

New York Divorce and Family Law Blog

[The Client- Divorce Attorney Relationship: Candor Required](#)

Posted by [Daniel Clement](#) on September 23, 2010

[J. Benjamin Stevens](#) in the [South Carolina Family Law Blog](#), discusses what he calls the “*Three Meeting Rule*.” According to Stevens, it takes three meetings with a client for an attorney to get a true view of a case.

As Stevens points out, one meeting is wholly insufficient to learn the intricacies of a case

The types of issues that a client needs to discuss with his attorney in Family Court cases can be (and often are) embarrassing. Imagine for a moment what it must be like to have to tell a complete stranger the most intimate details of your married life, to perhaps have to relive a particularly painful incident, or to admit to some extremely embarrassing things that you have done. Doesn't sound like much fun, does it?

While it is important for a client to be completely candid with his/her attorney, it would be unrealistic to expect “all cards to be laid on the table” initially. Regardless, it is important for a client to quickly understand that no matter what issue the client wants to avoid discussing, his/her dirty laundry will be aired in the course of the divorce unless his/her attorney knows about it and is prepared to deal with it.

No matter how painful, embarrassing, or abhorrent, it is far better to hear the damaging or embarrassing facts directly from the client in the privacy of a closed office, then in open court or a conference with a judge. Properly prepared and armed with the facts, a weakness can be recast as a strength in the same way that martial artists are taught to channel their opponents' energy against them.

For example, I had a client that enjoyed partaking in activities that could be embarrassing if exposed to the client's friends, family and co-workers. Because I knew of the “activity” and of the client's spouse threats to expose my client, we were able to diffuse the threat by

CLEMENTLAW

THE LAW OFFICES OF DANIEL E. CLEMENT

acknowledging the activity during a court conference and revealing the spouse's attempted extortion; by doing so, the court admonished the spouse not to reveal my client's secret and, I believe, thereafter viewed the spouse as mean, greedy and vindictive.

THE LAW OFFICES OF DANIEL E. CLEMENT
420 LEXINGTON AVENUE, SUITE 2320
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10170
(212) 683-9551
DCLEMENT@CLEMENTLAW.COM