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## Thoughtful, quiet, kindly lawyer many times can best the blowhard

In the fast-paced, all-encompassing legal profession, lawyers encounter a multitude of personalities on a daily basis.

They might experience this in the courtroom, over the phone, written in an e-mail or even sitting a few desks over in the office, as the legal profession is typically adversarial in nature and our differences as human beings are often accentuated in this type of environment.

Along with that and lawyer's busy schedule, it is easy to make assumptions about other people's personalities and attitudes.

Lawyers become adept at noting patterns of behavior and tend to believe there is nothing they have not seen before. However, as a practicing lawyer, be careful not to mistake a person's behavior for something it is not.

Remember, the first thing you are taught in law school is that you need facts and evidence to support and win in your case. Assumptions are not facts, but beliefs formed without proof.

### Don't ever mistake my silence for ignorance

Most people tend to believe that a successful attorney needs to be a social, gregarious extrovert. When it comes to practicing law, both extroverts and introverts can thrive. In fact, the balance of having both personality types is essential to the success of the legal profession.

Do not make the mistake of underestimating the introvert who is quiet in nature or assuming their silence is ignorance. Instead, attempt to understand and embrace the silence for what it means.

Quiet people are the ones you might listen to the most. Silence often reflects the time needed to carefully construct the purposeful message a quiet person wants to convey. While they are not talking, they are listening, gaining knowledge of a situation and thinking about their next move.

Quiet people take the time to process and meaningfully reflect on what they want to say rather

than rattling off the first thing that comes to their minds. What they choose to share, and how they choose to share it, is not ignorance.

Having good communication skills is key to a good lawyer's success, and effective communication is more about listening than talking. Rather than assume a person's silence is ignorance, listen to them.

### Don't ever mistake my calmness for acceptance

Calmness should never be mistaken for acceptance, defeat or tolerance. Choosing not to engage in aggressive, meaningless behavior is often the only thing a calm person is accepting or tolerating.

Rather than accepting an opponent's proposition, a calm person may be so confident in their position or argument, they are able to effortlessly maintain composure. Reasons for getting worked up are absent in a calm person because they are overcome with self-assurance.

*Mistaking somebody's behavior or personality for something that it is not may afford the other person more advantages than what they started with.*

A lawyer's stress can be overwhelming. Calmness is something lawyers should actually strive for. Losing emotional control in a situation often makes things worse for everyone, including the client.

It is easy to lose the ability to think straight and focus on the important issues at hand when roused or agitated. Calmness increases concentration by eliminating stress and anxiety. Judges often prefer the calm, collected lawyer to their aggressive opponent on the other side, which may be to the calm lawyer's advantage as well.

### Don't ever mistake my kindness for weakness

Never assume a kind attorney

### COLLABORATIVE CONCEPTS



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may be easily manipulated and never assume they are vulnerable or gullible. Kindness is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength. As with silence and calmness, attorneys have the ability to be kind in certain situations because of their confidence in the matter at hand.

A lot of people underestimate a person and overlook what they

Also, as a lot of practice areas have their niches, the chance of running into opposing counsel on a case down the line is more probable than not. Mutual respect for the other attorney may help clients reach an amicable resolution faster. Poor behavior in court may lead to adverse inferences by the judge or jury as well. Clients often spend an enormous amount of money and energy on attorneys' egos.

This is not to say that kindness should be used as a tactical advantage. You should always be kind and encourage others to be too. This shows lawyers have compassion for all parties involved and truly want what is best for their clients.

Lawyers are advocates and counselors in one of the most politically active professions. As a result, lawyers have the ability to promote kindness well beyond the courthouse in powerful ways. Lawyers should embrace and utilize this opportunity to make positive change in their communities.

### Be silent. Be calm. Be kind. Be you.

The different facets of the legal profession, along with the number of people and myriad issues lawyers experience on a daily basis, may leave some quick to make assumptions about other people. Mistaking somebody's behavior or personality for something that it is not may afford the other person more advantages than what they started with.

As lawyers, be confident in your abilities, know yourself, know what you are willing to do, and know what other people are capable of doing as well. Find the area of the legal profession that fits you and your personality best and never make assumptions or underestimate a person.

As Carson Kolhoff said, "Don't ever mistake my silence for ignorance, my calmness for acceptance or my kindness for weakness. Compassion and tolerance are not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength."