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President's Message

Hon. Linda Fidnick

The world has gone full round the sun one more time, and thankfully we are, mostly, still here. As we grace our desks and walls with 2023 calendars replete with those big blank spaces to write in new meetings, new appointments, and new special events, we can also welcome other, less concrete, types of newness. Whether we choose to explore new ideas, or want to take on new professional challenges, or seek to deepen our understanding of the work we do with new energy, it is my hope for you that this turning of the calendar will give you the chance and motivation to do so. [Continue reading.](#)



AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference

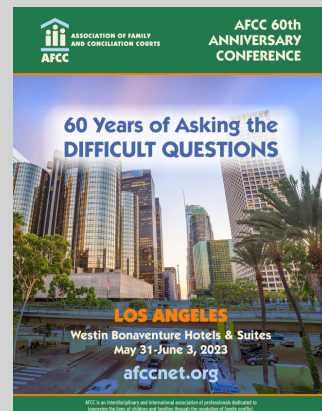
60 Years of Asking the Difficult Questions

May 31-June 3, 2023

Westin Bonaventure

60th Anniversary Conference

May 31-June 3, 2023
Los Angeles, California



Conference Sponsors



SOBERLINK

Join as we celebrate 60 years of AFCC in the birthplace of AFCC.

Exhibit, Sponsor, and Advertise

If your business caters to the needs of family law professionals, please consider exhibiting with us in Los Angeles! Confirming early lets you take advantage of lower prices, secure a better table location, and more. Read the [exhibitor prospectus](#) for more details and contact [Abby Rebholz](#) to sign up.

Reserve Your Room Today!

Book your room early at the Westin Bonaventure Los Angeles today. You can make your reservations [online](#) or over the phone by calling 800-937-8461 or 888-627-8520. Do not delay as AFCC room blocks frequently sell out.

Scholarships

Thanks to the generosity of donors to the AFCC Scholarship Fund, AFCC will offer several scholarships for the 60th Anniversary Conference. Each scholarship includes conference registration, one pre-conference institute, a certificate of attendance, and meal functions, including the Welcome Reception, Luncheon, and Annual Banquet. A limited number of scholarships will include travel stipends. The application deadline is March 8, 2023. [Apply now!](#)

Read the Conference Brochure!

View a more detailed breakdown of the conference including pre-conference institutes, workshops, presenters, schedule, CE information, and registration information. Peruse the [schedule](#) and [register](#) soon.

Silent Auction

After a two-year hiatus, the AFCC silent auction returns to the 60th Anniversary Conference. The auction will take place on Friday night of the conference. The proceeds raised from the auction help fund essential AFCC projects and initiatives. To donate an item to the Silent Auction, please contact Abby Rebholz at arebholz@afccnet.org or at 608-664-3750.

[Register Now!](#)



AFCC Chapter Conferences

AFCC Arizona Annual Conference
January 20-22, 2023
Sedona, AZ

AFCC California Annual Conference
February 10-12, 2023
Costa Mesa, CA

AFCC Alberta Annual Conference
March 16 & 17, 2023
Edmonton, AB, Canada

AFCC Colorado Spring Conference
April 28 & 29, 2023
Denver, CO

AFCC Online Training Programs

The Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations
March 13-16, and
March 20-22, 2023

Coming Soon!

AFCC Fall Virtual Conference
November 1-3 & 6-7, 2023

Ask the Experts: 7 Insights into Affairs and Their Impact on the Divorce Process

Marcy Pasternak, PhD, Sharon Montgomery, PsyD, and Tamsen Thorpe, PhD

As mental health and legal professionals, we know how difficult it can be to assist families negotiating the divorce process. One of the more inflammatory factors that we encounter, only too frequently, is when there has been an extra-marital affair. Even if the parties have been unhappily married and equally yoked in their misery, the occurrence of an affair is often explosive. It is helpful to understand the dynamics of affairs and the negative

consequences that may ensue. Providing early psychoeducation and effective interventions can be crucial to the outcome of these complex matters. Particularly, shifting the self-focus perspectives of these adults onto the best interest of their children, can make a critical difference. [Read more.](#)

AFCC Online Training Programs

The Fundamentals of Conducting Parenting Plan Evaluations

March 13-16, and March 20-22, 2023

This program will incorporate a complete overview of the parenting plan evaluation process, including the definition and roles of the parenting plan evaluator, as well as, the specifics of the evaluation process, including interviewing, recordkeeping, use of technology, and best practices for report writing and testifying.

Participants will learn the difference between a forensic role and a clinical role, how to review court orders and determine what information should be obtained, strategies for interviewing adults and children, how to assess co-parenting issues, how to develop and test multiple hypotheses, and how to craft recommendations.

Training Team:

- Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP
- Robin M. Deutsch, PhD, ABPP
- April Harris-Britt, PhD
- Kathleen McNamara, PhD
- Sol R. Rappaport, PhD, ABPP

[View the program brochure!](#)

[Register Now](#)

Planning to attend the online PPE training program in March? Consider joining us also for the in-person pre-conference institute *Advanced Training in Parenting Plan Evaluations* at the 60th Anniversary Conference in Los Angeles on May 31st, 2023. Can't attend the online training? Contact AFCC to find out more about how to view the recording afterwards in order to be able to join us for this special pre-conference institute.

Award Nominations

AFCC will be acknowledging the accomplishments of leaders in family law by presenting awards at the AFCC 60th Anniversary Conference. We encourage you to recognize your colleagues by submitting a nomination. Nominations for the awards listed below will be accepted online through March 21, 2023.

John E. VanDuzer Distinguished Service Award recognizes outstanding contributions and/or achievements by AFCC members. [Nominate a colleague!](#)

Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award recognizes outstanding research and/or research achievements in the field of family and divorce. [Submit your nomination now!](#)

Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs created by AFCC members. [Nominate a program!](#)

Webinar Corner

Screening for Intimate Partner Violence

Beth McCormack, JD

Wednesday, February 8, 2023
1:00pm – 2:00pm Eastern Time (US/Canada)



Registration will close on February 7, 2023 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Knowing and understanding ones' clientele is essential for attorneys in private practice. Some practitioners may be shocked to discover that their affluent clients, although educated and wealthy, are experiencing intimate partner violence. High-net-worth and high-profile couples are acutely aware of their public image, and therefore more cautious to conceal the signs that they may be experiencing abuse. It is imperative for the screening process to anticipate violence in the home, as it is difficult for these clients to disclose their experiences. This presentation will prepare participants to screen for intimate partner violence, both in litigation and in Collaborative Law, for their high-net-worth and high-profile clientele.

This webinar is not approved for CE for psychologists because of the legal focus.

Beth F. McCormack, JD focuses on highly complex family law matters as well as mediation and collaborative law. Beth also represents children, when appointed by the Court, which makes her unparalleled in her ability to navigate complex parenting issues. Beth's practice is founded on compassion and empathy. She sees it as her responsibility to be aware of each person's needs, seeking the most appropriate solution for each client. Her peers consistently nominate her as a Best Lawyer (since 2016), Super Lawyer (since 2012), and Leading Lawyer (since 2013). Most recently, Beth was named top 50 women Super Lawyers, and in 2017, Ms. McCormack was selected as one of Crain's Chicago Media's Most Influential Women Lawyers in Chicago. Her work ethic and community involvement have earned her accolades within the legal community, and beyond.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-members: \$20

[Register Now!](#)

More Upcoming Webinars!

Coping Abilities Children Need (And How to Ensure They Get Them)

Lyn Greenberg, PhD, ABPP

March 7, 2023

Gender and Sex in Family Law: How to Work with a Gender Diverse Population (DE&I Series)

Rebecca Stahl, JD LLM

April 12, 2023

Group to Individual Inference in Scientific Testimony

Chancellor & Dean David Faigman; Professor Michael Saini

April 18, 2023

The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Young Children

Kate Wurmfeld, JD; Kiran Malpe, LCSW, BS

May 10, 2023

AFCC Fall 2023 Virtual Conference

Addiction, Family Violence, and Mental Illness

Assessing and Managing Challenges to Contemporary Coparenting

November 1-3 and 6-7, 2023

You asked and we delivered. AFCC is taking our fall conference online. Remote learning is more than flipping through documentaries on the TV. Virtually everyone one can benefit from accessible education. Join us as we discuss addiction, family violence, and mental illness along with other challenges to contemporary coparenting. Look for the call for proposals in February.

AFCC Member News

Andrea Jones, AFCC member from Ontario has been appointed to the Ontario Court of Justice as a Justice of the Peace. Prior to her appointment, Andrea contributed to AFCC in many ways such as serving on the AFCC Board of Directors. She was also a member of the AFCC Task Force for Model Standards of Practice for Child Custody Evaluations and the Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Congratulations, Andrea!



Tammi Axelson, AFCC member from Texas has recently earned her doctorate in clinical social work from Tulane University in which her research area was focused in child custody evaluations. Tammi is a frequent presenter at AFCC conferences and will be presenting a workshop at our upcoming 60th Anniversary Conference. Congratulations, Tammi!



AFCC eNEWS

The *AFCC eNEWS* is the monthly e-newsletter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. The *eNEWS* provides up-to-date information for professionals including practice tips, international news, and the latest initiatives in family law and conflict resolution. The *AFCC eNEWS* is provided at no charge to you; anyone can subscribe.

[Subscribe here](#).

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As you consider all the many opportunities for learning and growth that may come your way, I hope that you will put coming to the 60th annual AFCC conference in Los Angeles this May at the top of your list. We have been working hard to make this conference an extraordinary one for all who are involved with divorced and separated families. We will re-visit, with new research and new perspectives, some of the toughest issues facing us as family law professionals, from those cases in which a child is not seeing one parent, to a nuanced understanding of intimate partner violence, to ways in which courts in a variety of countries are trying to make the process of divorce and separation less traumatic and more humane for those who must access an adjudicatory system.

AFCC continues to grow and thrive because of you, the members who see a place for themselves in the thinking and caring AFCC community of professionals. Doing this work is not easy, as the people with whom we work are often traumatized, angry, hurt, and suffering. I often think that when one chooses to work with these families one is entering a vocation rather than taking a job. It requires patience, empathy, and a thick skin. There is no better place to share difficult experiences, find support, and learn possible solutions to the challenges that we face in that work than at an AFCC conference.

I hope your new year is filled with many new and rewarding experiences, and that coming to AFCC - Los Angeles in May will be a highlight of those experiences for you when you look back on 2023 at this time next year.

Hon. Linda Fidnick



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Ask the Experts: 7 Insights into Affairs and Their Impact on the Divorce Process

Marcy Pasternak, PhD, Sharon Montgomery, PsyD, and Tamsen Thorpe, PhD

As mental health and legal professionals, we know how difficult it can be to assist families negotiating the divorce process. One of the more inflammatory factors that we encounter, only too frequently, is when there has been an extra-marital affair. Even if the parties have been unhappily married and equally yoked in their misery, the occurrence of an affair is often explosive. It is helpful to understand the dynamics of affairs and the negative consequences that may ensue. Providing early psychoeducation and effective interventions can be crucial to the outcome of these complex matters. Particularly, shifting the self-focus perspectives of these adults onto the best interest of their children, can make a critical difference.

1. **Trends:** Although there is not a lot of research on the impact affairs have on families, we do know that the incidence is greater, and more women are having affairs; particularly younger women. A study conducted in 2012, found that 23% of men and 14% of women engaged in extra-marital affairs. More recently, statistics show that men and women are on par until their 30's after which men outpace women. Approximately 11-21% of people with children engage in affairs. In a study of divorced individuals who had participated in a premarital course prior to marriage, a high percentage (60%) of individuals cited infidelity as a major reason for divorce.

2. **Types of Affairs:** There are many types of affairs and underlying dynamics that drive infidelity. Certainly, in the past 30 years, there has been a liberalization in sexual mores, advances in contraception, and the surge in the use of social media platforms. There is also a greater emphasis on the self and emotional satisfaction. Affairs may be primarily sexual, emotional, or both; the latter obviously the greatest threat to a marriage. The reason for affairs can run the gamut, including exit affairs, lack of intimacy or emotional connection, mid-life crisis, or sexual addiction. There are also numerous psychopathologies, individual deficits, and personality issues that drive these.

3. Challenges to the Divorce Process: The discovery of an affair adds gasoline to the fire of the divorce process. In this context, there are two emotionally polarized individuals in the room, who are in different places. Negotiations and decision-making become challenging at best. The injured party's obsession over the details of the affair prevents them from focusing, particularly on the needs of their children. The offending parent often is riding the continued high of the new love interest, while lacking empathy to the spouse's distress.

4. Impact on Adults: The unique characteristics of the affair may add complexity and fuel the conflict in the divorce and future co-parenting. These include, but are not limited to, multiple affairs, those of longer duration, when the affair partner has been previously known, whether the children have become involved, or there is a STD or pregnancy. The typical reactions to divorce such as rejection, abandonment, loss, betrayal, anger, and humiliation are only magnified. The depth of these emotions can also lead to PTSD, severe depression, substance abuse, and emotional dysregulation. As professionals, we need to be alert to the increased potential for domestic violence, and suicidal ideation. While therapy may be of assistance in these matters, some may require trauma focused interventions.

5. Potential Effects on Children: There is a paucity of research on the impact of infidelity on children, but we do know it can vary according to age, gender and cultural factors. It can cause children to feel guilt, depression, anxiety, fear, shock, and anger. It can also detrimentally effect parent-child relationships to the extreme of alignments and parent-child contact problems. Children may overhear conversations among parents and extended family. An injured parent often discloses the existence of an affair to the child in a moment of distress or anger. Early intervention is crucial for children, as is educating parents regarding the detrimental effects of their behavior. Specifically, parents need to understand the negative consequences of alignments, premature introduction to the affair partner, and multiple changes/losses occurring simultaneously. Younger children may blame themselves for the tension and feel abandoned by their parents' lesser emotional availability. Adolescents may blame one of the parents, may become parentified, or it may affect how they cope with their own emerging sexuality and future adult relationships.

6. Impact on Parent-Child Relationships: Overall, it is an overwhelming task for children to remain out of the conflict and maintain neutrality when there is an affair. Adolescents in particular, have a difficult time with this. They often lose respect for a parent, or align with one parent while rejecting the other parent. Indeed, they actually can reject either parent. Adolescents tend to have a significant reaction if the affair partner is known to them, or there is a child expected or born of this relationship. In families where there are diffused boundaries, a parent-child enmeshment may ensue. In families with rigid boundaries, children may feel disengaged or isolated. Family therapy or a family intensive intervention is often recommended to address these problematic relationships.

7. Softening the Repercussions for the Children: A common question is “What, if anything, to tell the children?” As a general rule, it is best that children are not made aware of the existence of affairs, and that their parents keep this information to themselves. Characterizing either parent as a “bad guy” or “victim” does not benefit them in any way. However, there are many occasions wherein children are aware. In these situations, it is important to listen to their feelings and thoughts without sharing adult feelings, perspectives, or details. They should never be asked to keep secrets or be a parent’s confidant. Characterizing the precipitant for divorce as a “loss of fit on the part of the adults” is far less damaging, and something that best protects the child’s relationships with each parent. Children need to receive the message that it is not something they can control or repair. It is not “their divorce.”



Marcy Pasternak, PhD Dr. Marcy Pasternak is a Clinical and Forensic psychologist who practices in New Jersey. She obtained her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duke University. While her practice serves individuals of all ages in both the clinical and forensic arena, her special interests include marital and family therapy, divorce therapy, forensic evaluations concerning custody and parenting time, removal, refuse/resist dynamics, grandparent visitation, risk assessment, and personal injury. She often serves as a parenting coordinator, parenting coach, and is also an accredited divorce mediator, conducting both divorce mediation and therapeutic mediation. She conducts multi-day Intensive Family Interventions through "Building Family Resilience", an outgrowth of her practice. These interventions are for families in which a child resists contact with a parent.

Dr. Pasternak has served as a psychological expert in numerous counties in New Jersey. She was a Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at New Jersey Medical School, UMDNJ, now voluntary faculty. She is the past President of the NJ chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts and has given numerous workshops and presentations to the mental health and legal communities in New Jersey and nationally.



Sharon Ryan Montgomery, PsyD, is a licensed psychologist in New Jersey. Dr. Montgomery completed her doctorate in psychology from Rutgers University in 1982. Her areas of expertise are in Clinical and Forensic Psychology. Dr. Montgomery has served as an expert in over 2000 custody disputes, and has also conducted evaluations in criminal matters, personal injury, marital tort cases, and testified in court on numerous occasions. She also serves as an Individual, Couples, Family and Reconciliation Therapist; as well as Parenting Coordinator, Mediator, Divorce Coach and supervises other

psychologists. Dr. Montgomery also provides intensive therapy workshops/weekends for families in which a child is refusing contact with a parent through the Building Family Resilience Program.

Dr. Montgomery is Past President of the New Jersey Psychological Association and the New Jersey Chapter of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, Human Services Association of Morris County, and the Morris County Psychological Association.



Tamsen Thorpe, PhD is a Licensed Psychologist in private practice since 1997 and prior working in the areas of research at UCLA and in Organizational Psychology in NYC Corporations. Dr. Thorpe counsels adults, children, couples and families in transition. In therapy, she assists couples rekindle their relationship using the Gottman Method and EFT Couples therapy techniques, addressing such challenges as affairs, parenting, communication, and conflict. She also conducts forensic evaluations in the area of Family Law and interventions such as: divorce coaching, parent coordination, coparent counseling, and reunification/family integration counseling. Lastly, she is on the Board of Directors for NJ's local AFCC Chapter and has spoken recently on such topics as Parent-Child Contact Problems and Affairs at the AFCC national conferences, as well as many other venues.