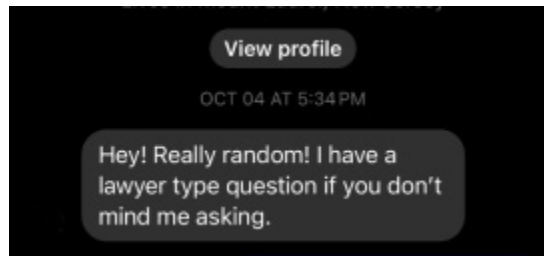


Who is in Your DMs...Asking for Legal Advice

By Stacey Gorin



At the October NJSBA YLD meeting, Jonathan Amira and I were talking about how there must be a full moon, mercury in retrograde or something because three or four people from grade school reached out asking me about their legal issues, specially through my Facebook private messages. Typically, social media users are sliding in DMs to “shoot their shot” as the kids say these days. But lucky for us lawyers, our DMS are open to those who have legal troubles.

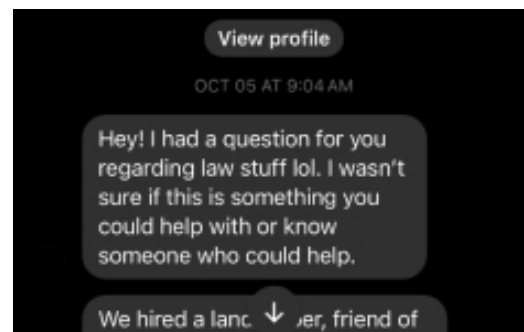
The major reason we all attend law school is to help people navigate the court system, to be advocates and promote justice. Of course, these “people” not only include our day-to-day clients, but also our family and friends.

It is almost automatic that when we announce on social media that we just graduated law school and passed the bar with the *Legally Blonde* Elle Woods meme “What? Like it’s hard”—this opens the floodgates for acquaintances from yester years to ask us any and all their legal questions.

This can present a difficult head and heart contradiction. Our heart tells us that we went to law school to be able to solve problems, and who are we if we don’t attempt to solve the legal problems of the people we care about or have past relationships with? But our head tells us that we can get in serious ethical trouble if we provide information about an unfamiliar area of law and get it wrong.

My conversation with Jon at our meeting was light-hearted and we were joking around, but after further

contemplation on this topic, we need to find a happy medium to the above head/heart contradiction. There are ways we can assist our social media connections without jeopardizing our law license.



Here are my three pieces of advice:

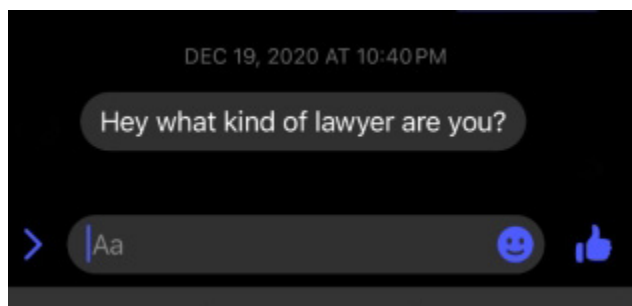
Know your boundaries and lay them out early. If this is someone you haven’t talked to since 1998, you do not have to answer them. Also, you are allowed to say something like “Thank you for reaching out and thinking of me, but this is not an area of law I practice.”

Referral them to a friend. One of the greatest advantages of being a member of the YLD is the access to many other attorneys in other legal fields. For example, if someone presents you with a family law question, form a relationship with a family law attorney in the YLD.

Know your mentors. If by chance the legal question is something within your practice area that you can personally handle, ask a more experienced attorney to guide you through the issue. This is a great way to learn and form relationships with other attorneys.

When I began to think about the concept of non-lawyer friends asking for legal advice through the channels of social media, I admit, I did not take this

issue seriously at all. But what I realized is that, although we are legally trained and out here to help, we need to recognize our limitations and what we are able to do without getting ourselves in serious trouble. ■■



Stacey R. Gorin is a member of the NJSBA Young Lawyer's Division as the Burlington County Representative. She is also the secretary of the Burlington County Bar Association. In addition to her bar memberships, Stacey is an associate at Capehart Scatchard in Mt. Laurel, Where she practices in the commercial litigation and education law departments. She enjoys spending time with her fiancé Shane and their dog Alonza, and passionately cheering on the Philadelphia Eagles and Phillies.