



CLE Course Description

60 minutes

1 hr CLE Ethics, Mental Health, or Wellness credit depending on jurisdiction

Ethics Under Pressure: Trauma-Informed Strategies for Difficult Client Interactions

Lawyers regularly communicate with clients who are angry, overwhelmed, frightened, unrealistic, or disappointed by the legal process. In those moments, clear communication is not only good client service—it is an ethical obligation.

This program uses realistic client scenarios to explore how trauma-informed communication strategies can help lawyers comply with Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.4: Communication. The program also touches on the negative impact of client distress on lawyers, including secondary trauma and compassion fatigue, and offers simple self-regulation strategies to support ethical, professional, and effective communication.

Participants will learn practical tools for:

- De-escalating angry or emotionally activated clients
- Delivering difficult news with clarity and compassion
- Responding to clients who interrupt, over-talk, or reject advice
- Setting appropriate communication boundaries
- Staying grounded under pressure to respond rather than react

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the program, participants will be able to:

- Recognize common trauma or stress responses that affect client behavior
- Set clear and professional boundaries around communication and availability
- Explain risks, delays, settlement realities, and legal limitations in a way clients can understand
- Apply self-regulation tools to remain calm, clear, and ethical during challenging interactions
- Identify how MRPC 1.4 applies to difficult client communications

Faculty

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