioner. Remaining aware of another's struggle and pain points, helping to evaluate options and helping our visitors persevere while practicing empathy are themes that align with being an Ombudsman and are threaded through this essay.

Behaviors which may obstruct the process for identifying paths in which to move forward are described using language which quite often is illustrated by our visitors. *Perseverance* can serve as a reference point for the Ombudsman in their practice, recommending a passage or perhaps using any of the passages as a source of dialogue, to help coach a visitor through their experience. As I read through various sections of the book, I could easily identify references for what it might mean to "let go", helping the visitor gain clarity on their role in the conflict, or perhaps how their personal history might inform how they are or may handle current conflicts.

I recommend *Perseverance* as a reflective reference guide that can inspire or help a visitor or Organizational Ombudsman get unstuck. There are many ways the Organizational Ombudsman can benefit from *Perseverance* such as; when they may need a few inspiring words to move forward, when they feel lost, or think their ethics are being challenged, or standards of practice are being compromised. *Perseverance* is a reflective journey that can transcend experiences and mindsets towards possibilities for Ombudsman and visitors.



## REFERENCES

Wheatley, M. J. (2010). *Perseverance*. Berrett-Koehler.



## AUTHOR BIO

**Jacqueline Villafane** is a Certified Organizational Ombudsman Practitioner, and is the Corporate Ombudsman for the American Red Cross enterprise. Jacqueline has been a consultant to government agencies and global organizations in the areas of Organization Development, Executive Coaching and Action Learning: a process that involves a small group working on real problems while taking action and increasing individual, team and organization learning. Her experience in conflict resolution includes working in the for profit and nonprofit environment, as a coach and facilitator for resolutions.