

## **GROUND RULES FOR THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS**

1. Attack the problems and concerns at hand. Do not attack each other.
2. Avoid positions; rather express yourself in terms of needs and interests and the outcomes you would like to realize.
3. Work for what you believe is the most constructive and fairest agreement for both of you and your family.
4. Bring your best self--your highest functioning self--to the four-way settlement meetings (both attorneys and both spouses are present).
5. During settlement meetings (both attorneys and both spouses present) remember the following:
  - a) Do not interrupt when your spouse or his or her attorney is speaking. You will have a full and equal opportunity to speak on every issue presented for discussion.
  - b) Do not use language that blames or finds fault with the other. Use non-inflammatory words. Be respectful of others.
  - c) Speak for yourself; make "I" statements. Use each other's first names and avoid "he" or "she".
  - d) If you share a complaint, raise it as your concern and follow it up with a constructive suggestion as to how it might be resolved.
  - e) If something is not working for you, please tell your attorney so your concern can be addressed.
  - f) Listen carefully and try to understand what the other is saying without being judgmental about the person or the message.
  - g) Talk with your attorney about any thing you do not understand. Your attorney can clarify issues for you.
6. Be willing to commit the time required to meet regularly. Be prepared for each meeting.
7. Be patient—delays in the process can happen with everyone acting in good faith.