

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

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Riding the Waves of Emotions in Collaborative Divorce - Part 2 of 3 -

Managing Emotions during the Collaborative Meetings.

Helping our clients to manage emotions during team meetings facilitates more productive and efficient meetings.

Tip #1

Early and Ongoing Review of Emotional Management:

Starting with the intake meetings, coaches and lawyers can let clients know what is expected regarding emotional management in the Collaborative process and encourage a reliance on the Collaborative professionals for guidance. It is reassuring for clients to know:

- that they can rely on the structure of the collaborative divorce process to help them get through each step.
- that they should be thinking about accomplishing immediate tasks. This prevents clients from becoming overwhelmed by completing immediate tasks and helps them feel they are capable. This also helps those that are impatient with feeling that they are moving forward by accomplishing parts of the whole.

In the North Bay Area we have a set of process **anchors** that both the team members and the clients are expected to review and acknowledge. These anchors address topics such as:

- respectful communication to avoid accusations and blame,
- speaking for yourself to avoid labeling others,
- taking turns talking and practicing reflecting back what was said so each person feels heard in the process,
- staying focused on current problem-solving to avoid bringing up everything and the kitchen sink!
- Review of the process anchors and returning to look at them again when conversations are unproductive helps maintain a safe space for couples to have difficult discussions.

Tip #2

Understanding our Clients and Sharing our Insights: Seek to understand each client's emotional triggers and couple's dynamics that lead to unproductive conversations.

- Help each client discern between productive and unproductive expressions of feelings.
- Communicate often with the other coach as the triggers and dynamics are discovered.
- Communicate with the team regarding approaches that you and your client agreed would help them participate effectively in the team meeting.

Tip #3

Gather and Explore what Helps Clients to Stay Calm and Stay Focused:

- Know your client and their stress tolerance. Ask them to rate on a scale of 1-10 the level of stress they experience during joint meetings.
- Discover what calming techniques will work for varying levels of stress - low, medium and high.
- Offer ideas such as taking deep breaths, disengaging from eye contact, drinking water and taking notes as ways to center themselves when experiencing low to medium levels of stress.
- Reassure clients that they can take a break if they are experiencing high levels of stress and fear reacting inappropriately or are unable to think because they are overwhelmed by emotion. Some might prefer to signal their coach non-verbally to indicate that a break is needed (e.g. passing a pen, or tapping a shoulder). Others may need to stand and walk out of the room to avoid saying something they don't mean to say.
- Anticipate when your client might need a break and verbalize this plan during the pre-team meeting.
- Watch your client's body language and check in with them regarding a need for a break if looking stressed, angry or overwhelmed.
- Collaborate with the client to compose statements that express the emotion and are reframed to avoid blame, accusations or labels that push buttons. Practice!

- Review support of professional team members and structure of meetings to help them through the process of divorce.
- Take time to discuss a seating arrangement for team meetings that works for your client, do they like to sit next to the coach or does the coach prefer to watch their facial expressions and sit across from them. Avoid having both the client's coach and Lawyer sit on the same side of a table with the client as this will set up an 'us versus them' dynamic.
- Plan to have basic and healthy snacks, tea, coffee and water available to the clients. This shows them we care and prevents hunger from triggering emotions.

Tip #4

Professionals Should Also Seek to Manage Their Waves of Emotion:

- Take time to understand the emotions that rise in us while working with a particular client or with the couple dynamic.
- Evaluate the team process and how the team members react to a rise in emotions.
- Discuss these observations in preteam and debrief meetings in order to generate ideas and avoid getting sucked into the clients' dynamics.
- Remember we need to tolerate some discomfort regarding conflict to help the clients find resolutions.
- At the same time, we need to hold them to their goals of a Collaborative divorce and set limits on disrespectful or unproductive expressions.
- Acknowledge our reactions to conflict so we don't interfere with the process either by rescuing too soon or by adding fuel to the fire.
- Seek assistance from a trusted colleague when you are aware of your reactions to a client or the couple's issues or dynamics that create discomfort or frustration.
- Motivational images and phrases often help us find our center and balance. When it comes to waves of emotion: "We can't stop the waves, but we can learn to surf!"

Look for part 3 of this series in your August Practice Tips!

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

Sacramento Collaborative Practice Group
invites you to join them at the

**Two-Day Basic Interdisciplinary
Collaborative Training**



Friday and Saturday, October 20-21, 2017
8:30am to 5:00pm (both days)

Location in Sacramento, California
To Be Announced

[//Click Here for Brochure//](#)

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For further information and registration contact Lindie Newlin or Hal Bartholomew at 916-455-5200, or email Lindie@DivorcewithRespect.com.

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