

The Value of a Collaborative Coach

Some clients are resistant to coaching initially and some adamantly refuse coaching all together. All collaborative professionals can educate clients that coaches have something important to bring to the table. We may only have one opportunity to do this. A Collaborative Coach can add value to the collaborative process in many ways:

Help Identify candidates for collaborative divorce

- Screen for Domestic Violence and addictions.
- Evaluate for potential violence. Have there been incidents in the past or is someone feeling threatened now?
- Help attorneys identify whether a client is an appropriate or not appropriate candidate for the process.

Help with communication issues

- Helping clients speak up for themselves at the table after years of passivity in the relationship.
- Helping clients rehearse ways to address difficult topics in 5 way meetings.
- Assist parties to moderate their demeanor or off putting behaviors that impede the environment we seek to create in order to allow access and effective participation in the Collaborative Process.
- Help clients keep communications open and use healthier ways of talking and listening during the process.
- Identifying ineffective communication patterns, and improving communication skills, the couple's ability to co-parent is improved and post decree need for attorney services may be reduced.
- Assisting in team meetings to monitor and redirect tone and unproductive behaviors
- Give the client feedback about what they thought they heard versus what was actually said since people hear what they expect to hear. If there's a level of trust the client will listen to and consider the coach's interpretation of events. Asking questions for clarification is part of the role of the coach.
- Improve communication of parents in order to facilitate healthy psychological development in their children. The more arguments and estrangement between parents, the more their children are at risk.
- BEING AVAILABLE: The coach may be able to take calls or respond to emails that may save the time and expense of attorney fees.
- Facilitate DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS when there is an issue between team members.

Help with Emotional issues

- Help clients identify and express concerns and needs
- Helping clients to develop skills needed to modulate their emotional reactions to circumstances, so emotions are not driving them to impulsive or poor quality decisions they may later regret
- Help clients see advantage of being concerned with emotional state of partner or spouse, which may assist them in effective negotiation.
- Offer more credibility with clients on emotional topics than the attorney whose loyalty may be questioned when they suggest it useful to be concerned for the other client's perspective as an important factor to the negotiating dynamic.

- "Immunizing" clients from being reactive to partner's bullying or manipulative behavior or other behaviors that trigger a non-constructive reaction.
- Helping clients be forward-thinking, rather than reliving past hurts and what did not work from their past.
- Helping attorneys with tips to serve "difficult" clients or those clients with personality disorders or active mental health concerns (severe depression or anxiety).
- Help attorneys identify and address causes of blockage in forward movement of case
- Provide assistance during times of crisis including:
 - Creating emotional and parenting space while the couple is still living together
 - At the time of separation
 - When they discover their spouse is seeing someone (a huge emotional blow)
 - When money has been moved—anywhere—without notice
- INSPIRE HOPE: convey the knowledge and hope that this trauma will pass. Eventually, the clients will adjust and have an opportunity to create a new life. They don't believe it but it's still important to tell them because it's true. Clients need to hear it— and often.
- Understand how bitterness and despair can threaten to take over but we also remind them there's a light at the end of the tunnel.

Help with parenting issues

- Coach clients on parenting skills
- Help parents develop a Parenting Plan that is child centered.
- Help clients to manage feelings that may impact decisions which may in turn impact children for years to come.
- Help to keep the FOCUS ON THE CHILDREN AND WHAT'S BEST FOR THEM. Children need plenty of time with both parents, provided the parents are safe people.
- Help clients develop or respect boundaries with their soon-to-be ex spouse. Coaches can be firm in some cases, while always being supportive.
- Meet with the parents to work on co-parenting separate from the team meetings – saving the expense of attorney fees.
- Remind clients that there are "New rules now!"
- Help parents create a healthy divorce story

Important things to tell clients

- They can't be too smart when it comes to divorce. The more they see the big picture, the better their future lives will be.
- While the clients may be smart in most areas of their lives, divorce is a new experience and because it's so upsetting, the clients may not be thinking as clearly as they'd like to be. They will benefit from the support, assistance and information a coach can provide.
- Their children are counting on their parents to be smart about navigating this transition well. Collaborative coaches can help them understand what will help or hurt their kids from an objective and researched-based point of view.

- Parents know their children well but this is a new set of circumstances for the family to undergo and endure. Ask client, “Why risk making unnecessary mistakes when you can consult a coach? This is the coach’s area of expertise. Divorce is not just legal and financial, it is emotional too.”
- Even if this isn’t the client’s first divorce, most likely it’s their first collaborative divorce and the rules for negotiation are different. Tell them the coach will walk them through the process.
- Remind them that the additional money they’re spending on the coach’s fees will ultimately save them money, time and aggravation in the future and help to make the process run more smoothly and efficiently.