

COLLABORATIVE PracticeTips

October 2020

A monthly bulletin from the CP Cal Practice Excellence Committee

The Practice Excellence Committee is pleased to offer tips to help you increase your Collaborative cases and achieve *practice excellence*.

Please send us your comments and questions! Email us at info@cpcal.com

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Adult Children in Collaborative Divorce Process: 10 Benefits You Shouldn't Ignore

As the divorce rate for older adults escalates, so does the number of adult children who experience parental divorce. Yet, these adult children frequently say that whenever they express their feelings and experiences, the most important people in their lives often ignore and dismiss them, leaving them to feel invisible, unimportant, confused, and painfully alone.

Carol Hughes, Ph.D.* and Bruce Fredenburg, LMFT*, Orange County Collaborative Divorce Coaches and Child Specialists, have recently published their insightful book *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce*.

Collaborative Divorce is a family-focused process. Including the adult children in the divorce process benefits them, their parents, the extended family, and the professional team by:

1. **Educating** parents that adult children are an integral part of family dynamics. When a couple divorces, their divorce journey and the outcomes impact their adult children.

2. **Acknowledging** that family is all about relationships. Three decades of research about late-life divorce indicates that the parent-child relationship is vital to both parents and children throughout their lifespans.
3. **Naming** the losses confirms their experiences are valid and real. Some of the many changes include losing the structure of the family as they have always known it, potential reduction and/or loss of financial support for younger adult children, and loss of familial celebrations like holidays, birthdays, and graduations.
4. **Addressing** the feelings and experiences that are likely to arise from the divorce of an adult child's parents. Validating their feelings and experiences can prevent disruption or destruction of long-term family relationships, including grandparent relationships.
5. **Coaching** parents how to avoid major pitfalls and protect their respective relationships with their adult children and grandchildren going forward. Examples of pitfalls include the danger of enrolling adult children as allies against their other parent or creating loyalty conflicts for adult children by using them as confidants.
6. **Reminding** parents that they and their adult children are going through different experiences. While they might be looking forward to a new life or feeling relief, their adult children may be grieving real and perceived losses.
7. **Enlightening** the professional team how adult children are stakeholders in their parents' divorce. When their parents meet one-on-one or in collaborative meetings, adult children can in fact be significant influencers "in the room", trying to steer parents into positions or toward safety.
8. **Recognizing** that the rupturing of one's family is a significant life event for adult children and can impact family relationships well into the future. Including an Adult Child Specialist ("ACS") on the professional team, who will meet with the adult children in person, via phone or digital platform, can provide a valuable service to adult children and their parents by helping them understand and preserve their family relationships.
9. **Incorporating** an ACS, who can help parents to understand the legacy they are leaving their adult children by modeling how they solve problems. Is it a battle to be won or a problem to be solved? What will their adult children learn and take with them into their current and ongoing relationships?
10. **Listening** to the voices of adult children. As the only professional who interacts with the entire family, the ACS gleans a wealth of essential information about family dynamics, emotional triggers and hidden agendas that can support the professional team in transitioning parents to a successful resolution. Often the ACS is the *one* professional that both parents trust and want to hear from in the collaborative process. This unique role affords the ACS the ability to center parents on consensus building.

*Bruce and Carol are founding members of Collaborative Divorce Solutions of Orange County. For more helpful information, please refer to their book *Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce* (June 22, 2020). Available at Amazon and local bookstores.

**With their collaborative colleagues Cathleen Collinsworth and Bart Carey, Bruce and Carol are also presenting "The Overlooked Value of the Child Specialist as a Family-Focused Facilitator in Collaborative Meetings" at the October 2020 IACP Networking and Education Forum. Sign up at <https://www.theiacpconference.org/>.

From the PEC:

Marketing TIP

Take Small Bites!

Marketing online is complex, with a lot of different avenues to explore. The whole thing can be super overwhelming. It can help to set up a time and money plan and budget. Go easy on yourself as you do this! Your time budget could be 10 minutes every day. Schedule those 10 minutes (minimum) in your calendar. Here are a few things you can do to fill out that time.

Make a list of the kinds of people who are great potential referral sources for you

Search online for how these people get together. Facebook group? Online meetings?

Figure out how to join these groups/events.

Go!

Type in Collaborative Divorce (your area) and see what shows up on the first page, scroll down to see where your office shows up...does it? (this one is depressing...go do something fun to cheer yourself up after you're done)



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