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# Collaborative Family Law

## *A divorce coach's role*

**T**hirty nine per cent of marriages in Canada will end in divorce. Factor in the number of common law relationships that end in separation and that number approaches 50 per cent. While divorce ends a marriage it does not end a family.

The legal system addresses spousal and child support, custody and access, and division of property and other assets. However, separation and divorce is more than a legal process, especially when children are involved. The separating couple may be concerned about how each will be affected by the separation/divorce. Can I live on my settlement? How will my relationship with my children change? People have unspoken

desires and feelings about their separation/divorce. They may be seeking vindication, validation, justice, revenge, or simply want to be heard. Finally, there are deeper, broader themes relating to personal meaning: feelings of guilt, failure and abandonment. These unrecognized feelings may show up as depression, anger, anxiety, or feeling overwhelmed and not good enough.

All of these factors impact separation/divorce and must be acknowledged and addressed or the separation and divorce process could be at risk. These risks may include sabotage by one or both partners, the best interests of the children being overlooked, conflicts escalating, emotional

difficulties impeding the process, important information not being disclosed, and the absence of safety and trust.

Divorce coaches help in the collaborative separation and divorce process by:

- assisting people to resolve emotional and personal issues so they can fully participate in the collaborative process
  - providing a structured framework to assist the parents in moving from a marriage to a co-parenting business partnership. This framework includes effective communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and how to run a successful business meeting
  - identifying the joint and individual interests of the parents to achieve a mutually satisfactory co-parenting plan
  - assisting the parents in creating a co-parenting plan that works
  - providing a resource for the parents for the life of the co-parenting plan.
- Divorce coaches are experienced counselors, social workers, and psychologists with specific training in Collaborative Separation and Divorce. They are licensed to practice and carry liability insurance.