

Case scenario: After many years of marital discord, including covert and overt conflict in front of the children due to poor communication, a lack of intimacy, struggles with extended family and friends, and concerns about possible infidelity, with ambivalence, Bob decided to take a giant leap and made an appointment to see an attorney about getting a divorce from his wife of 10 years, Carol. Bob is quite distressed over his situation and decision because he truly believed that he would be married to Carol for the rest of his life. When they had their children, Sarah and Sam now 7 and 9 respectively, Bob and Carol both experienced the joy of having a family that they had always dreamt about. Bob states that he doesn't know what went wrong but it seems that she is not the same person that he married. In fact, she is so far from the person that he married that it is like he is married to a total stranger.

Now, 10 years later, it appears that the differences between them are creating a gap that is too wide. From their dietary preferences and restrictions, to their professional careers, handling of finances, choice of friends, interest in recreational activities, child rearing, religious beliefs, and even their attraction for one another and sexual identity, preference, and desire were divergent. Although they had tried marriage counseling several times, it appeared to be to no avail, and the more time that passed, the greater the level of conflict became to the point that it was significantly affecting the children. Sarah was now unable to sleep at night, her grades were suffering at school, she was biting her nails to the core, pulling out her eyelashes and hair, and she was more withdrawn from her friends and social activities. Sam was acting out at school, getting into fights with his friends, not listening to his teachers, off task with his schoolwork, focused on only his video games, and non-compliant and disrespectful both at school and at home. Given that both children had friends from other families whose parents had divorced, the children were continually talking to each other and their parents about whether "they would be divorced too."

Carol wants to continue working as a yoga instructor part – time, and also wants to now home school the children. Bob feels very strongly that they should go to public school. She is not qualified to teach them, and he will not agree to home-schooling. Also, Bob thinks that since he earns the money in the family, he should either keep the family home or they should sell it, and Carol should move out of the house and get her own apartment---and a full-time job! Bob earns approximately \$150,000 per year as a salesman. Being a salesman also requires that he be out of town from time- to time.

After a tenuous conversation, both Carol and Bob were resigned to the notion that if divorce was the only option, that this 'Collaborative Process' did appear to present the best possibility to restructure their family and maintain their family relationships; including extended family and friendships that they shared. They both acknowledged that the interests of the children were the most important thing to focus on, and although they were not certain that they could learn to do things in a different way, what they did share was a desire to try to do whatever it took for the benefit of their children. This was the one thing they did agree upon.