

# COLLABORATIVE Practice Tips

A monthly bulletin from the CP Cal Practice Excellence Committee

The Practice Excellence Committee is pleased to offer tips to help you increase your Collaborative cases and achieve *practice excellence*.



Please send us your comments and questions! Email us at [info@cpcal.com](mailto:info@cpcal.com)

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## Riding the Waves of Emotions in Collaborative Divorce - Part 1 of 3 -

### **Initial Crisis Management.**

Divorce is often experienced as a crisis in a client's life. One may be taken by surprise and feel betrayed and destroyed. The spouse initiating the divorce can feel guilt, uncertainty, and concern regarding the effects on the children. It is a difficult life transition and painful emotions well up when addressing the divorce.

When faced with a crisis our survival brain kicks in and we are prone to protect ourselves with strategies of fight, flight or freeze.

### **Tip #1**

**Long-term decisions should be put off until a wave of crisis has passed.**

Studies in decision-making show that we are led to decisions driven by the frustration or anger of the moment when emotions are high. This can lead to solutions that punish others or fail to take into account both clients' needs.

Clients are also likely to get tunnel vision seeing only one solution that can relieve current anxiety or frustration.

### **Tip #2**

**How the Collaborative Divorce Coach can help:**

Collaborative Divorce Coaches can provide participants a safe space to react and vent. Clients benefit from having their experiences understood and their feelings heard.

Coaches also provide the opportunity to sort through the expression of emotions and discern what responses are important to express in the Collaborative sessions and what may need to be expressed by the individual outside of the Collaborative process.

Coaches can also direct clients in composing statements that express their concerns appropriately and help the client prioritize what they need to have addressed.

Clients may need to have one or several coaching sessions to discuss and understand why the marriage is ending. This can lead to acceptance of the divorce even when it is not their choice.

Coaches provide education regarding the variety of emotions that are experienced during a divorce. Shock, disbelief, sadness, anxiety, anger, betrayal, and guilt.

Coaches can help clients see the importance of allowing themselves to take the time they need to cope and discover what coping strategies work for the different emotions they are experiencing.

### **Tip #3**

**The Collaborative Divorce Coach can also help by** making sure basic needs are attended to during this difficult time. Is the client eating and sleeping okay? How are they functioning at work? Do they exercise to manage stress?

The Collaborative Divorce Coach should encourage his or her client to take time for themselves to process emotions and regain their emotional strength.

### **Tip #4**

#### **Creating Boundaries**

Creating boundaries are important to decrease conflict especially if the couple is still in the same house. This may mean defining separate time they are each in charge of caring for the children or can mean defining times each would use the master bathroom.

Parents may also need to learn to create more boundaries with their children to avoid burdening the children with adult emotions and putting them in a role of taking care of a parent or worrying about their parent's anger, anxiety or sadness.

Parents should also be coached to protect children by making sure their discussions are private. Children will seek to listen in to the adult conversations and often get over-involved in the grown up conflict which causes extra turmoil in their lives.

Coach parents to put up a brave front with their children. If this is difficult then let them know it is okay to name your feelings as long as the parent can also let the child know how they can take care of themselves. Reassure them that they have helpers outside the family to turn to.

## Tip #5

### Seek to understand the client's support system.

Who do they go to for comfort, venting and advice outside of the Collaborative team? Ask questions to understand how the client absorbs advice from others and whether they are able to discern what support is helpful and what advice might get in the way of the non-adversarial process.

Acceptance of the divorce and weathering the initial crisis can take time. Collaborative professionals can help clients understand and respect the different needs with regard to processing emotions.

This awareness of both client's needs can help the planning of meetings so that each client is prepared and ready to move forward.

**Look for part 2 of this series in your July Practice Tips!**

**Until then, CP Cal and the Practice Excellence Committee  
wishes all in the Collaborative Community a  
Happy Summer!**

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