**Expanding Collaborative Practice (CP) and Improving Outcomes**

**for Families with UpToParents.org**

November 12, 2012

See this two-minute [Video Introduction](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Videos/ExpandingCollaborativePractice%28CP%29WithUpToParents/ExpandingCollaborativePractice%28CP%29WithUpToParents.html)

on the use of these resources in Collaborative cases.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Ironically, for all of their collaborative ways, Collaborative practitioners must be aware that in promoting their services they are in competition with a sometimes entrenched view of divorce as a battle. Both (a) persuading prospective clients to the Collaborative way and (b) helping divorcing parents succeed by rallying to meet their children’s needs are powerful reasons for Collaborative practitioners to use [UpToParents.org](http://www.UpToParents.org).

Experience teaches that parents in divorce and other family crises want to know how they will be better off by the path they choose for handling their challenges. One thing that can clarify the advantages of the Collaborative path is an informed and creative focus on children’s needs.

Here is where CP professionals—attorneys, divorce coaches, and child specialists—can both build their practices and be of special assistance to families by referring clients to [UpToParents.org](http://UpToParents.org) (for divorcing and divorced parents), [ProudToParent.org](http://ProudToParent.org) (for never-married parents), and [WhileWeHeal.org](http://www.WhileWeHeal.org) (for parents working through marital problems).

To learn more about the websites and how they can be used to build and energize Collaborative practices, (1) try [UpToParents.org](http://www.UpToParents.org) as a hypothetical parent in divorce (just click on the **First-time visitors/Getting Started** icon and follow the simple directions) and (2) see the following links available on the “Professionals Corner” of [UpToParents.org](http://www.UpToParents.org).

* [Professionals’ Introduction to UpToParents](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Documents/ProfessionalsIntroductiontoUpToParents.doc)
* [Two-Minute Video Introduction to UpToParents by Judge Michael Scopelitis](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Videos/UseOfUpToParentsAndProudToParentInAllDivorceAndPaternityCases/UseOfUpToParentsAndProudToParentInAllDivorceAndPaternityCases.html)
* [The Paradigm Shifts to the Healing Divorce](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Documents/UpToParentsandParadigmShifts.doc)
* [Sample UpToParents Agreed Commitments](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Documents/UpToParentsCommitmentsEnglishAndSpanish.html)
* [Sample UpToParents Exercise Responses](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Documents/UpToParentsSampleExerciseResponses.html)
* [Sample Feedback from Professionals and Parents about UpToParents](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Documents/SampleCommentsAboutUpToParents.docx)

Click [HERE](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Documents/SampleDocumentsforCollaborativeProfessionalsUseofUpToParents.doc) to see these important documents easily adaptable to CP professionals’ needs.

1. Sample letter from a CP attorney to a divorce client
2. Sample joint memo from both attorneys to both clients in a divorce case (while we think all four of these documents deserve consideration, this one is so representative that we have also attached it as page 3 of this memo)
3. Sample language for CP Agreement
4. Sample letter from a CP divorce coach or child specialist

***Three Specific Steps***

While merely referring parents to these resources yields many benefits, there are three specific steps Collaborative professionals can take to ensure that parents use the child focus from their website work to move forward.

1. Each attorney can ask his or her client to privately share the username and password chosen in doing the website and briefly look over—and compliment—the client’s work. Attorneys can use their clients’ usernames and passwords to log on from the “Returning Visitors/Log In” icon on the homepage. *Parents deserve—and are helped by—acknowledgement for their commitment to their children’s best interests.*

We strongly suggest that attorneys make a special point to see that their clients have completed Exercise C, the list of good memories and compliments about their children's other parent that they will be sharing with their children. In working with hundreds of sets of parents, we’ve discovered that parents’ completion of this particular Exercise almost predicts success in problem-solving.

1. One of the attorneys (or a staff member) should merge the parents’ chosen Commitments into a set of “Agreed Commitments,” the ones that both parents have chosen. (One of the later “frequently asked questions” on the “FAQs” link of [UpToParents.org](http://www.UpToParents.org) shows how easily this can be done.)
2. At an early four-way conference, the attorneys can then do three powerful things:
	* ***Pass out and celebrate the parents’ Agreed Commitments,***
	* ***With the parents’ permission, read aloud their Exercise C compliments, the compliments and good memories about each other that they’ll be sharing with their children, and***
	* ***Invite any discussion the parents wish to have about their website work and the steps they want to take in implementing their Agreed Commitments.***

Not all parents and professionals will be interested in the same length of discussion on these matters, and we encourage professionals to find their own voice and comfort level. But without question, this early engaging spotlight on children’s needs can both attract and animate parents.

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October 30, 2012

**Sample Joint Memo from Both CP Attorneys to Both Clients**

[Note: This joint memo, or any adaptation of it, is just one important way in which CP attorneys can elevate not only parents’ attraction to the Collaborative process but also parents’ success within it by use of these unique free websites. CP professionals are encouraged to consider this and all sample forms available at this link: [HERE](http://www.uptoparents.org/files/English/Documents/SampleDocumentsforCollaborativeProfessionalsUseofUpToParents.doc).]

**To:** Charlie Jacobson and Jessica Jacobson

**From:** Deborah Michelson and Andrew Gonzales

**Re:** [UpToParents.org](http://UpToParents.org) [substitute [ProudToParent.org](http://www.ProudToParent.org) in paternity cases]

**Date:** [insert]

Jessica and Charlie—

As we have discussed with you individually, we consider that one of the most important responsibilities we all share in a Collaborative approach to your circumstances is protecting the best interests of Tiffany, Ryan, and Cody, including their good relationships with both of you. We are sending you this joint memorandum today to invite your early thoughts on their needs—and to let you know about a unique website resource that we find helpful in cases like yours.

The website is [UpToParents.org](http://www.UpToParents.org) [substitute [ProudToParent.org](http://www.ProudToParent.org) in paternity cases]. It’s a free, simple-to-use, and uniquely engaging tool for considering children’s often overlooked needs and steps for meeting those needs. We invite each of you to do the work on the website (including a complete job on all the written Exercises). Just click on the **First-time visitors/Getting Started** icon and follow the simple steps that follow.

So that your attorney can discuss with you what you wrote, we ask that when you finish, please email to your own attorney the username and password you used in signing up on the website.

As always, we look forward to being of any help you need at this important time. Feel free to be in touch with any questions or concerns.

Andrew Gonzales

Deborah Michelson

1. An electronic copy of this article is available in Part II of the “Professionals Corner” link of [UpToParents.org](http://www.uptoparents.org/).  All underlined links can be opened from that electronic copy. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)