

COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS:

The pace of your process

Facing separation and divorce is traumatic and terrifying. It is almost inevitable that in any separation one partner is ahead of the other emotionally, often having reached the decision to leave the relationship some time ago. When working around a collaborative table, it is vital for us to address the emotional stage which each of you have reached in order to decide how and when it would be best to embark upon a collaborative journey.

It is now well accepted that the emotional journey relating to the end of a relationship is akin to the transition people go through when they face death or bereavement. It is therefore helpful to have some understanding of what this journey can look like.

The 'grief cycle' (pioneered by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross) is a 'change model' to help us to understand and deal with our own personal reaction to trauma. It is now understood that this does not just relate to death and dying. The model can vary so much from person to person and recognises that people have to pass through their own individual journey when coming to terms with the change and loss they are experiencing.

People do not always experience all of the five grief cycle stages. Some stages may be revisited. Some stages might not be experienced at all. Transition between stages can be more than an ebb and flow rather than a progression. The five stages are not linear neither are they equal in their experience. People's grief and other reactions to emotional trauma are as individual as their fingerprint.

Five Stages of Grief – Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Stage 1 – Denial

This is a defence mechanism and perfectly natural. It is possible to become locked in this Stage when facing a traumatic change.

Stage 2 – Anger

Anger can manifest in different ways. You may feel very angry with yourself and/or with others, especially those close to you.

Stage 3 – Bargaining

It is natural for you to try to regain some control in your situation by seeking to bargain or to negotiate a compromise.

Stage 4 – Depression

This is an acceptance of the situation with emotional attachment. It is natural for you to feel sadness and regret, fear, uncertainty etc. It shows that have begun to accept the reality.

Stage 5 – Acceptance

This Stage definitely varies according to your situation, although broadly it is an indication that there is some emotional detachment and objectivity.

Timing for a collaborative couple can be key to a successful collaborative journey. One aspect of timing involves respecting the fact that people will be at different stages in coming to terms with a separation. The golden rule is simple: we must all go at the pace each person can handle. I recommend involving a Family Consultant to all of my collaborative clients as I believe that emotional support parallel to the process will give it the best chance of success.