**Sample Opening to Mitigation Piece**

Mitigation efforts are highly personalized documents written in the first-person voice. They provide clients with tangible evidence of remorse. The client submits this document in anticipation of the sentencing hearing.  Rather than waiting for the attorney to express reasons for the lowest possible sentence, the defendant puts his life into context and positions himself for the best possible outcome. The following is a sample opening for a client, with identifying criteria removed.

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**Introduction:**

My name is \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*. Events that led to the need for this narrative embarrass and humiliate me. I made reckless, foolish, and bad decisions as a young man. A youthful hubris combined with a lack of appreciation for the severity of my crimes proved a toxic combination. I deeply regret the crimes I committed and I am determined to make my victims whole in the best possible way.

Introspection is the only way to lessen the shame and guilt that torments my conscious. Although I cannot offer an excuse for the criminally bad decisions I made, writing this narrative feels necessary. I owe the Court a level of transparency and a full expression of my remorse. To show that remorse, I am compelled to write the background that may bring my poor decisions into context. Perhaps the Court will value this background when deliberating over the appropriate sanction.

This document is long. I’ve invested hundreds of hours in silent reflection, trying to ascertain the influences that led to my bad decisions. Although I urge you to read the document in its entirety, I understand that I wrote this more for me than for anyone else. I needed to feel as if I were doing everything possible to atone for my bad deeds. From my perspective, atonement begins with understanding. It follows with deeds. This document shows what I have done. It also shows what I am doing and what I propose as a strategy for reconciling with the community of \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* and the broader society for my crimes.

**Remainder of document accomplished following goals:**

* **Chronicles life events that influenced decisions leading to crime.**
* **Wrote explanation of crime.**
* **Expressed remorse.**
* **Offered commitment on how client intended to make things right and atone.**
* **Suggested alternative sentence for judge to consider.**