

## **GROUND RULES FOR COMMUNICATION**

1. **Needs**: Express yourself in terms of needs and interests that you would like to realize.
2. **Disclosure**: Disclose all documents and information that relate to the issues.
3. **Agendas**: Agendas and issues to be addressed at each meeting will be agreed upon in advance. If you need to deviate from the agenda, everyone will need to agree.
4. **Focus**: Work for what you believe is the most constructive and acceptable agreement for both you and your family.
5. **Speaking**: Do not interrupt when someone is speaking. You will have a full and equal opportunity to speak on every issue presented for discussion.
6. **Respect**: Do not use language that blames or finds fault with the other. Use non-inflammatory words. Be respectful of others.
7. **"I"**: Speak for yourself; make "I" statements. Use each other's first name and avoid "he" or "she".
8. **Be constructive**: 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.
9. **Concerns**: If something is not working for you, please let us know so your concern can be addressed.
10. **Listen**: Listen carefully and try to understand what the other is saying without being judgmental about the person or the message.
11. **Preparation**. Be willing to commit the time required to meet regularly. Be prepared for each meeting.
12. **Patience**. Be patient – delays in the process can happen with everyone acting in good faith. The collaborative law process is much faster than litigation.

~ Barbara Ann Bartlett ~

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