

COLLABORATIVE Practice Tips

November 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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“All I Want for Christmas is to Wake Up to a Vaccine in My Stocking”

We are all facing holidays that may look quite different this year. Thanksgiving for two anyone? The reality is that we may have to make plans for the holidays without our adult children, siblings, aging parents and/or friends.

More relevant to our work, some of our clients may be facing their first holiday season as a divorced or divorcing person. It is also 2020, so nothing is “normal.” How do we help ourselves AND our clients cope with the holidays in the time of Covid.

1. **Financial Considerations:** Some clients may have not experienced a significant financial change during Covid. Others may be making even more money than usual. We will all likely have some clients who have suffered significant financial and personal losses. Refer your clients to a neutral financial professional and encourage them all to set a realistic and manageable holiday budget. Encourage clients with children to have a discussion with the other parent about how to handle gifts this year. The type

of gifts given may be quite different. Planning ahead can help clients to edit their gift lists to exclude items that cannot be used without appropriate Covid precautions, i.e. travel, group activities with friends, movie passes, restaurant gift cards (unless adequate outdoor dining opportunities), etc.

2. Legal Considerations: Be realistic with clients about timelines and what can be expected in terms of decision making from the courts at this time.

Many courts are significantly backed up. Some courts are open for in-person activity, while others are operating virtually. Inform clients on what is happening in their specific court.

3. Parenting Plan Considerations: If your clients already have a parenting plan that will work during Covid, their best option is to avoid court and continue with that plan, unless both parents can mutually agree to a suggested change.

If your clients do not have a parenting and/or holiday plan in place, encourage them to try and reach agreement, at least for this 2020 holiday season. They may wish to seek help from a mediator or involve a co-parenting coach or child specialist. The child specialist can flesh-out how the children might envision how they want to spend this year's holidays with each parent and any concerns they might have.

4. Emotional Considerations: It is never a bad time to meet with a mental health professional, and now more than ever. Holidays are often a time of stress, anxiety and even depression. These emotions can be exacerbated when it is the first holiday season in a divorced or divorcing couple's life.

Covid is only compounding the emotional impact of this year. Many will be unable to see older family members who may have provided much needed support and company in our lives.

The takeaway here is to encourage our clients to plan holidays in advance.

Taking charge of their own circumstances by starting a conversation and developing a plan is an aspect of resilience. It will keep clients from sliding into victimhood. If a client is without the children this holiday season, encourage her/him to make a plan. Sometimes the smallest plans reap the biggest rewards, like taking a short trip, planting a garden, reading a book or volunteering at the local food bank. Simply donating to one of many charitable organizations providing to those in need, can contribute to feelings of being involved, useful and valued.

Be sure to remind your clients to take care of themselves. Everyone is emotionally depleted right now - Covid, election season, fires, excessive heat, power outages, isolation, working from home, supervising school-aged children and their on-line learning – the list alone is exhausting.

For those who are open to self-care suggestions, share the RAIN approach, a coping method that can help us to process and complete stress cycles as they

arise:

1- **Recognize** that you're upset and turn toward it: Denial is not your friend. Name what you are feeling, thinking and experiencing: depressed, frustrated, angry, tired, sad, fearful, etc.

2- **Accept**: Acknowledge and accept what you are feeling. It's there. It is what it is. AND remember this feeling is temporary and that you are capable of riding the wave until it passes.

3- **Investigate with Interest and Care**: Many people actually physically feel their emotions somewhere in their body before they recognize the emotion. Are you having any physical sensations anywhere in your body right now? Is it in your stomach, chest or throat? Are your shoulders tight? Are you having headaches? Investigating where you are actually feeling your emotions helps you to identify them more easily in the future.

4- **Nurture with Self-Compassion**: Normalize your feelings and identify what you need right now. Anyone would have a stomachache right now; this is normal. What do I need right now? Consider a walk, a cup of tea, deep breathing, meditation, turning off the television, taking a nap, enjoying good food, talking with a friend. Then do exactly that for yourself. Process makes perfect.

From the PEC:

Make Your Blog Title Searchable

The best way for your clients to find you on the web is to create content marketing (blogs, podcasts, videos) that answers the urgent questions they type in their search engine. So before writing your blog, take a moment to think of what question your client is asking Google in the middle of the night. Make it very topical, very "right now," because in this wild and crazy, unpredictable world, your client wants information that's relevant to the situation tonight. Remember that your client wants a divorce but hasn't figure out how yet. They're deeply concerned about starting a war and wish for a process that is dignified and respectful and that would lead to the best outcomes for their children.

AND, there's something that connects and makes them trust YOU. Is that because you "get" that they have always been a soccer mom and have no idea what they would do for a living once divorced? Is it because they're trying to make it in the music business and because of your background, you'd really understand what that means? Is it because you've divorced and know how it feels to have to give half of your hard-earned assets to someone who cheated on you? Or because you know insomnia (or mindfulness or yoga or marital arts or...?) from the inside out? A great blog is NOT clinical, factual, and antiseptic. A great blog has passion based on personal experience that the reader can identify with, the more specific the better.

Don't worry about length and links and SEO and photos. Your title is the exact question your client is asking. Your content is steeped in passion based on personal experience. Go!



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