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# Popular Threads on Solosez

## Creepy Clients

I just had someone walk in and I told him about the consult fee and he went on and on and on about his "story" (which mostly sounded very suspicious and unsavory - I do just immigration law). Then when I wanted my consult fee he got all mad and weird and really creepy. I kicked him out of the office. There was someone else in the building, but I was a bit freaked out by this guy. Sorry I can't go in to more details. Just wondering what do you all do in a situation like that? I'm waiting a little bit before I leave to make sure he is long gone...

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This is incredible. The same thing happened to me yesterday as well. My assistant took a call from a perspective client. She was attempting to collect some background information and to set him up for a paid consult. He would not give her any information and demanded to speak with me. She put him on hold, and she brought the call to my attention. I told her to convey to him that there would be a consult fee to speak with me. She did so, and he began screaming. I was standing in my assistant's office, and I could hear him screaming on the phone. It was like he was on a speaker phone. He demanded our address and said that he was coming down right now to straighten me out. (For a minute I thought it was Alec Baldwin.)

Sure enough he appeared in my waiting room. I went out and greeted him. His demeanor changed dramatically. Eventually I was able to convey to him that I would be unable to assist him, and he left.

Michael D. Day

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As I write regularly on my blog and in the various personal safety columns, trust your instincts. And be prepared.

David Zachary Kaufman

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Back in the day, before I became a lawyer, I was a welfare caseworker (AFDC, Food Stamps, Medicaid). I had a review of a case, set the appointment, client didn't show up, so I cancelled her benefits as "unable to determine eligibility", which is what I was supposed to do. A few days later, I get a phone call from the client, screaming and yelling and threatening to come down there "with my 357 and shoot your sorry ass". And then she asks me what I look like and where my office is in the complex- remember, she hadn't been to the interview, so she had never met me. I told her I was 6' 4", thin, had black hair in a D/A cut and had a handlebar moustache and goatee, and my office was first on the right after you turned right off the food stamp office. I'm 6', fat, brown hair, clean shaven and my office was on the other hand of the complex. The person I



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described was a supervisor; I figured if anyone was going to get shot, at least we might get a supervisor opening out of it. I then told the supervisor what had happened; he just grimaced and said "Thanks a lot, Ron" and called the cops.

Ronald Jones

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I had an opposing party call my office ranting to my staff that he was going to come to the office and kick my \$%^& and then his brother called to say he was going to kill me after his brother beat the %^^&\* out of me. Then he asked for directions to the office as neither he nor his brother knew where my office was located. We didn't worry too much about them after that, though we did alert local police who to go after if something happened to me.

The brothers called a few more times, but we never gave them directions.

Vicki Levy Eskin

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I agree with the other posters. Pay attention to your instincts; call someone to walk you out -- don't try to be "brave" or fear appearing to be "silly."

Take care.

Alan Bail

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Not all. In doing pro bono work years ago for a senior center, I had some people who were preying on the elderly barred from a NYC hospital. After they tried to get the RC Archdiocese after me (not successfully, as after 1 phone call the church realized who was wearing the white hat), came the obligatory death threat.

Alan P. Bernstein

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No...better to be one of either the 12 or 6.

Alan P. Bernstein

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I'd see if anyone is around to walk you out, or call someone to let them know you are leaving and when to expect you home. I would not be on the phone as you walk to your car.

Amy Ondos

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The local REA has a sideline where they supply wireless panic buttons for a monthly fee. The buttons have a clip (so you could clip it on your clothes, etc) and ring into a central office and (supposedly) notify the sheriff's office if hit. We have one in my desk, one at my secretary's desk, and one in the conference room. My secretary asked for something shortly after we had a rather creepy incident.

WRT the parking lot, we had a city cop talk at the law school once. She created some controversy because, in addition to the standard advice about vigilance and keeping your keys in your hand ready to use (and not being shy about using them), she suggested that if we could make it into the car, we could use the car to knock down the assailant. One woman asked what to do then, and the cop said, "run over him." I felt kind of bad to hear she was reprimanded by her supervisor.

Anita Fuoss

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Right.

I know of three here in NJ in recent times :

A. divorce lawyer beaten almost to death right outside of his office. Perpetrator---who was caught and is doing jail time--- turned out to be the angry husband.

B. Father is shot in the face by hired hit man, while on his way to pick up his son for weekend visitation. By a miracle, he survives, but is permanently disabled. Police are still pursuing Mom for hiring the hit man.

C. Lawyer is shot to death a few doors down from his office. Investigation is still open. Police suspect it was an angry divorce client, since that was his entire practice.

Charlie Abut

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Criminal Law : where the worst people behave the best.

Family Law : where the best people behave the worst.

Charlie Abut

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No problem. In a rush after my car broke down, I snatched my carryon and my purse out of the back seat and jumped into my friend's car. Stuck my purse in the little plastic bin, zipped it through the xray without a beep, and I was off to the gate.

My keyring, which I should have left in the car: oversized piton type of clip with small flash light half a dozen keys bottle opener gadget two pocket knives -- two

What hung TSA up? A large white opaque space in my carry-on computer bag. Turned out to be several scholarly journals (ABA, LPM, GPSolo) that might have been a sheet of C4 or something. I had to strip the bag and xray everything separately.

But not the two knives.

CJ Stevens

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Call 911 and get a police escort.

Cliff Donovan

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You can always call your local police department and ask to have someone walk you out. You can't be too cautious (ok, maybe someone can be too careful but this is a long way from that). If nothing else, call someone on your cell before going out and talk to him/her as you walk to your car.

And let us know that you got home okay...we're all waiting to hear from you.

Deborah Matthews

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Due to an ongoing situation I have here, I now make a point of parking in a location where I can see my car, and the parking lot, before I leave the office, and I can again scan the parking lot, before I walk out of the building. When I was a girl, first learning to drive, I was told to get in the habit of holding my keys firmly in my hand, pointed end out, when I walk to mycar, and I continue this, to this day. And even if eveything seems ok, but I just suddenly get 'the creeps' I call my husband or a close friend, before I leave the building, and stay on the phone until I'm in the car, and out of the parking lot.

These things are now becoming a habit. Yes, it makes me angry that I have to do this, but all in all, none of it is really an imposition, or even much of an inconvenience, and it may make the difference, someday.

The world is crazy. Stay safe.

Laurie Gienapp

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The real problem is clients who don't display their creepiness until you are thoroughly involved with them. I had one who represented himself as a "turnaround specialist" for troubled businesses. What he actually did was obtain operational control, then strip the enterprise of assets, and disappear. Dealing with the aftermath was unpleasant, to say the least.

J. Robert Thompson

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We just had a local attorney get attacked at his home. Guy came to his home, knocked on door, attorney opened door, guy said "Take this", decked him and left. Attorney was 69- got broken nose, face lacerations, and broken rib. Doesn't remember who it was.

Jean Moyer

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I carry a gun for protection. My husband insisted that I get my concealed weapon permit when family of opposing side showed up at my office and threatened me while my husband was present. Next week I signed up for

the classes.

Jean Moyer

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It wasn't a criminal case. They are not the problem. It's the family law cases that get violent.

Jean Moyer

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A friend here in town used to practice domestic law and quit after a husband asked him to step out of the conference room so husband could speak to wife. Husband detonated a bomb that killed husband and wife and blew off a portion of the office building. Luckily, friend was far enough away and survived.

Don' assume violence can't happen to you!

Jim Pardine

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If I had clients like this, I would also carry a gun. It's one reason why I don't handle criminal cases.

Joseph Potashnik

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Just don't forget to take it off your key chain before you go through security!

Ronald Jones

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I practice in both family and criminal law and family law is the reason I have a have a permit to carry a concealed weapon and do, at all times. Although the absolutely most threatening client was from the criminal side of the house.

Mark J. Olberding

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Family law turns normal people into crazy people, and it turns crazy people into dangerous people. While I clerked for a Family law Judge, my Judge was stalked and threatened, his house was under surveillance by the state police, and there were times that I called the Sheriff's officers to escort me to my car because I was frightened by a few of the more demonstrative litigants. I'm glad that there is great security at the building where I rented my office space, actually all high rise building in NYC have stepped up security measures which is a good thing.

Melinda Scott

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Well, for me it was a family law case which led to a couple of pre-positioned Glocks at home and office!

Mike Riddle

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"Better to be judged by twelve than carried by six."

Mike Riddle

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Unfortunately, I don't know of any type of case that might not get bad. I've heard of lawyers being attacked by crim clients in the courtroom after the verdict is in; there was that probaete lawyer who was videotaped being shot outside the courthouse in California a few years ago; I remember one shooting here in Florida, it was a workers comp case and a pregnant lawyer was killed (IIRC, it was at a depo). And there was that shooting last week in Houston which involved someone being evicted from an apartment, though they went after the apartment management, not the lawyers.

Although I tend to agree, the family law cases tend to be the most volatile, almost anything can set off the wrong person. You challange someone's self image, 'disrespect' them, they can go off.

Ronald Jones

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You might consider what I've been doing for more than 20 years now; carry a medium smallish lockback knife on your key ring. I've got a Gerber LST folding knife, 3 1/4 inches folded, blade is 2 3/4 inches, Delrin (i.e, nylon) handle, about as thick as 4 credit cards and weighs only a couple of ounces. Lockback because you do NOT want the thing folding back on your hand if you use it. I've carried it for years, and in fact when I grab my keys, I hold the knife, closed, and kind of let the keys jangle. I've never needed it; BUT once, years ago, I was walking to my car and this, uh, creepy looking guy comes up to me, and I look at him and he looks at my hand and sees the knife, and he gets this real startled expression on his face, and he stopped and then walked away real quick.

Gerber no longer makes that exact model, but a very nice one at:

<http://www.gerber-tools.com/Gerber-Applegate-Fairbairn-Mini-Covert-46924.htm>

Looks like it'll fit on a key ring, with the hole in the handle, but check your states laws on carrying knives.

Ronald Jones

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Just don't forget to take it off your key chain before you go through security!

Yeah, and in my case, I also have to remember to take the gun out of my pocket before I go thru courthouse doors. But security is used to people coming in, looking at metal detector, going "Uhhhh....." and walking back

out to their car and then returning. A fair number of people in this part of Florida have concealed weapons permits and occasionally they forget. Never happened to me, though, at least not yet.

I have had courthouse security raise an eyebrow at a airgun loading tool I used to keep on the keychain, a thin aluminum cylinder with a ball on one end and a blunted point on the other; one deputy in Lake county looked at it, the other deputy walked over, and recognized what it was (really obscure tool).

Ronald Jones

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Don't bother with a gun unless you're actually willing and ready to use it to kill someone. Otherwise, it's just something your assailant will use against you. It can also lead to a false sense of security that makes people more careless and prone to risky behavior. Situational awareness is going to serve you 5 times better than a firearm.

Also realize that even from 12 feet away, there's a good chance that an attacker can close the distance and disable or hurt you before you even manage to draw your gun and shoot. And that's if you're already alert and expecting trouble.

Guns are a useful tool in certain instances. But they aren't magic pixie dust.

Seth D. Rogers

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From the attorneys with whom I've discussed this over the years, doing both family and criminal law, only and all death threats came from family law clients.

Ann F. Spector

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I've had this happen a couple of times. I try to position myself as close to the door as possible (without the creepy one between me and it) or as near to the phone as possible. What I do afterwards depends on the office set up - can you see out and for a good distance around your car? Are there other businesses nearby?

I finally did start locking the door after-hours after one such event . . . .

Veronica Schnidrig

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I have a bad enough temper that carrying a gun would be a really bad idea. . . I'd probably shoot a speeder on my street.

Veronica Schnidrig

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