Kristin Little MS, MA, LMHC

kristinlittlecounseling@gmail.com .206. 295.8673

Coaching Addendum: Limitations and Guidelines Explained

**Overview**

This document serves to describe in clear language, what you may expect in Child Specialist and Coparent Coaching including; how decisions are/are not made, ways we may arrange meetings, how I handle phone calls and emails, and how information can and cannot be used outside of our work together. Please contact me at kristinlittlecounseling@gmail.com if you have any questions before signing. Your signature indicates you have read and understand the scope, limitations and expectations of Child Specialist or Coparent Counseling services.

**Description of Services**

Child Specialist and Coparent Coaching addresses significant issues of concern for parents in the divorce process or post divorce coordination across homes. However, the Collaborative approach is strength and solution based with a focus on the capacities for future growth and meeting the needs of children across two homes. It is not intended to evaluate either parent or align with one or the other parent in a manner to promote the position of either or in an adversarial manner. However in the course of our work, I will likely voice my views and preferences for approaches, based upon my scope and experience, to help parents evaluate options in their discussions and decision making process. Despite my Collaborative orientation, there always remains a risk of unproductive conflict, lack of agreement and/or entering into a litigative process. In order to minimize risk, maintain a safe environment and protect any information from being used in a way that is unintended, I offer the following descriptions of boundaries and expectations in our work together:

**Limitations in Skill and Decision Making**

I do not assert power in decision making and our discussions are not legally binding, but rather a facilitated discussion between parents. I act as a facilitator and consultant in these discussions and offer information and feedback directly based on my skills in best coparenting practices, child development and needs of children in divorce and two-home families. While it is hoped that parents may make progress on agreement and coordination, it may not be the outcome of our sessions. Parents are ultimately responsible for decision making and if not successful in our work, parents may need to seek other processes and professionals to resolve their differences.

I am not a legal professional and do not give legal advice or act as a legal mediator. I can give referrals to legal professionals or work with your mediator or attorneys to provide child and coparenting context to your legal process.

**Joint and Individual Sessions**

Joint Sessions: Coparent/Child Specialist coaching sessions may include difficult discussions of issues where conflict between parents is expected. The boundaries of confidentiality and transparency is designed to ensure conflict is contained in the process and materials and information is not permitted to be used outside of the process for other purposes unless expressly desired and permitted by both parties with a signed release of information. I retain the right to decline, even if parents give authorization to not share information or allow its release if in my view the risks of harm to family and coparent relationships is substantial.

Individual Sessions and Services: I do offer individual coaching services. However if you choose to initiate individual services, joint sessions may not be welcomed by your parenting partner given the work to date and information disclosed. If joint sessions are scheduled, while sensitive of perspectives shared individually, the general agreement of not holding significant/important information will be followed and we may need to discuss what information would be disclosed prior to joint sessions.

Individual Sessions in Joint Services:
Individual sessions with one parent may be a part of the coaching process if appropriate and seen as supportive to the overarching family goals. These sessions will require transparency and permission of the other parent.

**Email and Telephone calls**

Joint Emails and Telephone Calls
I ask that parents respect my need to maintain a neutral role. If I am working with you jointly, please cc your parenting partner on all of our communications. I do not hold any important/significant information from you or your parenting partner. I want both of you to feel safe and know information is shared and my role is as a neutral support focused on your family.

Individual Emails and Telephone Calls
Infrequently, individual communication (emails/calls sent from a parent or initiated by Kristin) may occur to address individual concerns/issues, while these communications are best kept to a minimum, they may be important to maintain engagement, and provide timely support. I reserve the right to decline or address the email or phone call as I feel appropriate to meet the goals and needs of the family and may not disclose the communication if not seen as significant/important information. Individual support is not an indication that I agree or am aligning with one parent, but instead is meant to offer parent specific support to facilitate the joint process.

**Clients with a Collaborative Team: Additional Limitations and Agreements**

If you are in the Collaborative Divorce process and I am part of your Collaborative team, I will sign the Collaborative Participation Agreement provided by your attorneys. I will abide by the participation agreement and my role as a Collaborative professional team member.
My Role will be limited to the Child Specialist process to respect the roles of the team members. Therefore:

I will be less involved in decision making discussions unless requested and approved by the other team members.

I will minimize individual 1:1 communication with clients. If 1:1 communication occurs, I will have care to communicate with sensitivity, but am required to share the general nature of the communication with the team to advise them of issues of any significance.

Upon the completion of services with your team you wish to re-engage in services to support your family, I am required to request permission of the team. I cannot act as a therapist for your children and must maintain my established role of Child Specialist. I may be engaged to assist in one parent's support post services, but am required to have the permission of your parenting partner as well as the original Collaborative team.

**Child Sessions and Information**

When acting as a Child Specialist and assessing children's coping in divorce, unlike therapy, I do not hold children's information confidential. I disclose information gathered to parents for the purpose of assisting them in meeting children's needs.  however I do ask for your child's permission to disclose any or specific information at the end of the assessment and will not disclose information that your child does not wish to be shared.

I do not share information to any other person(s) regarding Child Specialist services unless both parties give their written agreement to share such information and that I do not believe there to be a professional rationale that would contraindicate sharing on the parents, family or their children.

Although I hold a Mental Health License, my work with children in Coaching is not therapy. children are not being treated for mental health and are not being assessed or diagnosed for mental health issues/disorders. The sessions are are for the purpose supporting children's needs and interests their parent's divorce process.

**Verbal Disclosure of Information**

I do not make any written report that is shared with parents regarding their children's disclosures, but share this information verbally to both parents. The information shared is confidential and protected.

If parents wish share a general description of our work to an identified professional, it will be given verbally. The disclosures may include child specific information. A signed release by both parents will be required and I retain the right to decline, even if releases are signed, if in my view the risks of harm to family, children and coparent relationships is substantial and/or if person(s) to whom I am asked to disclose lacks the qualifications, experience or skills to safely interpret the information and manage it with sufficient care to confidentiality and children's wellbeing.

**Legal Requirements for Reporting Abuse or Risk to Self or Others**

Regardless of my role, as a mandated reporter, I am required by law to report suspected child abuse or dependent adult or elder abuse to the appropriate authorities. I am also required by law to inform the police and the intended victim if a client is threatening serious bodily harm to another person(s).

Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_