

Check Out Thomas Swisher's Story

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TODAY WE'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THOMAS SWISHER.

Hi Thomas, please kick things off for us with an introduction to yourself and your story.

My professional path has been anything but linear, and in many ways, that's what shaped the work I do today. I began my career as an attorney-litigator, working in private practice and later as a mediator. Early on, I was drawn not just to legal outcomes, but to the human stories underneath conflict—especially family conflict. I saw how unresolved patterns, poor communication, and long-standing emotional wounds often mattered more than the legal issues themselves.

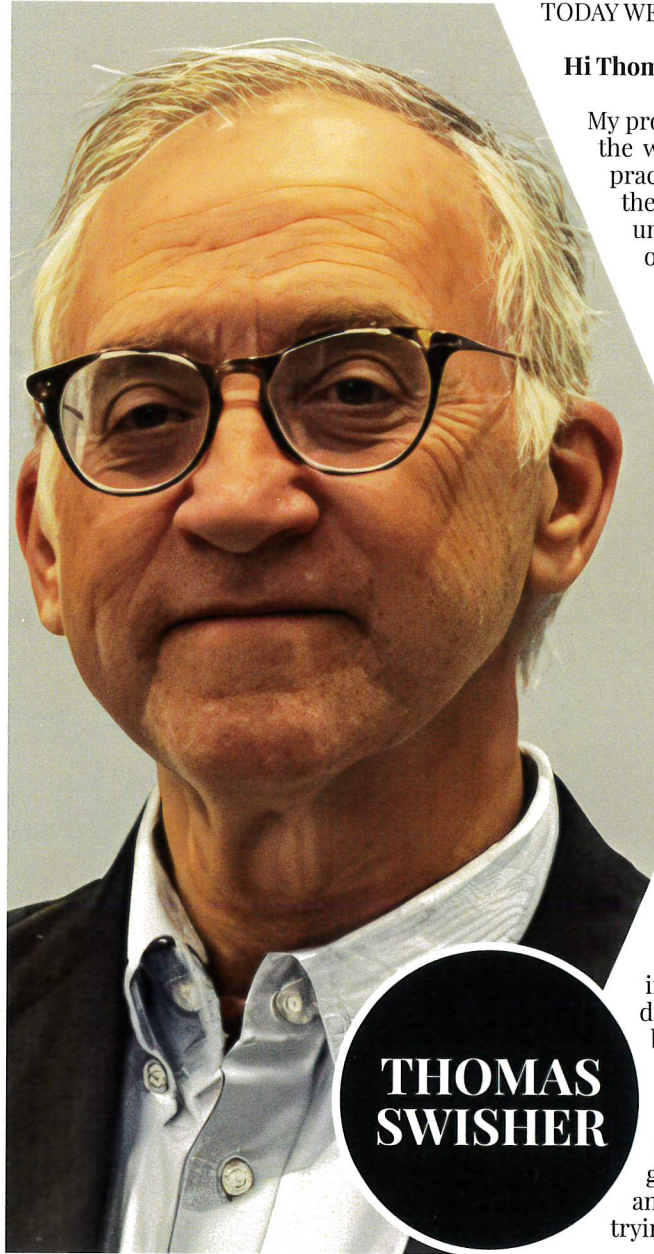
That curiosity eventually led me back to school and into the counseling field. I earned my Doctorate in Counseling from Loyola University of Maryland, became a licensed professional counselor, and began focusing more deeply on family systems, the ways families function, where they get stuck, and how patterns repeat across generations. Over time, my work expanded to include counseling, mediation, teaching at Stevenson University, and community education.

Today, I wear several hats: counselor, mediator, educator, and author. I work with individuals, couples, and families navigating conflict, transitions, grief, and change. I also recently published a book called *Family Dynamics: Transforming the Hidden Patterns That Shape Us*, and I'm working on a companion workbook, designed to help people better understand the unseen forces shaping their relationships. What connects all of my work is a belief that awareness changes everything. When people understand their family patterns, they gain more choice, compassion, and freedom in how they live and relate.

I'm sure it wasn't obstacle-free, but would you say the journey has been fairly smooth so far?

Not at all! It's definitely been a road with detours, uncertainty, and real risk. One of the biggest challenges was deciding to leave a stable legal career to return to school and pursue counseling. I remember sitting in my office late one evening, surrounded by case files, realizing that while I was doing well professionally, I felt increasingly disconnected from the work itself. I was helping people resolve disputes in the courtroom, but I wanted to help them change the patterns that kept bringing them back into conflict. Making the decision to step away from something secure without a clear roadmap ahead was both unsettling and humbling.

There were also very practical struggles along the way—balancing work, education, and family responsibilities, building a counseling practice from the ground up, and learning how to integrate multiple roles as a counselor, mediator, and educator. At times, it felt like I was straddling three professional identities and trying to make them speak to each other in a coherent way.



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On a more personal level, the work itself is emotionally demanding. Sitting with people in pain, conflict, or grief requires ongoing self-reflection and care. Early on, I learned that if I didn't pay attention to my own boundaries and family dynamics, I wouldn't be able to do this work well or sustainably.

Looking back, those struggles weren't roadblocks so much as teachers. Each challenge clarified why this work matters to me and shaped an approach that's grounded, compassionate, and realistic about how change actually happens.

Thanks for sharing that. So, maybe next you can tell us a bit more about your work?

At the core of my work is helping people understand the patterns that shape their relationships—especially within families. I work as a



counselor, mediator, educator, and author, and those roles inform one another. In my counseling practice, I work with individuals, couples, and families dealing with conflict, life transitions, grief, anxiety, and long-standing relational challenges.

In mediation, I help families, often during separation or divorce, navigate difficult decisions in a way that reduces harm and keeps relationships intact and cooperative.

I specialize in family systems work, which means I focus less on “who’s at fault” and more on how patterns develop, repeat, and can be changed. Many people come to me feeling stuck in the same arguments, roles, or emotional reactions. I’m known for helping them slow things down, see the bigger picture, and make more intentional choices rather than reacting out of old habits.

What I’m most proud of is my ability to bridge worlds that don’t often talk to each other—law and counseling, theory and everyday life, insight and practical tools. My background allows me to approach family conflict with both structure and empathy.

That perspective also led me to write a book on family dynamics designed to make complex ideas accessible and usable for everyday people, not just professionals.

What sets me apart is that I don’t see families as “broken.” I see them as systems doing their best with what they’ve learned. My goal is to help people understand those systems, loosen what no longer serves them, and create healthier ways of relating—both within their families and in their own lives.

How do you think about luck?

I’ve come to believe that luck plays a role, but mostly in the form of timing and openness rather than chance alone. I’ve certainly benefited from good luck—meeting mentors at the right moments, having opportunities to teach, write, and serve in the community, and encountering clients and colleagues who trusted me early on when I was still finding my footing in a new profession.

At the same time, some of what initially felt like bad luck turned out to be essential.

Periods of uncertainty, career transitions, and even moments of self-doubt forced me to slow down, reflect, and recalibrate.

Those experiences pushed me to ask better questions about what kind of work I wanted to do and how I wanted to show up for others.

I often share one of my favorite fables about “luck” with students and clients. It’s about a farmer and his son, whose only horse runs away from the stable. The neighbors offer their condolences, saying, “How unfortunate. You lost your only way to get around and the horse that helps with your plowing.” But the wise farmer would simply reply, “How do you know?” Then, a week later, the horse returns to the farm, bringing with it a herd of wild horses, which the farmer and his son quickly gather. Hearing the news, neighbors exclaim, “What a blessing! You were poor, but now you are rich in horses!” And the wise farmer responds, “How do you know?” While trying to tame the wild horses, the farmer’s son is kicked and trampled, leaving him permanently disabled. Neighbors come back with expressions of sympathy, saying, “How sad. You’ve lost the strong help of your son.” As you already know, the farmer replies, “How do you know?” In the final part of this story, a military general gathers all the young men to fight in a war that ultimately destroys his army, but the farmer’s son is left behind, disabled, and survives. This old parable reminds us that what we often see as “good” or “bad” fortune can easily turn into the opposite.

I think luck matters most when preparation meets opportunity. Each step in my professional journey—law, mediation, counseling, teaching, and now authoring a book—prepared me for the next, even when it wasn’t obvious at the time.

Looking back, what I’m grateful for isn’t just the fortunate breaks, but the setbacks that redirected me toward work that feels more aligned, meaningful, and sustainable.

