

## *Principles of Collaborative Practice*

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The goal of the Collaborative process is to resolve all issues relating to separation and divorce in a non-adversarial manner, without going to court.

- The lawyers and clients sign a Participation Agreement which is a contract committing them to work in accordance with the Principles of Collaborative Practice.
- The clients and their lawyers work as a cooperative team, along with other jointly retained professionals, to reach the best possible mutually acceptable resolution.
- Clients conduct settlement discussions with the lawyers by their sides to provide legal advice and to assist in the process. Other professionals become part of the team as required and agreed upon. In this way, clients maintain control over decision making and are empowered to find creative solutions.
- The lawyers assist their clients to communicate and negotiate effectively in a respectful, dignified manner. The lawyers are specifically trained to manage conflict and assist clients to engage in constructive problem solving.
- Clients cooperate fully in obtaining and sharing all financial and other important information.
- The process reduces conflict and maintains good faith which increases the likelihood that parents can cooperate in the parenting of their children and reach solutions which promote their children's best interests.
- The costs of child and financial specialists can be shared. There are no court papers to be prepared and no court hearings, resulting in a process that is generally less costly and time consuming than litigation.
- If settlement is not reached, the lawyers must withdraw and neither the lawyers nor any member of their respective firms, may represent the clients in subsequent litigation. All members of the team endeavour to reach a comprehensive agreement to resolve all issues.

