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Collaborative divorce workshop set for Saturday in Grass Valley

Divorce is a life-changing event. It is physically, mentally and emotionally exhausting, and can be overwhelming.

The more contentious the divorce, the more difficult it is to resolve issues in a manner that benefits anyone, much less the entire family. It can be very difficult to move on.

Throughout California, the United States and internationally, a relatively new concept in the approach to divorce and other disputed matters has sprung up.

Long-standing local family lawyer Janet Minch Harley introduced the collaborative divorce concept to a small group of family law professionals about seven years ago.

The Nevada County Collaborative Divorce Practice Group emerged. Consisting of family law attorneys, coaches and child specialists (mental health professionals), and a financial specialist, this group has the advanced training to help you navigate the divorce process with a supportive professional team.

In a collaborative divorce, you and your spouse agree not to go to court. You jointly make decisions about the family's future, rather than asking a judge to decide.

This is different from a mediated divorce where both parties meet with one mediator who cannot advise either of them.

Collaborative attorneys explain the law in a nonadversarial way. Coaches assist you and other team members with healthy and constructive communication.

A child specialist sits down with the parents to discuss how your children are really doing during this difficult time, and to suggest how you can each better meet your children's specific needs.

The team also includes a neutral financial specialist to help understand the family's financial picture, and provide information so you can make informed decisions.

Within this framework, the parties explore creative solutions about their children, finances and property settlement. They can reach agreements which are not available to the judge who is required to follow a more limited set of options under California law.

Does this mean that only those who "get along" are candidates for collaborative process? No. If you got along, you probably would not be getting a divorce.

Even the most difficult cases are capable of collaborative success. With a commitment to honest communication, you can finish the process without spending your children's college funds or your retirement.

Collaborative divorce also has the advantage of privacy. There are no court appearances at which sensitive information is made public.

A firm commitment to consider creative solutions, and to communicate civilly with your spouse (even if you are angry or hurt), makes you a candidate for a collaborative divorce.

If you choose to have a balanced and creative solution, take control of your own decisions, and significantly reduce the stress associated with divorce, you can find further information about the collaborative process and the local professional team members by attending the first of four NCCDPG Divorce Options workshops offered this year, from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at Sierra Mountain Coffee Roasters, (\$25 fee), or by visiting nevadacountycollaborative.com.

You can also visit the statewide cpcal.com website for more information.