

Case Outcome Debrief

For the matter you have just finished, before it becomes something you carry.

No identifying detail. No names, no dates, no locations, no case or file numbers, no docket references. Describe the matter generally. If a stranger could work out whose case this was, take detail out.

Do not sign it. Do not date it. Do not save it with the client file. This is a practice tool for your own judgment, not a record of the representation.

0 The matter, in general terms.

Type of matter, posture, what was at stake. Two or three lines. Nothing that identifies anyone.

1 What outcome were you seeking?

What you were actually working toward — not what you told anyone you'd settle for.

2 What outcome came about?

3 What did you do well?

Name at least two things. If this is the question you want to skip, it is the one to answer first.

4 What would you do differently?

5 What was outside your control?

The facts as they were. The client's decisions. The record you inherited. The tribunal you drew. The timetable you were given.

6 On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely is it that you could have got a different result?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Now answer this: what is that number based on? Read your answer to question 5 again before you decide it was higher.

7 What is still live?

Motions to file. Appeals to note. Deadlines. Anything owed to anyone. Write each one down with what it needs and when — the point is to get it out of your head and onto a date.

8 What do you need to do in order to put this away?

Not what you'd like to feel. What you'd have to actually do.

If everything in question 7 is written down with a date against it, and everything in question 8 is something you can actually do, then this matter has been handled twice — once for the client, and once for you. That second pass is the one nobody schedules.

If the answers to 7 and 8 keep coming back the same way across several matters, that is worth paying attention to. It is usually a pattern, not a case.

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I coach ten attorneys at a time, one to one. Free to use, share, and print. Nothing here is legal advice.

Drafted with AI assistance (Claude). The thinking, judgment, and final edit are mine.