

COST DEFLATORS

HOW TO AVOID NEEDING COSTLY PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION

Failing to do *any* of the recommendations below, will significantly inflate the need for help from team members, and therefore increase the cost of your divorce!

OUTLINE:

1. Use BIFF GUIDELINES for texts, emails and telephone conversations. Communicate effectively.
2. Take notes during meetings, practice and hone the skills learned from your individual coach, in and outside of meetings.
3. Become masterful at having necessary and difficult conversations.
4. Parent by placing your child(ren)'s needs in the foreground.
5. Be Prepared, Trustworthy and Reliable.
6. Take care of your personal health, physically, mentally and emotionally.
7. Be clear about what you want, without being attached to a particular outcome. Trust your collaborative attorney to help you understand what's reasonable under the law, and what's realistic given the specifics of your case.

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- 1. Use BIFF GUIDELINES (Bill Eddy) for emails and telephone conversations** to keep them brief, business-like and “professional,” with your partner/spouse *and* your team. **B**rief, **I**nformative, **F**riendly, **F**irm (i.e. avoids cost of lengthy phone conversations and long email streams). Contempt, criticism, defensiveness, stonewalling, blaming, judgmental and provocative styles of communication *will* require *much* more professional intervention.
 - 2. Take Notes, Practice and Hone Skills Taught during Coaching Session(s)** in between meetings. Use collaborative techniques *outside* of team meetings (e.g. make requests instead of blaming; use “I-statements;” speak for yourself not your spouse/partner; avoid long-winded explanations that don't move the process forward; listen more than you talk (!); eliminate the words “fair” and “should” from your vocabulary and understand why these are ineffective *for you*; pick your battles wisely - don't waste \$1000's arguing over the Zappa cd; Learn the ways you're inclined to speak “disrespectfully” under pressure and learn/practice immediate remedies. Disrespect and an adversarial tone will provoke interpersonal messes that will require more professional help and increase your costs; Respect your spouse/partner's boundaries and limits. Badgering or arguing a point will escalate discord and require more professional intervention to move forward; Cultivate a “benign curiosity” about the other's view rather than being invested in “being right.”
 - 3. Become Masterful at Having Necessary & Difficult Conversations** – get help, craft and prepare for these, as needed. You will save money in the long run, and avoid acting

out or otherwise being ineffective and requiring costly professional help to clean up messes.

- 4. Parent by placing your child(ren)'s needs in the foreground.** i.e. Use your coach and your child specialist to help you learn to acknowledge and validate your child(ren)'s experience - it is usually *very* different from your own. Learn to recognize all the subtle and obvious ways you may put your child(ren) in the middle, and avoid these. Typically each parent will have to accept more limited access to a child/children; Learn the distinct differences between your sources of grief and loss with the divorce, and your *child(ren)*'s experience of loss. They don't need to feel your pain – they already have their own.
- 5. Be Prepared, Trustworthy and Reliable.** Understand that scheduling your team of professionals at times that also suit you is no easy task. Realistically assess the time it takes you to be *fully prepared* for such meetings when you schedule them. Avoid rescheduling meetings. Complete tasks by the deadline dates prior to meetings. Follow through on your agreements. Ensure you understand your financial report and are equipped to be realistic about your budget/cash flow. Share ALL pertinent information–withholding undermines your trustworthiness and blocks progress. Work collaboratively – acting in a one-sided way provokes reactivity and requires more professional intervention. Have the courage and wisdom to ask for help when you are confused or “shut down.” Mean “yes” when you say “yes,” and “no” when you say “no” – if you have trouble doing this under pressure LET YOUR COACH KNOW so s/he can be sure to help you by checking in. You become trustworthy by knowing where you're NOT trustworthy, building skills and getting support from your team.
- 6. Take care of your personal health physically, mentally and emotionally!**
Divorce is typically traumatic and stressful so you will need to take active steps to reduce stress and related symptoms (Exercise is the single best stress-reducer). Get individual therapy (not from your coach) to help you express, release and effectively regulate your emotions when they are overwhelming. Biologically, you *literally can't think clearly* unless you're emotionally regulated. Therapy will also help you think things through that may be too overwhelming to process in a team meeting when your team is focused on moving you forward. It's very costly to try to “process deeply” when you are paying a team. Make a note and save this for therapy, Your coaches *will* help you get clear and calm so you can get to the finish line. Avoid actively abusing substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior during your divorce or during meetings. Get help to stay sober, or you'll be handicapped, and lose credibility - both will significantly increase your costs.
- 7. Be clear about what you want, without being attached to a particular outcome.**
You are likely to get more of what you want if you can be creative and help your team consider win-win solutions that help ensure your spouse/partner gets what s/he needs/wants *as well* (versus what you “think” s/he should have). Locking into a position, refusing to budge, and/or becoming attached to a particular outcome are tactics that will stall the process, require significant costly intervention, and limit your overall effectiveness. Ask and then trust your collaborative attorney to help you understand what's reasonable under the law, and what's realistic given the specifics of your case.

Collaborative Divorce (or Any Mediation Process): Be Prepared and Organized to Reduce Your Stress and Costs

- Purchase a Binder for documents with, for example, the following dividers: Signed Agreements, CD Process Info, Coach Info/Notes/Homework, Child Specialist Info/Notes/Homework, Attorney Info/Notes/Homework, Financial Info/Notes/Homework, Full Team Meetings/Notes/Homework. Bring to each meeting with any Team Member. Not bringing needed documents when you have scheduled a meeting leaves you paying professionals for less productive times.
- Summarize your concerns as succinctly and factually as possible on paper prior to meeting with your professionals. Rambling, lengthy explanations and storytelling require more costly professional time. Take time *yourself* to consider what's really important to you, and how to present it in the clearest, simplest and most straightforward way possible. Also consider typing up bullet points and sharing a copy with your professional, to help keep you on point. Divorce is typically very difficult emotionally. The more time you take to think through your concerns and type these up in advance, in bulleted form, without judgmental language, the more focused and on-point you'll be during meetings.
- Make your own copies to keep of any forms you fill out/sign and provide to anyone on your Team. If necessary, remind your team to provide copies for you of their documents.
- Bring your calendar to each meeting. It will significantly increase your stress and cost when we have to call or email everyone to reschedule meetings that work for everyone.
- Ask for as much homework as possible to do on your own, so that you do more and your professionals do less, wherever this is possible.
- Complete assigned tasks by the agreed upon time. If you do not complete assigned tasks by when you say you will, this will erode the trust and goodwill you need to come to an agreement out of court, and you will require more professional help (more costs).
- Calendar specific times to complete your homework. Plan and organize your time thoughtfully and realistically. Work backwards from the next meeting time, and schedule blocked out chunks of time to handle what needs to be done by you. Not being prepared for a meeting stalls the whole process, with professionals being paid to wait for you to catch up or finish.
- Take your own notes at meetings so you can refer to these later, especially regarding areas that are unclear or challenging for you. Divorce is generally stressful, and co-parenting can also be difficult. Anyone in your position would have difficulty recalling what was said/explained. Someone from your Team may also take minutes at each meeting but they may not be especially attuned to the issues that matter *to you*, in particular. You may be asked to approve notes taken professionally.
- Respectfully request that professionals write-up: 1) Partner's Stated Interests, 2) Agreements, 3) Tasks (including who and *by when these are due*) on a whiteboard. Offer to take a picture and email this to the team, rather than paying professionals to type up detailed minutes for each meeting.
- Star items during meetings that you have questions/are unsure about. If necessary, ask the Team respectfully to wait for you, to make sure you have time to at least write down your question(s). Your Team Member (e.g. Coach/Co-mediator) may refer your question to another Team Member (e.g. lawyer or financial specialist), or that question may need to be asked at a different meeting. But don't let the question go. Write it down.
- Keep a running list of concerns and questions you need answered. You are not likely to recall these automatically during meetings, especially when you are stressed. Once you've written down your questions, decide later where those questions and answers go in your binder – e.g. Legal? Financial? Communication (Coach)? Parenting Plan (Coach/Child

Specialist)? Personal therapist? Be prepared to ask about these at your next meeting if the question is left unanswered.

- Develop a system for keeping track of unanswered questions. Keep these filed under the binder sections where they belong (e.g. Unanswered questions about finances may go under Lawyer AND Financial Specialist sections.). Look for and review these *before each meeting with your professional*. You may wish to have a list of questions at the front of each section. There is no problem with your bringing a laptop to document as we go along. You may save money and it may lower your anxiety which will make it easier to reach an agreement, if you review your notes after each meeting, and again before the next.
- Think about and keep a running list of win-win solutions to challenges you are both facing. That is, think carefully about how things can be designed to work for BOTH of you. Avoid trying to "sell" your view. Get help and use your professional support (Coach, Child Specialist, personal therapist, child therapist, etc.) to help you map out workable options and strategies for approaching these issues effectively and non-reactively with your partner.