

GROUND RULES FOR THE COLLABORATIVE FAMILY LAW PROCESS

1. Interest-based negotiating. You will express yourself in terms of needs and interests that you would like to realize.
2. No surprises.
 - a) You have signed a binding agreement to disclose all documents and information that relate to the issues.
 - b) Agendas and issues to be addressed at each four-way meeting will be agreed upon by the attorneys in advance of each meeting.
3. Focus. You will work for what you believe is the most constructive and acceptable agreement for both you and your family.
4. Communication rules for each four-way meeting.
 - a) Do not interrupt when the other or their lawyer is speaking. You will have a full and equal opportunity to speak on every issue presented for discussion.
 - b) Do not use language that blames or finds fault with the other. Use non-inflammatory words. Be respectful of others.
 - c) Speak for yourself; make “I” statements. Use each other’s first name and avoid “he” or “she”.
 - d) If you share a complaint, raise it as your concern and follow it up with a constructive suggestion as to how it might be resolved.
 - e) If something is not working for you, please tell your lawyer so your concern can be addressed.
 - f) Listen carefully and try to understand what the other is saying without being judgmental about the person or the message.
 - g) Talk with your lawyer about anything you do not understand. Your lawyer can clarify issues for you.
5. Preparation. Be willing to commit the time required to meet regularly. Be prepared for each meeting.
6. Patience. Be patient – delays in the process can happen with everyone acting in good faith. The collaborative law process is much faster than litigation.