

Critical Incident Essay

June Peterson

ID: 1112222

When I was 24, I enrolled in an education program at university, planning to apply to graduate school to become a counselling psychologist. I wanted to work with children who were experiencing difficulty in their home lives.

One evening, when my husband and I were at his ball practice, he hit a fly ball out of the park, and it struck the windshield of a car, shattering it. The driver was not in the car, so we left a note explaining what had happened and giving our contact information for follow-up.

The owners of the car were very angry (although they had been parked in a no-parking zone, probably because of its proximity to the ball diamond) and threatened to sue my husband. As both my husband and I were attending school at the time, we were relatively poor and the thought of facing a legal battle terrified us.

I had a summer job working with legal documents at the local university, and I began to research this kind of issue. The more I looked into my rights and the situation we were in, the more knowledgeable I became.

Ultimately, I wrote a letter to the car owners, explaining the legal issues relevant to this incident. In the long run, after the incident was satisfactorily resolved, I changed my ambition and decided to become a lawyer. I applied to law school, got accepted and graduated with a law degree three years later.

Now, as a practicing lawyer, I try to put myself in the position of injured clients when they first arrive in my office. I remember the feelings of upset and helplessness I felt in thinking about being sued. I recognize that there are strong and not always

reasonable emotions that arise in incidents of property damage. The broken windshield incident, although unpleasant and very stressful, ultimately led me in a whole new direction and provided me with the tools to succeed in my career.