



South Carolina Bar

Continuing Legal Education Division

2026 SC BAR CONVENTION

Substance Abuse Mental Health

“Managing Difficult Clients and
Colleagues: Protecting Your Mental
Health and Well-Being

Saturday, January 24

SC Supreme Court Commission on CLE Course No. 260149

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Managing Difficult Clients and Colleagues: Protecting Your Mental Health and Well-Being

Doug Brown



The Lawyer's Guide to Managing Difficult Clients & Colleagues: Protecting Your Mental Health & Well-Being

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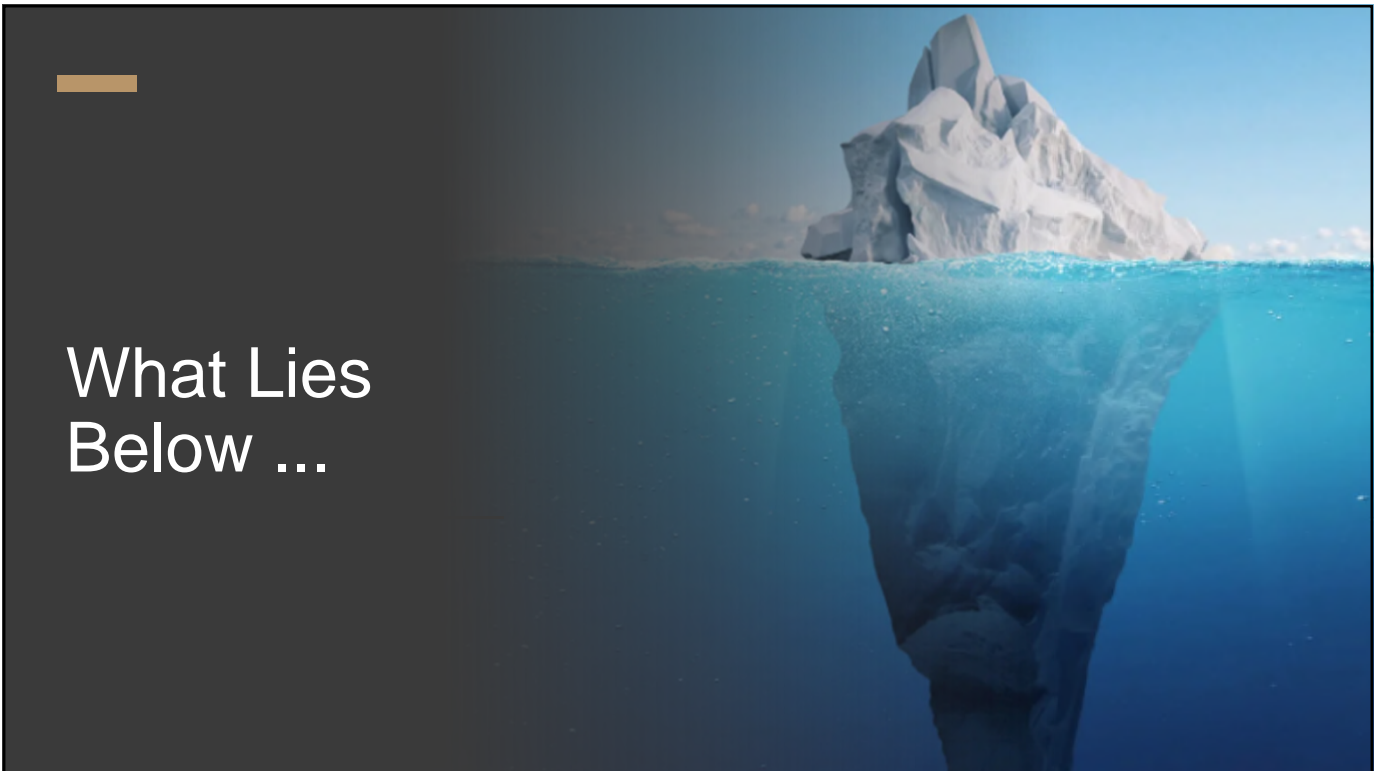
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The Upper Limit Problem



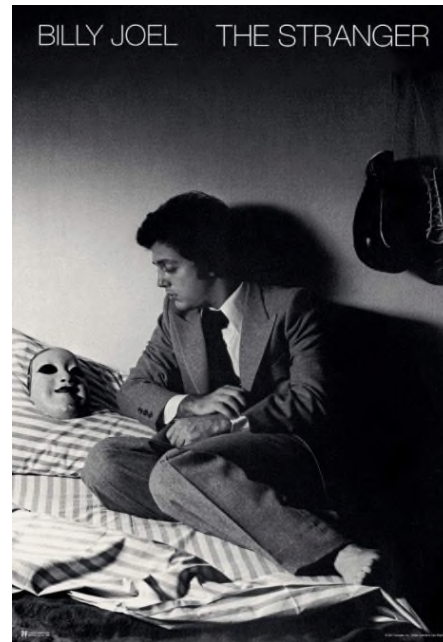
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What Lies
Below ...



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High Performers, Hidden Struggles

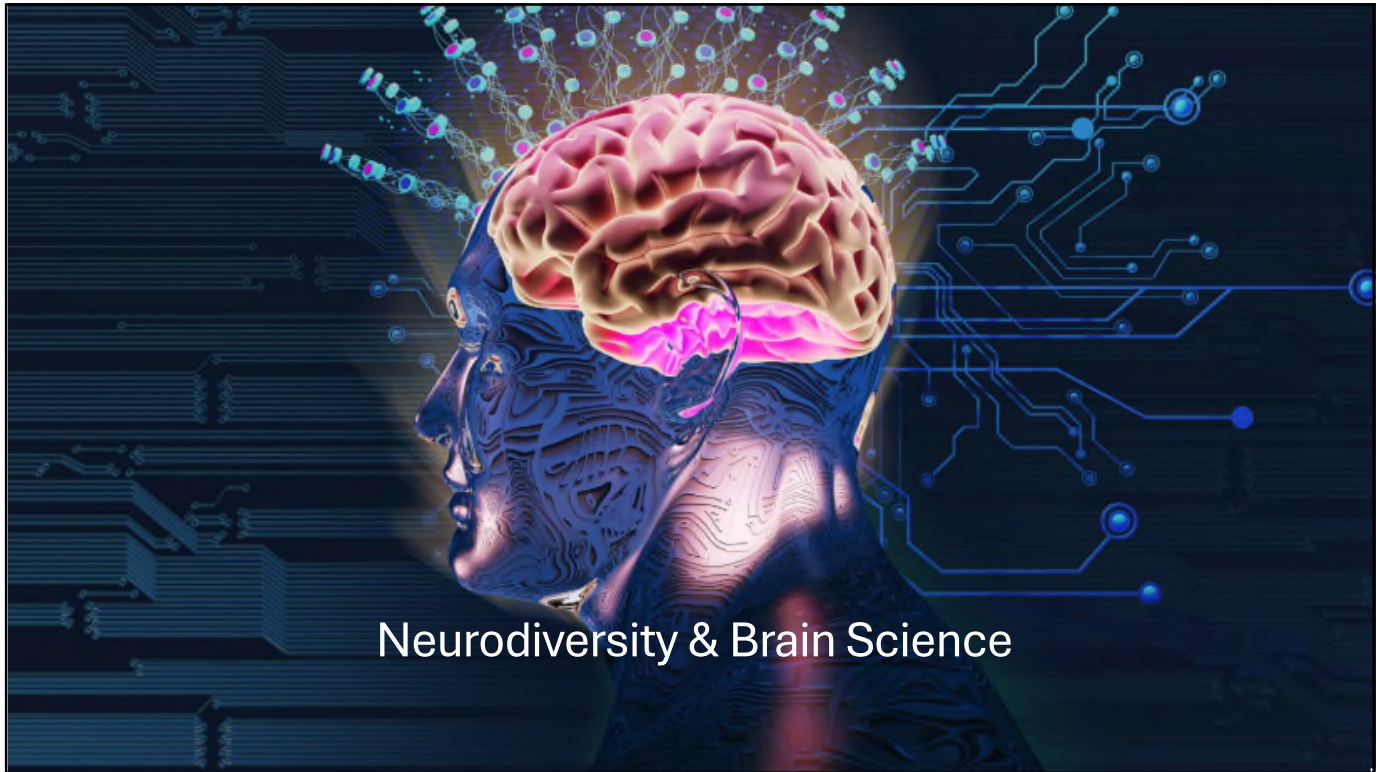


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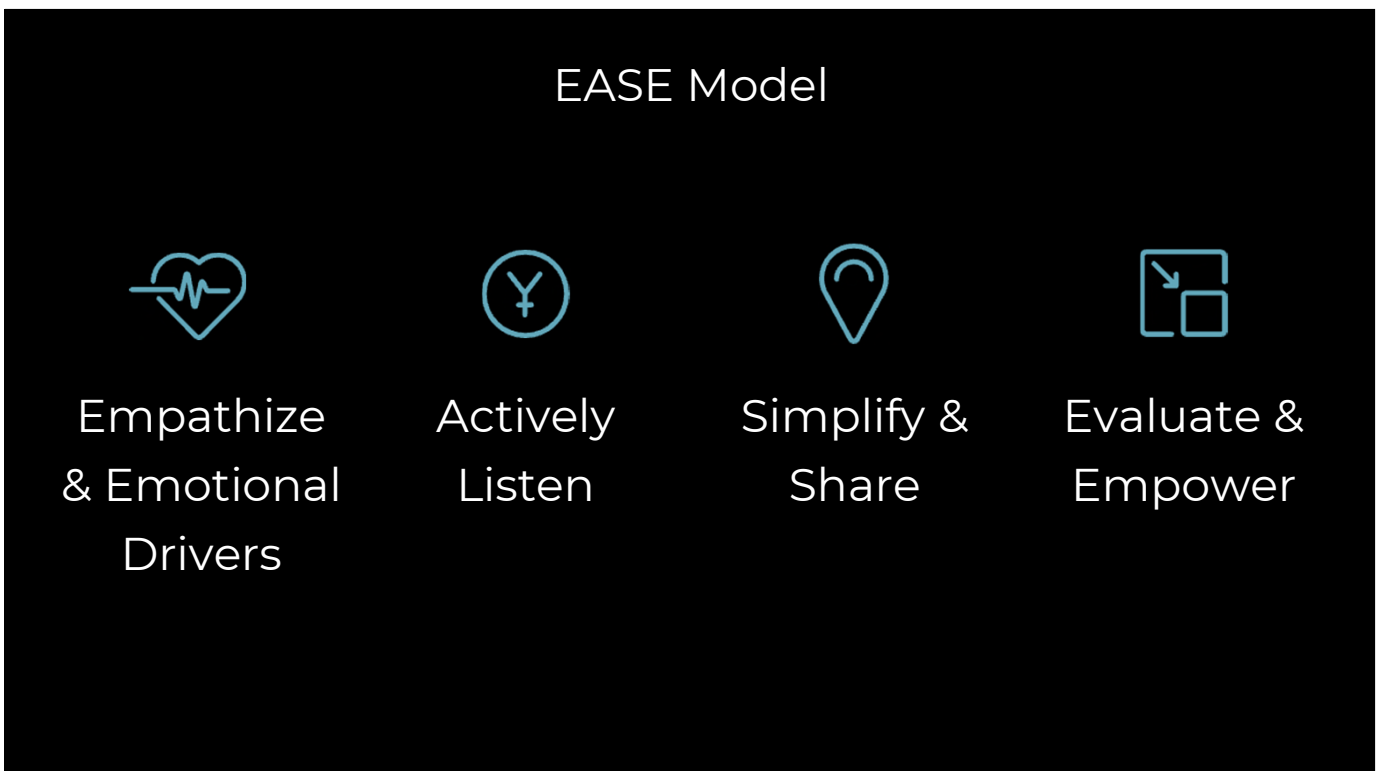
Recognizing Patterns?

- ✓ Overwork / Busy-ness
- ✓ Perfectionism
- ✓ People-pleasing
- ✓ Procrastination
- ✓ Imposter Syndrome
- ✓ Control / Micromanaging
- ✓ Self Soothing
- ✓ Hidden Mental Health Challenges
(ADHD / Depression / Anxiety)

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The Lost Art of Listening

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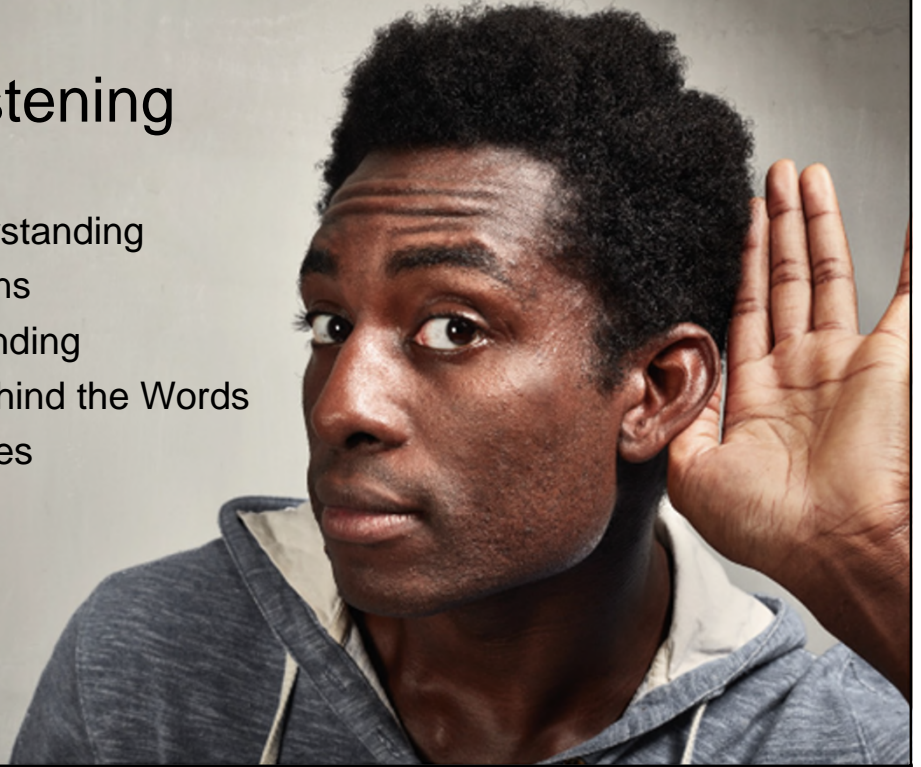
Active Listening?

Active Listening	Typical (Non-Active) Listening Behavior
Fully concentrating without interrupting	Formulating a response while the client is still speaking
Nodding and maintaining eye contact	Checking your watch or phone during conversations
Summarizing a statement for clarity	Assuming you know what someone will say and not paying full attention
Asking open-ended questions to understand	Asking leading or closed questions that steer the conversation
Pausing to consider a question before responding thoughtfully	Immediately responding to a question without fully understanding it

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Active Listening

- ✓ Concentrate on Understanding
- ✓ Ask Clarifying Questions
- ✓ Reflect Before Responding
- ✓ Mind the Message Behind the Words
- ✓ Watch Non-Verbal Cues



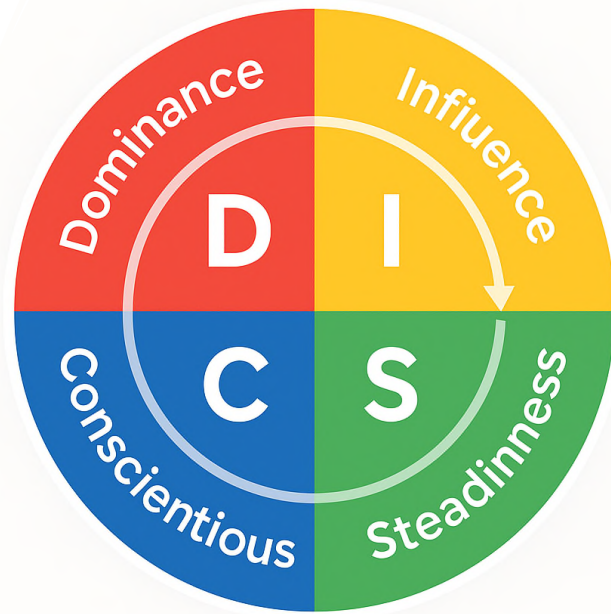
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The Smith Case Crisis



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Work Styles



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The Improv Principle of "Yes, And ..."



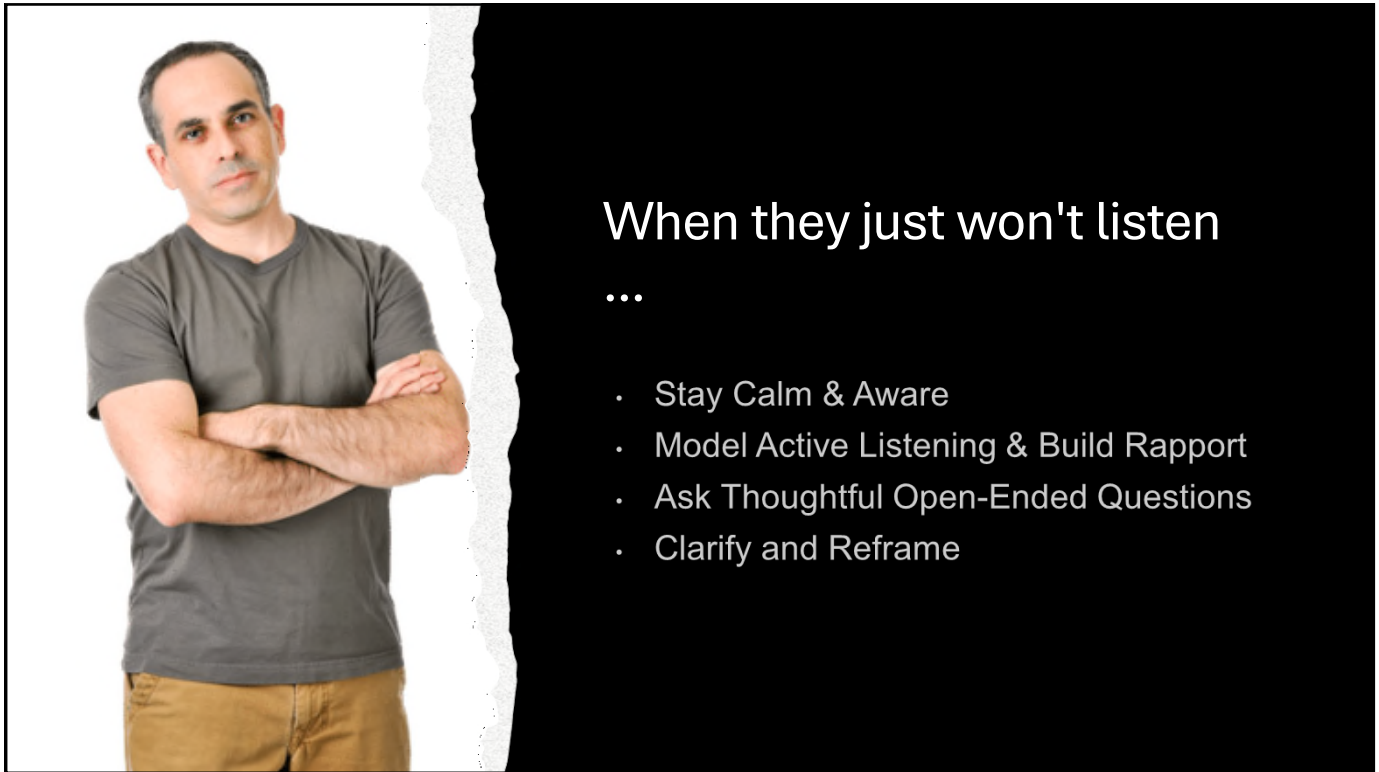
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Maintaining Balance in Conflict

- Balance & Steadiness
- Redirecting Energy
- Strategic Positioning
- Control through Calmness

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Who's on Your Team?



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After Action Review

What did we EXPECT to Happen?

What ACTUALLY Happened?

What was DIFFERENT? Why?

What will we DO differently?



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Remember this ...



**It's not a character
flaw—it's chemistry**



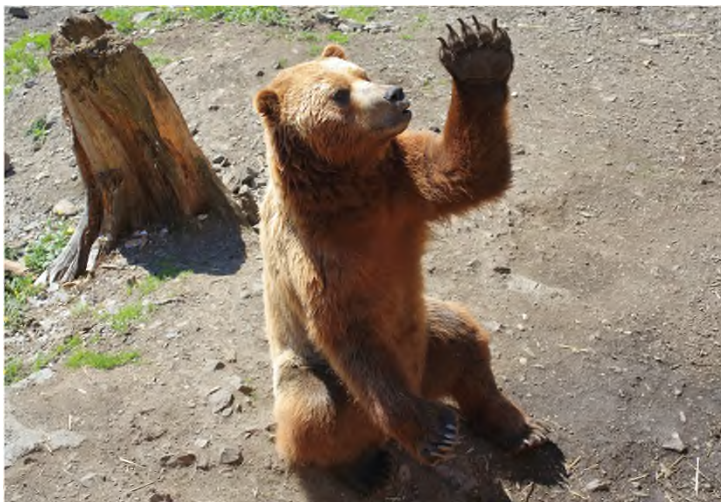
**High performers struggle
too – and it's natural**



**Be patient, start small,
learn as you go**

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Q&A



Bonus Materials



<https://bit.ly/MentalHealth2601>

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Beyond the Practice Grind ...

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