

## The Role of a Neutral Coach

As an integral member of the collaborative team, the neutral coach facilitates communicating among **all** participants in a couple's divorce process. The coach addresses any emotional obstacles that keep either member of the couple from effective functioning. The neutral coach has three main tasks: 1) Help the couple move through this process, wherever they are emotionally. 2) Help the team work together effectively. 3) Handle the logistics of the process.

- The coach meets with the couple, both together and individually, to gather information and understand the dynamics and stress points of their particular situation.
- The coach talks about each person's readiness for divorce, and works with the couple to identify where and when communication breaks down between them.
- The coach helps each member of the couple learn what they do that triggers their partner negatively and why that is not in their self-interest long-term. The coach may teach them how they can calm themselves when they become overwhelmed with emotion in order to be more present in the discussion.

- The coach supports the neutral child specialist participation.
- The coach assists the parents to develop the parenting plan.
- The coach teaches the couple healthy co-parenting skills and develops the parenting plan.
- The coach honors collaborative principles and will share with the team pertinent information from the couple that could help or hinder the couple achieve their goals.
- The coach facilitates all joint meetings. The coach encourages communication among participants, sets expectations for behavior, monitors the participants' verbal and non-verbal communication and helps manage the unexpected that may be present in the room.
- The coach as a neutral helps provide a voice that is not considered an advocate for either spouse/party. The attorneys are advocates for their clients, and even though they are committed to a collaborative process, their words may be seen by the other spouse/party as aiding the person for whom they are allied. The neutral voice can help move things along and also elicit more honest and candid answers to difficult questions.

- The coach encourages and facilitates effective communication between professional members of the team, both in and between joint meetings. Team members may not realize how they affect the process and this can impede progress.
- The coach may make referrals to other professionals when more support is needed.