

Supporting Collaborative Practice (CP) with UpToParents.org

It is difficult to imagine a more helpful development for families in crisis than parents' agreement to live outside the shadow of the courthouse. CP professionals, and really all sensible professionals, know that most parents are unlikely to be helped by a legal contest between them.

We believe that CP professionals can build excellent outcomes in their cases—and expand client interest in Collaborative Practice—by making a priority of children and their needs. Not only are children the fragile and helpless consumers of what parents and professionals create for them in the midst of family crises, but most parents are all-the-more interested in peaceful cooperation when they see the advantages for their children.

Here is where CP professionals—attorneys, divorce coaches, and child specialists—can be of special assistance by referring clients to the free websites www.UpToParents.org (for divorcing and divorced parents), www.ProudToParent.org (for never-married parents), and www.WhileWeHeal.org (for parents working through marital problems). Both CP and these websites are concerned with problem-solving rather than blame, family interests rather than litigation, and building futures rather than disputing the past.

To learn more about the websites and how they can be used to build and empower Collaborative Practices, see these links on the “Professionals Corner” link of UpToParents.org.

- [Professionals' Introduction to UpToParents](#)
- [Two-Minute Video Introduction to UpToParents by Judge Michael Scopelitis](#)
- [The Paradigm Shifts to the Healing Divorce](#)
- [Sample UpToParents Agreed Commitments](#)
- [Sample UpToParents Exercise Responses](#)
- [Sample Feedback from Professionals and Parents about UpToParents](#)

Click [HERE](#) to see samples of the following documents easily adaptable to CP professionals' needs.

1. Sample letter from a CP attorney to a divorce client
2. Sample joint memo from attorneys to their clients in a divorce case
3. Sample language for CP Agreement
4. Sample letter from a CP divorce coach or child specialist

There are three specific steps Collaborative professionals, including attorneys, 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.

2. 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 shows how easily this can be done.)
3. At an early four-way conference, the attorneys can then do three powerful things:
 - ***Pass out and celebrate the parents’ Agreed Commitments,***
 - ***Read aloud the parents’ 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 attorneys will be interested in the same length of discussion on these matters, and we encourage you to find your own voice and comfort level. As a general proposition, we think that early discussion of children’s needs can be a remarkable help to all problem-solving in family cases, but professionals should make their own decisions on the length of that discussion.

With this added website resource, we believe you will see in your work what we have seen in ours: a noticeably elevated parent focus on children's needs, a focus that can help produce more interest in problem-solving—and in use of Collaborative Practice.

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