

## Moving families beyond conflict

The image displays four key features of the OurFamilyWizard app:

- Messaging with ToneMeter™:** A screenshot of a text message from Jamie Smith about school pickups, with a red tone indicator and the text "Why are you so bad at being on time?".
- Shared co-parenting calendar:** A monthly calendar view showing dates from 31 to 4, with specific events like "First Day of School" (8:00 AM - 3:30 PM) and "Swim Practice" (4:00 PM - 6:00 PM) highlighted.
- Location check-in:** A map showing a location check-in at Kenwood Elementary School (2013 Penn Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55405).
- Expense tracking:** A screenshot of an expense entry for "School Supplies" totaling \$50.00, with a "Taylor paid" status.



Scan the QR code to access professional resources

## VII

### MENTORSHIP AND THE FUTURE OF COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

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#### INTRODUCTION

Mentorship began as a mythological archetype and grew into a business phenomenon in the 1980s. Institutionalized mentoring programs became the promise for creating strong leadership and innovation in the corporate world. The awareness that we don't do anything by ourselves is humbling. Success is built on education, hard work and the collective wisdom of our network of relationships. These important relationships are crucial to sustaining the growth and future of Collaborative Practice. In this article, I am asking you to consider that proposition, as well as to consider engaging in Collaborative Mentorship either as a mentor or as a mentee. Collaborative Practice is an important catalyst for legal and social change. To continue the momentum of Collaborative in communities around the world, whether they already have a robust Collaborative Community, or just a few Collaborative practitioners, Collaborative Mentorship provides an effective opportunity that benefits both mentors and mentees. It allows them to build authentic and caring relationships based upon trust and genuine curiosity. This is how we build the future of Collaborative Practice one important relationship at a time. This is how we help our Collaborative Practitioners and teams to be successful. This is how we create leadership succession and diversity. This is how we ensure that Collaborative Practice is here to stay.

#### MENTORING ARCHETYPES

Greek Mythology is the first place where humans considered the value and importance of the wise and learned advisor, through Homer's *Odyssey*.

Daniel Levinson wrote, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* in 1978 and is perhaps the first person to use the term "Mentor" in the 20th Century as applied to its role in business.<sup>1</sup> Soon thereafter, Dr. Kathy Kram began her lifelong academic study of mentorship in the workplace, *Mentoring at Work*.<sup>2</sup> These important bodies of work provided the impetus to creating institutional mentoring programs throughout corporate America and for looking deeper into the psychology and structure of the mentoring relationship, the developmental network, and the diversity trip wires that ultimately appeared.

There are two main mentoring archetypes that have developed: Social Mentoring (individual – Organic) and Organizational Mentoring (formal - within an institution or group). Both archetypes provide for either short-term or long-term mentoring by another professional or established coach.

Social Mentoring often occurs organically when someone is either introduced to a new member of an organization or community, or they have met through a training, workshop, or other event where they have made a spark of a connection. It may simply evolve by following up with a lunch or coffee, or by reaching out for some career advice, or ideas for a case-specific problem. This relationship evolves organically and authentically as the professionals continue to communicate with one another and build a mutual relationship of trust and admiration. As the relationship develops, each becomes more invested, more open, and more connected to the success of one another. Specifically in the Collaborative world, social mentoring can organically occur in local Practice groups and Development groups. It can also occur by attending Collaborative statewide and international meetings, workshops and forums. This has become an even easier

endeavor by the recent evolution of meeting on virtual platforms. These opportunities for connection can be a touchstone for relational authenticity.

Organizational Mentoring most often occurs when a group or institution creates a formal mentoring program for people to enlist. Experienced professionals sign on to accept a mentee, and new or younger professionals sign up to be matched with a mentor. This structure can be just as successful as Social Mentoring, however, it often takes more time for the mentor and mentee to connect authentically. It requires consistent check-ins and often a more structured schedule. Leadership programs have helped greatly to advance Organizational Mentoring in the Collaborative world. Consider the IACP's Leadership Academy and Florida's FACP Leadership Institute. These leadership programs generate intention around succession planning, diversity, sustained growth and community awareness. By creating these programs, the future of the Collaborative Professionals and the Collaborative Community are greatly enriched.

### CRITICAL LEADERSHIP

The mentoring relationship is at its best when it benefits both the mentor and the mentee. The Collaborative Mentees that I have had the privilege of working with over the years have shared their lives with me, their hopes and dreams and their fears. They have taught me about myself, they have challenged my concepts of Collaborative Practice, and helped me to dig deeper into the "Why" of my own professional life. They have enriched my life and my continued evolution as a Collaborative Practitioner, as a teacher and as a lifelong learner.

Critical leadership roles in your local practice groups need to be filled with intention and purpose for the future. Asking important questions about strategic planning is a good place to begin. Is your practice group helping to make great leaders in the Collaborative Community? Is the leadership in your practice group helping to shape the future of Collaborative Practice by continuing to strive for excellence, and by helping it evolve to meet the

needs of the practitioners as well as the needs of the community? Is your Collaborative Community inclusive and has it been able to meet the need for diversity?

In the Collaborative Community, consider that we need to create safe spaces for mentoring young professionals as well as new Collaborative Professionals who are mature practitioners. Mentorship creates opportunities for relationship building, practice expansion, community growth, succession and inclusion. It begins with mentor and mentee showing up to cultivate a relationship of trust. By creating this opportunity, we are handing the baton to the next generation – we are saying "yes" to the future of Collaborative Practice.

### THE COLLABORATIVE MENTOR – ARCHITECTS OF CHANGE

When considering mentorship in our Collaborative space, reflect on how many mentors you may have had in your life. From elementary school teachers, high school coaches, neighbors and managers, to other people you have admired and emulated from afar. These relationships no doubt made an important impact on you as they have to me. A mentor might have helped you get organized, set goals, learn competency skills, or improve interpersonal relationship skills. I would like you to also consider that Collaborative Mentoring goes beyond the individuals and brings purpose and focus to the future of Collaborative Practice, its

**Collaborative Process represents the opportunity for legal and social change.**

growth, its evolution, and its social acceptance. Let's begin with a shared understanding of the definition of "Mentor:"

The definition of "Mentor" (N): A trusted counselor or guide, an experienced and trusted advisor. Someone with knowledge or experience that is shared with others to help them improve.

The definition of "Mentor" (V): To advise, train, or share relevant experiences and knowledge.

The desirable attributes of a Collaborative Mentor are very similar to the attributes of a Collaborative professional. Consider the following list:

- Willing to invest time and attention to a new Collaborative Professional;
- Relevant expertise in Collaborative Process and Practice;
- Enthusiasm for sharing your collaborative experience and resources;
- Ability to give honest, direct, concrete, and actionable feedback;
- Excellent communication skills;
- Reflective listening skills and empathy;
- Commitment to the Collaborative Process;
- Teamwork experience and skills; and
- Leadership experience and skills.

Collaborative Process represents the opportunity for legal and social change. Consider the Collaborative Mentor as an architect of change. Collaborative Practice is relational, it is not transactional, and neither is mentoring. Mentorship is more focused on character than competency. The five basic skills necessary to be an effective Collaborative Mentor are as follows:

1. **Communicate and Listen.** This relationship is first and foremost not about the mentor - it is about the mentee. Show up. Ask your mentee about their aspirations and commitment to

the Collaborative Process and the Collaborative Community. Ask them what their expectations are of the mentoring relationship. This is not pontification, it is an open dialogue between both of you that encourages the sharing of thoughts, fears, and hopes. Watch out for implicit bias and stereotyping. Be curious, ask questions, strive to understand differences and connect with similarities. At the foundation, this is a safe zone where you both begin to develop trust.

2. **Give Constructive Feedback.** Here is where you get to use your best debriefing skills! It is not good enough to say, "Well, that's not very collaborative!" How often have we heard that? How often have we said that? What does it even mean? There should not be any protective hesitation where you don't give feedback because you are fearful that they will react poorly or that they aren't ready to receive your feedback. Constructive feedback is about giving concrete examples and actionable possibilities. It is about strategic conversations on goal setting and evaluating visible outcomes. It is also about celebrating successes.
3. **Share Experiences.** Relational authenticity is essential for the mentoring relationship. It allows both people to be open, transparent, candid and real. Storytelling is one of the most valuable ways to share important lessons learned. Did you have to make major paradigm shifts when beginning your Collaborative Practice? Are you continuing to make paradigm shifts along the way? Sharing these experiences allows the relationship to grow and become more meaningful while creating invaluable learning moments. Sharing experiences is a priceless endeavor that enriches and inspires both mentor and mentee.
4. **Empathy.** Empathy is an important component of any relationship. In the mentoring relationship, it is important to cultivate empathy by listening, by being curious and by putting aside our own "expert blindness". Bolster confidence and competence in your mentee. It is also imperative that the mentor reflect and consider their own biases. Do not project your own expectations



onto your mentees. Avoid the “like me bias”; being a mentor is not about mentoring your younger self! Authentic mentoring requires you to share knowledge, interests, and time.

5. **Collaborative Connection.** Serve as a role model to your mentee. Seek out and share resources and introduce other Collaborative professionals to your mentee. Encourage involvement in local, state, and international Collaborative organizations such as the IACP. Share leadership skills you have learned for shaping the evolution of your practice, the Collaborative community, and the future of the Collaborative Process in society.

Assigning mentors in a formal organizational group program can be more of a structured and short-term endeavor. This can lead to superficial transactional relationships - but it doesn't have to be that way, especially, when there are opportunities for social engagement and authentic mentoring along the way. *The Collaborative Family Law Group of Central Florida* (CFL) has just reached its twentieth year of inception and over those years, its leadership has developed several points of engagement that allow new and existing members to connect in meaningful and authentic ways. Those types of engagement are: Practice Group General Meetings; smaller Development Group Meetings; a formal orientation for new and existing members; Notetaker training and listing; and formal mentoring.

**PRACTICE GROUP GENERAL MEETINGS.** General meetings bring the entire practice group together five times a year. The group meets in a hall, serves light food and beverages, and encourages members to bring guests who are interested in learning more about the Collaborative Process and about the group itself. The meetings may focus on Collaborative education, marketing, updates, and opportunities. Some meetings are devoted to celebration and socializing. From its early leadership, the intention of this practice group was to be inclusive with its membership. They developed a strong Allied Professional membership, and a firm belief in the collective wisdom and equality of the interdisciplinary team.

**DEVELOPMENT GROUP MEETINGS.** To provide a smaller environment to strengthen the Collaborative Community, CFL created monthly opportunities for members to come together in small groups to discuss different subjects, case specific questions, receive updates on state and international developments, and to get to know each other on a more intimate level. There are several development groups that are hosted in different locations at different times. This makes them accessible for everyone to find the group or groups that the member wants to attend.

**ORIENTATION PROGRAM.** To provide a clearer path towards integrating into the Collaborative Community and developing actional goals for creating and building a Collaborative practice, the board of the CFL intentionally set out to create a strategic planning initiative. One of the actionable goals was to establish an orientation program for new and existing members with the purpose of “Helping new members build a quality Collaborative practice.” More specifically, this program's stated intention is to:

Help new members understand their role and expectations in the Collaborative Process;

- Help new members understand the protocols and vision, mission, and values of the practice group;
- Help motivate new members to present the Collaborative Process option to their clients;
- Help new and existing members understand the need for additional Collaborative skill training;
- Help effectively mentor new members;
- Help develop a mentality of leadership among new members; and
- Help educate about valuable resources such as the FACP and the IACP.

The Orientation program has been offered after each local training session which occurs in January and August of each year. The training is associated with the *Barry University Law School Collaborative Family Law Clinic*. Another important aspect of

this program is that it invites new members as well as older members who want to refresh their understanding and engagement in the group as well as explore leadership possibilities.

**FORMAL MENTORING.** The Orientation program allowed new or existing members to sign-up to be matched with a formal mentor, who was most often a board member. While this organizational program faced some challenges through succession and the pandemic, the social mentoring aspects of CFL have filled the gaps. However, while social mentoring and the development of organic relationships have immense value to the Collaborative Community, having as much intention around formal mentoring as in leadership, is invaluable to sustaining and growing the Collaborative Community and the social and legal identity of the Collaborative Process.

**NOTETAKER TRAINING & LISTING.** It took some time for the Collaborative Community in Central Florida to realize the benefits of having a designated notetaker rather than having the team members take turns creating the notes. At first, it had to do more with understanding the value of having a volunteer notetaker - yet another person on the team and explaining that value to the clients. Once the team started to understand the value, and once the newly trained Collaborative professionals understood the value to them as well, it was easy to help the clients accept a designated notetaker on their Collaborative case. The notetaker program created positive unintended consequences. New or existing members who wanted to take notes were placed on a list on the practice website for members to reach out to when they were assembling a new team. Volunteer notetakers committed to attending all team meetings including the initial professional team meeting. They were given one-on-one guidance by team members regarding the full-team meetings, the style and structure of notes, the expectations of the notetaker and of the team. Team members had the opportunity to get to know a new Collaborative member. Natural and authentic mentoring relationships were forged. Strategic team conversations allowed the notetaker to gain invaluable insight and experience.

### THE COLLABORATIVE MENTEE

Consider that there is a difference between mentoring a new graduate or a younger professional than mentoring a mature professional who has practiced in their field for several years and is just entering into the Collaborative world. The younger professional may have to reevaluate some of the orthodoxy that continues to be taught in school, but overall, there is often little to no initial transformative paradigm shifts that the younger mentee needs to experience to understand their place in the Collaborative world and the value of

Brenda has been a practicing attorney in Florida for 35 years. For the last 26 years, she has focused her practice on Family Law. Over the entire span of her career, she has served as a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) with hundreds of children in both dependency cases and family law cases. Her work with children and families inspired her to become a proponent of the Collaborative Law Process and Mediation. She was instrumental in creating and developing The Collaborative Family Law Clinic at Barry University Law School, which is a program designed to help underserved families in need of representation for divorce and paternity actions. She has served as the Director of the Clinic and as an Adjunct Professor teaching Collaborative Law since 2014. She is also a Collaborative Law Trainer, teaching the principles and nuances of Collaborative Law and practice to attorneys, mental health professionals, financial professionals, and allied professionals. She served as the Administrator and Board Member of The Collaborative Family Law Group of Central Florida from 2008 to 2018. In August 2020 she became one of the first Accredited Collaborative Professionals in the State of Florida as designated by the FACP - Florida Academy of Collaborative Professionals. In 2021 she was awarded The Tom Behan Award for Collaborative Excellence. This award was presented by The Collaborative Family Law Group of Central Florida in recognition of her achievement, leadership and commitment to the principles of the Collaborative Process through excellence, mutual respect, integrity and community.



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the Collaborative Process. They get it and they are all in. They want to know how to best implement the process and how to become successful. More specifically, they want to know these foundational aspects of Collaborative Practice::

- How to explain the Collaborative Process in the most effective manner;
- How to help the client evaluate the best process for them;
- How to create the best possibility for bringing the other client on board with the Collaborative Process;
- How to have the first conversation with the other Collaborative attorney;
- How to select the best neutrals and allied professionals for the team;
- How to invite the neutrals to join the team;
- How to prepare Collaborative notes and meet expectations of the team;
- How to prepare the clients for the Collaborative Process;
- How to integrate into the Collaborative Community; and
- How to engage in meaningful public advocacy for the Collaborative Process.

The mature professional who is just learning about the Collaborative Process cares about all the foundational aspects of the Collaborative Process just as the younger professional cares. However, the mature professionals often have a harder time grappling with how the Collaborative Process challenges their identity and fits into their established professional world; how they fit into the Collaborative Community; how they engage and interact with a Collaborative team; their value in this process; the value of this process to their practice; and the value of this process to their clients. They often begin this seismic paradigm shift in the presence of other professionals at an introductory training. But how do we help them continue making those vital micro paradigm shifts once they

leave the training? How can we give them a safe place to share their concerns, their fears, and their process questions in a non-judgmental zone?

We can create these safe places for mature professionals by encouraging them to connect with a Collaborative Mentor. We can match the mature professional with a trusted peer from the Collaborative Community whom they feel comfortable with, and who has perhaps faced similar challenges. We can do this by connecting them with a mentor from another geographic area so they can explore the process, their professional identity, and how to achieve excellence in the Collaborative Process with a mentor that has no previous experience or knowledge about their professional identity. We can do this by connecting them with a mentor from another discipline. This provides a unique, cross-professional mentoring relationship with perhaps even greater benefits as we challenge ourselves to be a more diverse and inclusive community. All these mentoring possibilities provide an opportunity for sustaining the growth and continued evolution of the Collaborative Practice.

### THE FUTURE

We need to meet the needs of our Collaborative communities around the world to sustain the future of Collaborative Practice. Social and Organizational Collaborative Mentoring is a critical component to the care and nurturing of the Collaborative world. It creates a synergy that allows us to continue to grow, to develop leadership, succession and to attend to the preservation of institutional history and knowledge. Mentoring creates the opportunity for our practices to thrive and evolve to meet the needs of diversity and inclusion as well as the vital needs of our clients. Each Practice Group should strive for a culture of mentoring that develops the next generation of leadership. We need to create that interpersonal magic that takes time and effort – but has the greatest rewards. This is a call to action.

### NOTES AND RESOURCES:

<sup>1</sup> Levinson, D.J. (with Darrow, C.N., Klein, E.B., Levinson, M.H., & McKee, B.). (1978). *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. New York, Knopf.

<sup>2</sup> Kram, K.E. (1985). *Mentoring at Work*, Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

CFL – *The Collaborative Family Law Group of Central Florida* ([www.cfl-cfl.com](http://www.cfl-cfl.com)) is a Collaborative Practice Group that was initially established in 2002. It continues to sustain and grow a vibrant and engaged Collaborative Community with its stated Mission being: "Enriching legal, mental health, and financial professionals by supporting and advancing quality collaborative practices, creating awareness, building community and relationship opportunities for members, and providing training and development."

Clutterbuck, D., & Ragins, B.R. (2002). *Mentoring and diversity: An international perspective*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Eby, L.T., Durley, J.R., Carr, S.E., & Ragins, B.R. (2006). *The Relationship Between Short-Term Mentoring Benefits and Long-Term Mentoring Outcomes*. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 69, 424-444.

FACP – *The Florida Academy of Collaborative Professionals* ([www.collaborativepracticeflorida.com](http://www.collaborativepracticeflorida.com)) This is a statewide organization of lawyers, financial, mental health, and allied professionals committed to the Collaborative Process with the mission of it becoming the prevailing method for the resolution of disputes beginning with family law and moving into other areas of the law. They provide opportunities for education, resources, leadership training, innovation, and an Annual Conference that brings the Collaborative Community together to further their mission and goals.

Higgins, M.C., & Kram, K.E. (2001). Reconceptualizing Mentoring at Work: A Developmental Network Perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 26, 264-288.

Ibarra, H. (2022). *How to Do Sponsorship Right*. *Harvard Business Review Organizational Behavior*, 100: 11-12 p 111.

Kram, K.E. (1983). *Phases of the Mentor Relationship*, *Academy of Management Journal*, 26, 608-625.

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Levinson, D.J. (with Darrow, C.N., Klein, E.B., Levinson, M.H., & McKee, B.). (1978). *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. New York, Knopf.

Ragins, B.R., & McFarlin, D. (1990). *Perception of mentor roles in cross-gender mentoring relationships*. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 37, 321-339.

*The Collaborative Family Law Clinic, Barry University Law School, Orlando, Florida*. In 2023, the Clinic will celebrate its 10th anniversary. Each spring and fall semester, the clinic begins with an Introductory training provided by Roadmaps for Resolution. ([www.roadmapsforresolution.com](http://www.roadmapsforresolution.com)) This introductory training brings together law students who will be serving in the Collaborative Family Law Clinic, and professionals who are embarking on their first official collaborative training. The clinic allows the newly trained professionals to join the clinic teams as observers and mentor attorneys for low-income families. It also creates mentoring moments and the possibility for future long-term mentoring relationships.

**COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE  
AROUND THE WORLD**

Sharing Insights from Practice Groups throughout the Globe

Does your Practice Group have tips and ideas to share with the global CP community? Is your group doing something new and innovative in Collaborative Practice? Are your members gaining recognition for their outstanding work in Collaborative Law?

Share it with us! We'd love to highlight your work with other IACP members.

As we work to expand our global footprint, we're especially interested in hearing from our partners outside of the US. Submit your group name and information to [info@collaborativepractice.com](mailto:info@collaborativepractice.com)