

I entered the process of playing a client with little knowledge of how to actually do that. I've never been a client in a lawsuit before. Being in law school has garnered in me a tendency to look at things from the perspective of an attorney, and rightfully so I think. However, this entire exercise allowed me to catch a glimpse of the vulnerability of a regular person with a problem they can't solve on their own, entering the office of someone they have never met, expecting them to be able to solve that problem for them. This was the hardest part of the whole exercise for me, to put myself into the place of someone I am not; to try and feel the emotions I think they would feel, to make the decisions I think that they would make, and to hopefully reach a resolution that this person would feel comfortable with.

In law school we are presented with fact patterns, and my mind immediately begins to try and categorize the problem, so as to quickly find a rational solution. Law school analyses do not involve emotions of the kind that this hypothetical presented. Dana's fact pattern includes a background and a lot of issues that are wholly emotional. I felt it very difficult to rationalize these emotions, and eventually I took the stance that rationalizing the emotions would be unfair to the character; that it would be better to try and feel the emotions and allow them to take some root, so as to best serve the character I was proxy for.

As we entered the room for the negotiation, it felt weirdly tense. It was clear to me that everyone was taking this seriously, and were really doing their best to be the character that they were assigned to play. . . . As I began apologizing, I actually was Dan. Barbara [not her real name] actually was Jan. I can't recall everything that I said in the apology, but the room was emotional. I stumbled on words and felt legitimately sorry for the situation. Barbara was visibly choked up, bordering on tears. It was a very heavy experience. All of the fear and intimidation of the emotions of playing this character completely faded away. I sincerely felt like I wanted to give Barbara a hug. She was visibly blown away, and her dynamic changed completely. Barbara then went into her feelings, and said that she was really relieved that I had done that. She said that she was prepared to take a really hard stance in the negotiation until I relented and apologized to her with sincerity. Getting this done early, while it was unexpected to us both, almost made it feel like we no longer even needed the attorneys to settle the problems. Like they were just there for the details and nothing else mattered above the fact that we had just reconciled and both looked forward to a loving sibling relationship.