





CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS



*The true measure of
a civilized society is
how it treats people
accused of crimes*

Winston Churchill



*The true measure of
a successful attorney
is how they treat the
people they represent
who have been
accused of a crime*

Bill



Having Positive Client Relationships Matters

- Makes you a better attorney
- Makes you a better advocate for your client
- Makes your life easier
- Makes your clients more likely to trust you
- Makes your clients more likely to listen to your advice
- Makes your clients more likely to make a good decision in a bad situation

Positive Client Relationships are Where Mitigation Evidence is Born

- In the events of their lives
 - The good things
 - The bad things
 - The diagnosable things

Barriers to Creating Positive Client Relationships



■ Client Barriers

■ Lack of trust

- Ability to have a positive relationship is hampered simply because you are a Public Defender or a Court Appointed Lawyer
- Clients come into these relationships with preconceived notions about us
 - Assume we don't care about them and what happens in their case
 - Assume we are inept attorneys who aren't good enough to get paying clients
 - Assume we work for the Court and the Prosecutor

Barriers to Creating Positive Client Relationships



- Client Barriers Continued
 - Mental Health
 - Education/Learning Disabilities
 - Interpersonal Communication Skills
 - Embarrassment
 - Fear/Anger
 - Unreasonable Expectations
 - Language/Cultural Issues

Barriers to Creating Positive Client Relationships



- Attorney Barriers

- Do we have the ability to communicate with a wide range of persons and personalities
- Unconscious bias
- Lack of Openness

Tearing Down the Barriers to Creating a Positive Client Relationship



- The Basics
 - Treat like a human
 - Shake their hands
 - Attempt to empathize or sympathize with their situation
 - Ask about their current situation
 - Learn their name and how its pronounced

Tearing Down the Barriers to Creating a Positive Client Relationship

- Communication
 - Talk to your Clients, in person, regularly
 - Keep your word
 - Keep them informed
 - How their case will proceed
 - Who you are and what you're role is

Tearing Down the Barriers to Creating a Positive Client Relationship



- Communication Continued
 - Listen
 - Ask Questions
 - Open-ended questions
 - Use direct and indirect questions
 - Start with less threatening information early in relationship
 - Non-accusatory questions
 - Follow Up Questions

Tearing Down the Barriers to Creating a Positive Client Relationship



- Communication Continued
 - Answer their Questions/Concerns/Worries
 - Why Should I trust you?
 - You work for the government?
 - You don't care about me?

Tearing Down the Barriers to Creating a Positive Client Relationship




- Relationship with Prosecutor
 - In Front of Client v. Out of Court
- Don't Crush Their Dreams – yet
 - Highlight the areas where you may have a fight
 - “Big Fish Story”
- Don't be Easily Offended
 - A rejection of a great plea offer is not a rejection of you personally

Tearing Down the Barriers to Creating a Positive Client Relationship



- Remember That You are Not Alone
 - Investigator
 - Professionals
 - Doctors
 - Psychiatrists
 - Family



*“Being unwanted,
unloved, uncared for,
forgotten by everybody, I
think that is a much
greater hunger, a much
greater poverty than the
person who has nothing
to eat”*

Mother Teresa