

**Collaborative Family Law**<http://collaborativefamilylawgroup.com/>**250.704.2600**[info@collaborativefamilylawgroup.com](mailto:info@collaborativefamilylawgroup.com)

We are well into Spring and baseball season is underway for many families. In this newsletter, Bob Blank, divorce coach, takes a look at how collaboration is a team sport, comparing it to baseball. Also, find out who your collaborative professionals are up-island.

### Collaborative Practice on Vancouver Island - Did you know?

There is a collaborative practice group in Nanaimo that has been active for the past 2 years. This group formed to offer the collaborative process to mid-island families going through separation. Since our inception we have worked on 12 collaborative files. As a practice group we are committed to providing our clients with the best possible service. We are constantly working to learn from each file and from each other with the goal of constant refinement and improvement of the service that we offer.

This practice group consists of 3 lawyers: Jennifer Hubbard in Qualicum Beach, and Bill LaRose and Laura Taylor who practice in Nanaimo. Ellie Hallman is a divorce coach based in Duncan although she is a member of the Nanaimo group and commutes to an office there. Currently there are no collaboratively-trained coaches or financial specialists based in Nanaimo. A number of our Victoria members have volunteered to support the Nanaimo collaborative professionals by providing coaching and financial support in a full team model. These "road warriors" include: Tanya Sterling, Craig Holm, Jane Taylor Lee, and Bob Blank. If you reside up-island and want a collaborative team process to support you through separation, consider contacting the Nanaimo team through any one of the professionals listed above.

### What Baseball Can Teach Us About Collaborative Separation and Divorce.

What can baseball possibly teach us about helping individuals and families navigate the treacherous waters of separation and divorce? What lessons can we take from baseball and apply them to helping individuals and families through the collaborative separation and divorce process? In this article we will explore how games and game theory can assist in improving communication in families and help create a healthy co-parenting partnership

Eric Berne, the Canadian born psychiatrist, described "games" as a series of transactions between people that are reciprocal, ulterior, and proceeds toward a predictable outcome. Each "game" or interaction has a payoff i.e. sympathy, satisfaction, or arriving at a parental decision that is in the best interests of the children. This understanding of "games" will assist you in more clearly defining the major life transition that you are going through and help you to clearly define your parental alliance and how you want to co-parent your children. Baseball has many lessons that we can apply to assist in navigating this transition. Tommy Lasorda, the former manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers said, "There are three types of baseball players: those who make it happen, those who watch it happen, and those who wonder what happened." We want to assist families in "making it happen" in a way that supports the needs and interests of all family members and allows all of the family members to move ahead in their lives in a positive manner.

**Lesson number 1 is that baseball is a team sport.**

Unlike tennis and golf, success in baseball is measured by how well the team does and success can only be achieved if all of the players work together and support each other. Successful co-parenting and a strong parental alliance is built with a shared sense of purpose with both parents working together for the benefit and welfare of their children. Collaborative professionals assist the couple and family in redefining their relationship from a personal marital commitment to a co-parenting partnership with the focus on working together for the best interests of the children. As my old baseball coach used to say "There is no I in team." shared solutions that meet the needs and interests of all family members.

**Lesson number 2 is that baseball has a defined set of rules that define how the game is to be played.**

These rules includes: the numbers of balls and strikes each batter gets, the number of outs per inning, and when a game ends.

The umpires are part of the game and are the arbiters to make sure the game is played fairly. In Collaborative practice our basic set of rules include: negotiate mutually acceptable settlements without having a court decide the issues, maintain open communication and information sharing, and creating shared solutions that meet the needs and interests of all family members. The arbiters of the collaborative process are the clients with the assistance of the Collaborative professionals. The importance of rules is that they keep all parties focused on the goals we are striving to achieve and can get us back on track if we find ourselves emotionally hijacked or derailed.

**Lesson number 3 is that success in baseball is based on executing a set of basic skills.**

The skills in baseball include: pitching, hitting, and throwing a baseball with the intention of scoring runs. In Collaborative practice these basic skills include: listening actively, speaking without judging, blaming, or criticizing, opening to influence from others, willing to compromise, self-soothing when necessary, and willing at times to sacrifice self-interest for the good of the family. Baseball, like collaboration, is the only place in life where sacrifice is really appreciated and is a necessary part of the game. Collaborative practice supports these basic skills and these are foundational pieces that help parents create the co-parenting plan and navigate the on-going challenges of raising children in two homes.

**Lesson number 4 is that the length of a baseball game is theoretically infinite.**

In baseball this is because the game is balanced and fair and both teams have an equal opportunity to score runs. There is no sudden death overtime. In baseball you can't "kill the clock". You've got to give the other team its chance. Like baseball, families are infinite. In whatever manner, we are all intertwined with our family for our whole life. This perspective shows us the importance of commitment to making co-parenting successful and learning the skills necessary to work toward creating a positive parental alliance. This does not mean that we have to be perfect in order to be successful. Here again baseball has a message. Baseball is the only field of endeavor where you can succeed three times out of ten and be considered a success.

**Lesson number 5 is that baseball is a team sport that relies for success on each player performing his unique role.**

Like a team each member of the family is unique. For the family to function successfully each member of the family needs to be recognized and support for their uniqueness and be supported to fulfill their potential.

**Lesson number 6 is in the immortal words of Yogi Berra "When you come to a fork in the road, take it."**

Separation and divorce is a major fork in the road. You have a choice in how you negotiate this change. The Collaborative Process allows you to proceed in a manner that reflects and supports the best interests of all parties and gives the possibility of experiencing this transition as healing and transformative as opposed to hurtful and destructive. The choice is yours.