

## **Why I Choose to be Part of the Collaborative Divorce Team as a Family Support Specialist**

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Over the 29 years in my private practice as a Psychotherapist, I have seen many clients deal with the breakup of their marriages. Some were able to choose the mediation process to amicably end their unhappy marriages. Others chose the litigation process which usually led to highly conflictual and protracted processes. I witnessed the hurt, the fights and the cost of win-lose scenarios on the couple and their children over and over again.

When I learned about the alternative of Collaborative Divorce, a middle path opened up. In Collaborative, each member of the couple has their own attorney as well as a team of professionals to support them. As long as the couple agree to be transparent and rule out litigation (going to court), then the obvious choice to help guide them along the way is Collaborative.

There are so many reasons that I appreciate the Collaborative model, and why I chose to be trained as a Family Support Specialist (Divorce Coach).

### **Team approach**

I really appreciate being part of a team of professionals that work together so the couple can divorce in a kinder and gentler manner. There is transparency among the team of professionals as well as between the divorcing couple.

Collaborative Divorce includes a team of experts: your own attorney, a neutral divorce financial specialist and a neutral Family Support Specialist (FSS). In some cases, we also include a Child Specialist to give voice to the children.

We provide structure as a team for respectful problem solving and we can also collectively land on more creative solutions for the couple working together as a team.

### **Reduce negative effects on children & foster effective co-parenting skills**

I was so tired of hearing how children were put in the middle and used as pawns by either parent to make it seem that the other parent was the “bad guy.”

In the Collaborative process, children aren't put in the middle, because we address that tendency head on. The FSS helps the couple identify how and why they're using the children to get their needs met, and how this won't help the family in the short and long term.

The parents will be in their children's lives for many years to come. The question is how can they best plan for separate lives while still co-parenting their children. I'm so grateful that I can do my part in fostering a more positive divorcing environment that can lessen the long-lasting effects that divorce can have on the children.

### **Streamline communication and managing emotions**

Emotions are central to the divorce process and in traditional litigation settings there's no place to work through feelings. Lawyers are not therapists or coaches, nor are judges.

In the collaborative setting, the FSS helps the couple work through their feelings so we can find resolution. It's not always easy AND it's doable when there's space for the couple to express their thoughts and feelings with a trained specialist.

The FSS does not act as a therapist, he/she acts as a coach helping the couple work through key issues and triggers that get in the way of reaching agreement. If we don't address emotions as part of the process, no amount of logical persuasion will help the couple close the deal.

The FSS also addresses the communication process between the team, so as the case progresses we all work together effectively for the couple.

### **Future planning**

In Collaborative, the goal is to come up with an agreement that works as a blueprint to guide the couple and family for the future. We promote a post-divorce environment that enhances the wellbeing of the family. I love the focus on the long term and not just an agreement which expediently gets the deal completed.

Besides my empathy, compassion and intuition, I also bring my innate creativity and background as a life and business coach to the Collaborative process, which inspires out of the box solutions.