

Things We Should Say

"I'm not your therapist. I'm just your lawyer."

Roger M. Rosen, California

"Sometimes the juice isn't worth the squeeze."

Michael J. Polk, South Carolina

Don't tell me it's about doing what your parents wanted. This case is about money.

Robert "Robby" W. Hughes, Jr., Georgia

"I need to know everything, not just what you think I need to know."

Bobby Lott, Jr., Alabama

"It's totally your call on accepting the plea offer. Whatever happens in this case, I'm going home for dinner. You may not be."

Russ Carmichael, Pennsylvania

And the corollary:

"There is a difference between what you want to hear and what you need to hear. Part of my job is to tell you what you need to hear."

Bert Krages. Oregon

Sometimes I want to say "I know you're lying," but instead what I say is "oh?" or "mmm" and end the consultation with an "I don't think I'm the right attorney for this issue."

Corrine Bielejeski, California

"No."

Bret Cook, California

I had this attorney boss who used to say "There are people you can talk to, you know?"

Ryan Young, Virginia

From a former partner: Don't piss in your own whiskey.

From a former colleague: don't drop the soap (said to a defendant who kept getting in his own way)

Mitchell Goldstein, Virginia

Judge/mentor to me: Any day you walk out the front door of the courthouse is a good day.

Deborah Matthews, Virginia

“Don’t break the ice- melt it.”

-From an old (now deceased) curmudgeon rural attorney to me the “city” attorney who is in this rural county court for the first time

Micah G. Guilfoil, Kentucky

From a now deceased former partner

"The matter that you only accept only because business is slow is the matter that you will regret taking when business picks up."

From the best man in my wedding, also a lawyer, speaking of clients and their matters.

"I did not put your ox into the ditch. I am trying to help you get it out."

Craig A. Stokes, Texas

"Any schmuck with \$500 can file a lawsuit. The question becomes whether you can defend it."

Scott I. Barer, California

And the corollary, as I always tell my clients, "anybody can sue anybody for anything".

Ed Burcham, Kentucky

Litigation is not mathematics, so we cannot predict how the case will come out. It is more like trial-and-error science. More experienced lawyers have better hypotheses to

start out, but they still have to be tested in the courtroom. And there are always unknown variables.

Wendy C. Lascher, California

"I can get an order from the court but I can't fix crazy"

Randy Birch, Utah

Which includes the following:

"Every time you go to trial, it is a crap shoot. It does not matter how good your case is, when you put it in front of a judge (or a jury), you never know what is going to happen. The facts are on your side and the law may be on your side, but the judge wakes up that morning in a grumpy mood; pours sour milk on his Wheaties and gets annoyed at his wife regarding the spoiled milk; trips over his brother-in-law (whom he hates and is staying at his house) on his way out of the house; and you, the client, look like either his brother-in-law or his wife. Every discretionary ruling goes against you and the jury, if there is one, picks up on that and you lose. There are no appeals because the rulings were discretionary and your case is over. This is why it is better to settle than try a case."

Of course, this is one of the reasons that I actually like being a lawyer, the total uncertainty of the law.

Frank Kautz, Massachusetts

A piece of paper won't stop a bullet.

Cynthia Hannah-White, Hawaii

However, not having that piece of paper may come back to haunt you. Get it, but remember that, in the end, it is just a piece of paper.

Frank Kautz
