

## **Why I Chose to Practice Collaborative Law**

Written By Jacqueline Caputo, Esq.

A divorce is really a reorganization of a family, and in most cases a very layered, complex untangling of lives. It is not a frivolous event. To be done right from a professional standpoint, it needs to be handled delicately and thoughtfully. In my over 17 years of practicing law, I have learned that a job well done is best accomplished outside of the courtroom; but that is not because the judges, court personnel and other attorneys do not care or do a poor job. I have found that they usually care very much about the families whose cases they control, but it is just that – the court and attorneys are in control, not the divorcing parties, and that is fundamentally flawed. No one else should be in control of the reorganization of your family at such a crucial time other than you. Although the marriage clearly is not working anymore, if the parties are really committed to what is best for their family, then they will choose the Collaborative process.

The Collaborative process undoubtedly provides the most comprehensive and thorough approach to this reorganization of a family. It considers all aspects. It leaves no stone unturned. It anticipates all the changes that time will bring, and it crafts an agreement that can adapt to those changes. It is enriched by the knowledge and experience of professionals. It leaves the parties feeling empowered, understood, and prepared rather than lost, frustrated and destroyed.

There is also tremendous value in the Collaborative process. Divorce is expensive, no matter which option one selects. Collaborative will not be cheap, but it will absolutely be a better use of financial resources than litigation. It will be money well spent because there is no waste; no sitting around in a courtroom waiting for your case to be called when there are so many others on the same calendar, no useless and expensive motions to be made, no bluster and posturing over things that do not really matter, no charges on your bill that you have no idea what they are for. Instead, the clients are paying for creative, focused and knowledgeable minds to work together to reach their specific goals and create a detailed path forward.

The benefits of alternate dispute resolution in divorce became even more clear to me after I became a parent myself. Now I understand the challenges and emotions of parenting, and I can better relate to my clients. I know what issues are important to them and how an agreement designed in the Collaborative process is so much more useful and complete than a “cookie cutter” order forced upon them by the court.

When giving a prospective client a consult, if they ask me if I am a shark, I very honestly tell them no, and that if that is what they are looking for, then I am not the right fit. Yes, I can absolutely be strong and firm when required, but the best qualities that I bring to my cases are compassion, attention to detail and the ability to find solutions and middle ground. I can best utilize these strengths and really help families through their Collaborative divorce.