

SHOW ME HOW TO SAY NO TO THIS:
TAKE A BREAK IN A FIELD OF “NON-STOP”

IN THIS
ISSUE



“I hadn’t slept in a week. I was weak, I was awake”

– Alexander Hamilton, *Hamilton: An American Musical*



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The following article was written by one of our summer interns, Sydney Lee. Ms. Lee is a rising 2L at Belmont University College of Law.

Enjoy!

Family law attorneys are rarely just attorneys. On any given day, they can find themselves acting as legal advocates, confidants, therapists, or financial advisors, often wearing all four hats at once.

Many of our readers are family law attorneys. As such, you understand that fighting for your clients is what makes this job so special. But in the world of family law, disputes are ongoing and new conflicts arise daily. Some might say they are non-stop. Finding the balance between giving excellent client service and caring for yourself is necessary to build a sustainable and fulfilling legal career.

Without firm boundaries, it is easy to miss out on vital life moments or reach burn-out (licensed therapist [Emily Moon](#) discussed this at our end-of-year CLE last year). Have you ever found yourself putting out client fires late into the night, working through weekends, or answering phone calls at your best friend’s birthday party? While these things may happen



occasionally, making a habit of them will not only disrupt your personal life but also drain your energy and plant seeds of resentment towards your clients and profession. Learning how to say “no” can be hard, especially if you are introducing the boundary after years of not drawing the line, but it can be done. So, how can you say “no” to this? Here’s what we suggest:

SUGGESTIONS FOR HEALTHY BOUNDARIES:

Putting a plan in place for when clients can reach out to you during the initial consultation lays a foundation of understanding. When you set clear boundaries and stick to them, you show your client that you are disciplined and organized which builds trust and reliability. Remember to be fully available and present during the times you have offered but be prepared to stay firm on your off hours.

1. COMMUNICATE

Availability: Define your precise office hours and when you will and will not accept calls.

Preferred Contact Method: Define how you prefer them to contact you.

Non-Emergency Protocols: Give clients a framework for what to do when something happens. Show them how to document incidents or keep a journal for the case rather than calling you immediately.

What Constitutes a True Emergency: Clearly define the scope of a legal emergency (physical danger or child safety) versus an emotional emergency.

2. FREQUENTLY UPDATE YOUR CLIENT ON THEIR CASE

Over communicate during the quiet periods when you are waiting for the court to act. Routinely update your client on their case, even just to say you are waiting on the court to act, to reduce anxiety and late-night calls.

3. LIGHTEN THE LOAD: PROVIDE OTHER RESOURCES

You do not have to carry the entire weight of the client’s crises on your shoulders. Creating a team for your client and knowing how to delegate to different experts may relieve stress and decrease the number of calls. Considering building a team with the following support:

- i. Therapist
- ii. Child Counselor/Specialist
- iii. Financial Advisor/Experts
- iv. Support Network (friends, family members, support groups)
- v. Divorce Coach

What do you do when a client crosses these boundaries? The following page has tips for that.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN A CLIENT CROSSES THOSE BOUNDARIES?

1. RESTATE BOUNDARIES

Send a polite email or letter formally restating your communication agreement.

2. IN-PERSON CONVERSATION

Bring client in for an in-person conversation about communication and time limit boundaries. State that if communication comes during clearly stated off-hours, response will not be sent until work hours.

3. CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS

Should clear violations continue to occur despite upholding your end of the contract, you may need to consider further action such as withdrawing from the case.

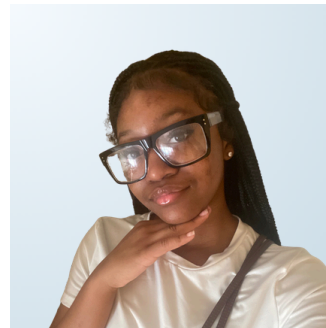
Sources:

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PUTTING YOURSELF BACK IN THE NARRATIVE

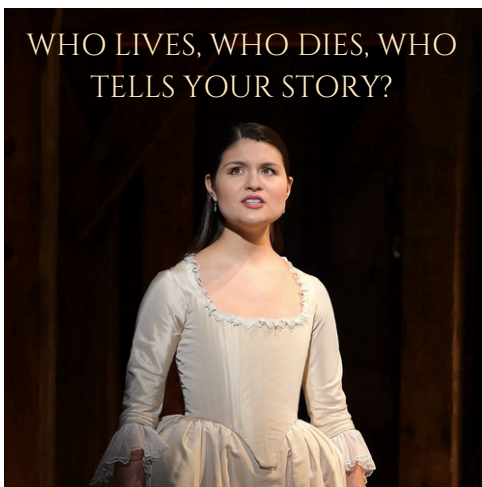


The following article was written by Micah Dixon, Nyla Smith, and Sterling Barrett, three of our summer interns. Enjoy!

Known not just for being the wife of founding father and chief architect of the American financial system Alexander Hamilton, Elizabeth Schuyler “Eliza” Hamilton is remembered as the founder of the first private orphanage in New York City, an institution that provided care and education to orphaned and low income children. Her legacy is especially meaningful in the context of family

law. This system deals with adoption, guardianship, and other matters centered on the wellbeing and future of children.

In the finale of the hit Broadway musical *Hamilton* by Lin Manuel Miranda, Eliza Hamilton (the fictional version of the historical figure) “puts [herself] back into the narrative” after betrayal and heartache and, eventually, the death of her husband at the hands of Aaron Burr (Miranda, 2015). She chooses not to let tragedy define the rest of her life. Instead she dedicates herself to preserving history, advocating for children through the founding of New York City’s first private orphanage, and ensuring that future generations would be positively impacted not just by her husband's legacy but also by her own.



The musical closes with a series of memorable questions: "Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?" (Miranda, 2015). While the lyric speaks to legacy, it also offers an important reminder for anyone navigating the end of a marriage. Divorce marks the end of one chapter, not the end of your story. For many individuals and families, the conclusion of a divorce brings a wide range of emotions. There may be relief, grief, uncertainty, hope or all of the above. As the legal process comes to a close, the work of rebuilding begins. Like Eliza, you have the opportunity to decide what comes next.

Putting yourself back into the narrative means focusing on your future rather than remaining defined by your past. It may involve creating new routines, strengthening relationships with your children, rediscovering personal goals, pursuing education or career opportunities, or simply allowing yourself the time and space to heal. Every step forward is part of a new chapter.

Although the court's role is to help families resolve legal matters, the story continues long after the final decree is entered. The choices you make moving forward can shape a future grounded in resilience, stability, and hope. This next chapter is yours.

P.S. The orphanage founded by Eliza Hamilton is still around today, known as an organization called Graham. Learn more here: <https://www.elizasstory.org/>

NEW ATTORNEY ORIENTATION RECAP

Last Thursday, June 25th, we hosted our second New Attorney Orientation with the Fourth Circuit Court (formerly Law Day). We were joined by 20 current law students, recent law school graduates, bar passers, or attorneys new to practicing family law. They heard presentations from Judge Williams, Special Master Fleming, current family law attorneys, civil court judges, and the Circuit Court Clerk's office. Thank you to our attendees and wonderful presenters! Now we'll let the pictures speak for themselves:



See more about the event on our Facebook and Instagram:

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

CUSTODY X CHANGE RECAP

It seems the Fourth Circuit had a big event week last week! Thank you to all who attended last week's "Lunch" and Learn featuring Custody X Change. Shea Drefs, Managing Editor at Custody X Change, shared the capacities of this program, including co-parent communication, calendar making, finance tracking, and more. Learn more about this program by clicking the link or scanning the QR code:



<https://www.custodyxchange.com/>

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY

Our office will be closed this Friday, July 3rd, in honor of America's Independence Day. It seemed awfully fitting that Hamilton was at TPAC this past week so we wanted to highlight that in this week's newsletter. How many *Hamilton* references did you count? Happy Fourth of July!



"Black and white soldiers wonder alike if this really means freedom"

*"Not yet. *"*

— Exchange between John Laurens and George Washington in
Hamilton: An American Musical



**After the Declaration of Independence was signed and the subsequent American Revolution fought and won, it would still take nearly 100 years before June 19, 1985, when the last enslaved African Americans would be freed.*

LET'S GET REEL

For those following us on social media, you may have noticed an uptick in our posting schedule. Thanks to our wonderful interns, we have been posting engaging and educational content for all to see. These videos showcase what our interns have been learning while working with us this summer. Catch the next video on the 4th of July. Do yourself a favor and show them some love!



[@JudgeStephanieJWilliams](https://www.instagram.com/JudgeStephanieJWilliams)



[Judge Stephanie J. Williams](https://www.facebook.com/JudgeStephanieJWilliams)



CALENDAR

JULY

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
■	■	■	■	■	3	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	15	16	17	■
■	■	21	■	23	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■

7/3: Office Closed for Independence Day

7/15 & 7/16: ID Divorces by Waiver ONLY

7/17: Office Open, No Motion Docket

7/21: ID Divorces by Waiver ONLY

7/23: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

Judge Williams' Dismissal Docket at 2:30 p.m.

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	20	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■

8/20: Judge Williams' Status Conference Docket at 1 p.m. in Person or Via Zoom

Judge Williams' Dismissal Docket at 2:30 p.m.

For a complete view of our regularly scheduled dockets and available Court dates, please see the calendar page on our website by clicking here: [Website Calendar](#) or by scanning the QR code:



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Feel free to share this newsletter with anyone who may be interested. You may also email RebekahLHaralson@jnsnashville.gov to be added to the mailing list.

Additionally, you may view this and all previous newsletters on our website by clicking this link: [Updates and Announcements](#) or by scanning the QR code:

