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# AFCC eNEWS



MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

VOL. 3 NO. 8

NOVEMBER 2008

## SNEAK PEEK! NEW ORLEANS PLENARY SESSION

### Back to the Future or Full Steam Ahead? What Research Really Shows about Children and Divorce

Studies suggest that children are generally resilient following their parents' divorce and that those with healthy relationships with both parents often thrive. These findings are often articulated by professionals, interest groups and parents alike into platitudes such as "equal parenting time is always best" or "a good divorce does not harm children." Does the research fully support these statements? Is there any evidence that we should re-examine more traditional notions? This session will explore some of the myths and realities of research and conventional child custody wisdom.

**Presenters: Paul Amato, Ph.D. and Jennifer McIntosh, Ph.D.**

[Read more about the presenters...](#)

## NEW ORLEANS IS A GREAT WALKING CITY

The French Quarter offers some of the most beautiful historic architecture this country has to see. Click below for a self-guided walking tour of the Quarter:

[Take self-guided walking tour...](#)

## RESEARCH UPDATE

### Parenting Styles Predict Children's Adjustment

*Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.*

This article, published in the *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, examines the parenting styles of both parents and compares their styles to the adjustment of their children. To see J.M. Craig's summary, critical analysis and recommendations, please click below.

[Read now...](#)

## RECOMMENDED READING

The AFCC eNEWS asked some of its more experienced members to recommend important articles and books to the rest of our members. This month Irwin Sandler, Ph.D., Arizona State University, gave "thumbs up" to an article by Joan B. Kelly. If you have a recommended reading, please email your suggestion to [editor@afccnet.org](mailto:editor@afccnet.org).

**AFCC 46th Annual Conference**  
 Children, Courts and Custody:  
 Back to the Future or Full Steam Ahead?  
**NEW ORLEANS**  
 Sheraton New Orleans  
 (Open American States, great food, music and a fabulous conference!)  
**May 27-30, 2009**

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 -Mark Lundy, Santa Monica, California

More than 1,000 professionals attended last year's re-energizing Annual Conference. **Find out why!**

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Conference Program Available in January 2009 at [www.afccnet.org/](http://www.afccnet.org/)  
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## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

### 46th Annual Conference

*Children, Courts and Custody: Back to the Future or Full Steam Ahead?*

May 27-30, 2009

Sheraton New Orleans  
 New Orleans, Louisiana

[More information...](#)

### AFCC Regional Training Conference

November 5-7, 2009

Peppermill Resort  
 Reno, Nevada

### AFCC Trainings

[Training schedule & brochure](#)

### Parenting Coordination

*Christine Coates, J.D.*

December 8-9, 2008  
 Baltimore, Maryland

### Father Parent Differently Than Mothers

*Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D.*

Kelly, J. B. (2007). Children's living arrangements following separation and divorce: Insights from empirical and clinical research. *Family Process Special Issue: Divorce and its Aftermath*, 46(1), 35-52.

[Click here to read abstract ...](#)

## ASK THE AFCC STAFF

### How to pay for your AFCC Membership

AFCC knows that during difficult economic times every dollar counts. So as a service to our members, we are pleased to share our top ten ways to pay for your AFCC membership and even put a little something aside. The thrifty AFCC staff has identified more than \$1,500 in savings, ten times the cost of a \$150 AFCC membership!

[Find out how to save ...](#)

## GIVE THE GIFT OF EXCELLENCE TO YOUR COLLEAGUES

When you [give a gift membership to AFCC](#) (\$130), you, too, reap the benefits. Yes, your colleague will receive all the [benefits of an AFCC membership](#) and you will have the pleasure of working with a colleague who is informed with all the latest and cutting-edge information in your field. Our members consistently say that it is easier and more satisfying to work with other enlightened practitioners. You can help that happen!

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## ASK THE EXPERTS

### Ten Tips for Separated and Divorced Families for the Holidays

*By Peg Libby, Executive Director of Kids First Center*

Holidays and special occasions create special challenges for separating and divorced families. There are ways to make them easier for all involved. To read Peg Libby's top ten suggestions, please click below.

[Read more...](#)

## FEATURED ARTICLE

### When to Start Mediation

*by Nancy Hudgins and Debra Synovec, courtesy of Mediate.com*

Beginning your divorce process with mediation, rather than turning to it later in the process, can produce better results.

[Read the article...](#)

## DIVORCE IN THE NEWS

A child's ADHD increases divorce risk according to a new study published in the October issue of the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

[Read more...](#)

UK couple in real-life divorce over virtual affair: Wife twice found

December 10-11, 2008  
Baltimore, Maryland

### Parenting Coordination

*Robin M. Deutsch, Ph.D.*

February 9-10, 2009

New Orleans, Louisiana

### Attachment, Alienation and Access

*Arnold Shienvold, Ph.D.*

February 11-12, 2009

New Orleans, Louisiana

## AFCC Chapters

### Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

January 30-February 1, 2009

Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa

Sedona, Arizona

[www.azafcc.org](http://www.azafcc.org)

### California Chapter Annual Conference

February 6-8, 2009

The Mark Hopkins Hotel

San Francisco, California

[www.afcc-ca.org](http://www.afcc-ca.org)

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## ABOUT AFCC eNEWS

*AFCC eNEWS* is a monthly e-newsletter published by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC).

*AFCC eNEWS* provides professionals with time sensitive and up-to-date topics including practice tips, research innovations and international news.

[AFCC eNEWS archive...](#)

husband's avatar having sex with virtual women. This is true, folks.

[Read more...](#)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

One of AFCC's Board members, **Principal Family Court Judge of New Zealand Peter Boshier**, hosted an international conference in his hometown.

[Read more...](#)

The **5th World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights** will take place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada on August 23-26, 2009. Their Program Committee is comprised of The Hon. Chief Justice Diana Bryant, Australia, The Hon. Joseph Kay, Australia, Justice Robert J. Williams, Canada, and the Hon. Professor Richard Chisholm, Australia.

[Read more...](#)

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### Parenting Styles Predict Children's Adjustment

*Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.*

*Campana, K. L., Henderson, S., Stolberg, A. L., & Schum, L. [2008]. Paired Maternal and Paternal Parenting Styles, Child Custody and Children's Emotional Adjustment to Divorce. Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 48, 1 - 20.*

We have reviewed a number of articles regarding what the authors refer to as parenting style. For example, we have examined the importance of an authoritative parenting style in a number of previous reviews [See Digests: 3, 1; 4, 2; 5, 1, 3, & 4; 6, 4; 7, 1, & 2; and 8, 2, & 6]. This study goes much further. Here, the authors examine the parenting styles of both parents and compare their styles to the adjustment of their children.

The authors studied 518 children from 235 divorced families. The average age of the children was nearly 15 years old. Their parents had separated seven years earlier on average. All racial/ethnic minority groups were represented among the participants. Over 50% of the mothers had possession of their children 70% of the time. The parents and children all completed a variety of questionnaires. The parents were divided into four parenting style groups: authoritative parents scored highest on measures of warmth and communication and maintained developmentally appropriate behavioral boundaries; authoritarian parents were more rigid, exerted stern discipline, and were less communicative with their children; permissive parents were warm but provided limited discipline and monitoring; and absent/disengaged parents also communicated very little with their children, and provided limited discipline, warmth, and monitoring. The authors then tried to match parenting styles with the emotional adjustment of their children.

#### They found that:

- Across all parenting styles, children of authoritative parents have the best emotional adjustment. They have lower amounts of aggression and depression and higher self-esteem.
- Children who had at least one authoritative parent, they did significantly better than children with any other parenting style combinations except when both parents were authoritative.
- Children of absent/disengaged parents had significantly more depression and aggression and lower self-esteem than all the other groups.
- Children with permissive parents rated themselves as more depressed than those children who had at least one authoritative parent.
- Children whose parents were both absent exhibited the highest levels of aggression.
- Only 17% of the children rated both of their parents as being authoritative. However, 40% rated their mothers as authoritative and their fathers as permissive.

- In cases of divorce, the parent with whom the child lived with the most was more likely to be authoritative.

### **Critical Analysis**

A major strength of this article is that the authors obtained information both from parents and from their children. A second advantage is that information was collected from both biological parents. Third, they were able to compare the effects of differing parenting styles within the same family. Our only concern is that the sample of participants does not correspond to our experience regarding the typical amount of access time that non-resident parents are awarded. If it does not correspond, the study's applicability may be limited.

### **Recommendations**

Thirty-seven percent of the total number of participants were rated as authoritative parents. The reader may find this a rather small percentage, as do we. If this percentage accurately reflects parents across the nation, CCEs should pay a great deal of attention to parenting style because others styles are not beneficial to children, and in our view, authoritative parenting should be viewed as a significant asset.

We also wonder if being an authoritative parent comes with the territory of being a primary parent. For example, in more traditional family structures, mothers often take authoritative roles to a greater degree than fathers. In the context of custodial disputes, mothers may allege that they should prevail because, based on history, their husbands did not parent in an authoritative manner as much as they did. This may be true; however, it may also be the case that fathers can and do assume more authoritative roles when they become primary parents. We do not know of any data regarding a parent's ability to modify his or her parenting style, but in our experience, it is possible to do so. If parents are able to change their parenting style, we suggest that CCEs be cautious about making predictions regarding parenting style based only on historical data.

*For this as well as other valuable research visit J.M. Craig Press online at [www.jmcraig.com](http://www.jmcraig.com) or call (877) 960-1474. AFCC members receive a 25% discount on all J.M. Craig Products.*

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### **Children's living arrangements following separation and divorce: Insights from empirical and clinical research.**

Kelly, J. B. (2007). Children's living arrangements following separation and divorce: Insights from empirical and clinical research. *Family Process Special Issue: Divorce and its Aftermath*, 46(1), 35-52.

**Abstract:** When parents separate, children typically enter into new living arrangements with each parent in a pattern determined most often by one or both parents or, failing private agreement, as a result of recommendations and decisions by lawyers, therapists, custody evaluators, or family courts. Most of these decisions have been based on cultural traditions and beliefs regarding post-separation parenting plans, visitation guidelines adopted within jurisdictions, unsubstantiated theory, and strongly held personal values and professional opinions, and have resulted since the 1960s in children spending most of their time with one residential parent and limited time with nonresident, or 'visiting,' parents. A large body of social science and child development research generated over the past three decades has identified factors associated with risk and resiliency of children after divorce. Such research remains largely unknown and untapped by parents and professionals making these crucial decisions about children's living arrangements. This article highlights empirical and clinical research that is relevant to the shape of children's living arrangements after separation, focusing first on what is known about living arrangements following divorce, what factors influence living arrangements for separated and divorced children, children's views about their living arrangements, and living arrangements associated with children's adjustment following divorce. Based on this research, it is argued that traditional visiting patterns and guidelines are, for the majority of children, outdated, unnecessarily rigid, and restrictive, and fail in both the short and long term to address their best interests. Research-based parenting plan models offering multiple options for living arrangements following separation and divorce more appropriately serve children's diverse developmental and psychological needs.



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### ***Paul Amato, Ph.D.***

Dr. Amato is a Professor of Sociology, Demography, and Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University. His research interests include marital quality, the causes and consequences of divorce, and subjective well-being over the life course. He has published over 100 journal articles and book chapters, along with four books, including (with Alan Booth) *A Generation at Risk: Growing Up in An Era of Family Upheaval*, which was published by Harvard University Press in 1997. He received the Reuben Hill Award from the National Council on Family Relations for the best published article on the family in 1993, 1999, and 2001. He received the Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award from the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts in 2002, the Distinction in the Social Sciences Award from Pennsylvania State University in 2003, and the Distinguished Career Award from the Family Section of the American Sociological Association in 2006.

### ***Jennifer McIntosh, Ph.D.***

Dr. McIntosh is a clinical and developmental psychologist, family therapist and researcher. She is the founding director of Family Transitions, a specialist research and clinical practice, based in Melbourne, Australia. She is Adjunct Associate Professor at La Trobe University (School of Public Health) and Adjunct Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne (School of Behavioral Science). She has played a leading role in national research and associated professional development programs and multiple publications have resulted. She is the Director of three current research programs and is known for her strong advocacy on the rights of children to psychological safety, particularly in the face of family trauma and change.



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### ASK THE AFCC STAFF

#### Top ten ways to pay for your AFCC membership, increase your retirement savings and live a healthier, happier life!

AFCC knows that during difficult economic times every dollar counts. So as a service to our members, we are pleased to share our top ten ways to pay for your AFCC membership and even put a little something additional aside. The thrifty AFCC staff has identified more than \$1,500 in savings, ten times the cost of a \$150 AFCC membership!

**1. Refer a colleague to AFCC every other month.** AFCC members receive a \$10 credit for every new member they refer. Take membership brochures to share with your colleagues (AFCC will be happy to send them to you). Just make sure they write your name on the referral line in the membership application!

**Annual savings: \$60**

*Additional perks: Expanding your personal AFCC network.*

**2. Drive just a bit less and save a half gallon of gas every week.**

Cut 12 miles a week from your driving routine by carpooling once or twice, consolidating your trips, walking or biking on short trips or staying in for lunch. (Based on 24 mpg at \$3.00 per gallon.)

**Annual savings: \$75**

*Additional perks: Enjoy the health benefits of biking and walking and reduce your carbon footprint.*

**3. Brown bag it, once a week.** A turkey sandwich, yogurt, an apple and carrots is a healthy, filling and inexpensive lunch. You will save at least \$7 each time you bring your lunch.

**Annual savings: \$350**

*Additional perks: Less time out of the office at lunch means you will finish your work day earlier and spend more time with family...and you will definitely be eating healthier!*

**4. Launder and iron one item weekly.** You don't have to stop using the dry cleaner, but just take one shirt or blouse from the pile and save \$2.50.

**Annual savings: \$125**

*Additional perks: The satisfaction of doing it yourself.*

**5. Use the public library.** Check out a book for free instead of spending \$7-\$25 at the bookstore.

**Annual savings: \$20-200, depending on how much you read.**

*Additional perks: The opportunity to escape into a great book.*

**6. Skip the appetizer (or dessert).** When dining out, skip the appetizer or the dessert, just once a month for each. They are probably not very healthy and, let's face it—many of us could do without.

**Annual Savings: \$180**

*Additional perks: Take a day off from the gym.*

**7. Cook extra and freeze the leftovers for nights you don't have time to cook.** Just once a month, defrost pasta sauce or a hearty soup or stew for dinner instead of ordering take-out or delivery at a cost of at least

\$25 for two.

**Annual savings: \$300**

*Additional perks: Your cooking is certainly healthier than carry out and it tastes better too!*

**8. Buy wine by the case.** All AFCC members deserve to relax with a glass of wine after a long week of work. Did you know that you can usually get at least a 10% discount if you purchase by the case? Many stores will allow you to mix and match. One bottle of wine a week is about four cases per year, and the discount on \$12 wine saves you almost \$60.

**Annual savings: \$60**

*Additional perks: While consulting the sales person about the discount, ask about new wines and expand your horizons. Have a few colleagues over for a wine tasting and refer them to AFCC! (See tip # 1.)*

**9. Clip grocery coupons.** You can easily save \$2 a week on your grocery bill, and probably more.

**Annual savings: \$100**

*Additional perks: You'll have food at home for those "eat-in" dinners and brown bag lunches.*

**10. Have your morning latte at home once a week.** Okay, so you just can't live without that \$4 Grande Double Mocha whatever it is. And why not —you've earned life's little pleasures! But if you stick around the house once a week and drink home brew you'll pay for your AFCC membership and have money left over!

**Annual savings: \$200**

*Additional perks: Extra time with family in the morning and relaxing at home for a few more minutes rather than waiting in line at the coffee shop.*

**Bonus tip:**

**Save money with your AFCC membership.** AFCC members save \$100 on annual conference registration and (if you can't get to the conference) can download audio from conference plenary sessions for free, a \$45 value. And this is on the annual conference alone! Complete your membership application now to access great benefits and discounts from AFCC!



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### ASK THE EXPERTS

#### Ten Tips for Separated and Divorced Families for the Holidays

by Peg Libby, Executive Director, Kids First Center, Portland, Maine

When asked to write 10 tips for the holidays in the Ask the Experts section of the AFCC newsletter, I decided to ask the REAL experts, the kids who attend our divorce support groups at the Kids First Center. Here is an excerpt from the Holidays and Celebrations chapter of our new book, Kids First: What Kids Want Grown-ups to Know about Divorce and Separation.

#### 1. Plan, plan, plan

Planning and predictability help kids cope, especially with events like holidays that are often ripe with emotion and expectations.

#### 2. Begin early

Don't leave the complicated scheduling logistics until the holiday is close at hand – take it seriously and make decisions early (when parents begin writing out their separation plans is a good place to start).

#### 3. Be specific

Though future events can never be foreseen entirely, kids want to know what to expect year after year at holiday time. Specific and detailed holiday plans will provide kids with the security of knowing they have a plan they can count on.

#### 4. Include the kids

Based upon the ages of the kids, parents are wise to include kids in discussions of new holiday traditions, while making it clear that the final decision will be up to the parents.

#### 5. Be open and flexible

Though parents are urged to specify a very detailed schedule for holiday events, it is also unrealistic to block out the possibility of changes. However, the same rules of planning, specificity, predictability and inclusion of kids apply.

#### 6. Give kids permission to discuss their experiences at the other home

Parents respect their kids' need for privacy by not asking probing questions about the other parent's home. However, kids may want to discuss their holiday experiences and they will feel comfortable if they are free to do so.

#### 7. Create new traditions

It is OK, even important, to acknowledge that "something has changed this year" as families go through the first holidays following separations. Each parent can play a role to help create a new, personalized tradition that honors the old traditions.

#### 8. Introduce no surprises

Introduction of surprises or emotionally charged information, such as new partners, or moving, is best delayed until a quieter time. When parents keep in mind the child's point of view during holidays, they can avoid bad perceptions of otherwise good news.

**9. Don't discuss issues**

Refrain from the temptation to use holiday drop-off and pick-up times to review past problems and areas of tension. Parents can easily project their own feelings onto their child.

**10. Give yourself a break**

It should be expected that difficult feelings and behaviors will arise around holidays and special events. Unfortunately, parents do not have a guidebook that tells them what to do for every such event. There is only a right solution for a specific family and specific kids. Informed, caring parents work together to figure out what works to put kids first.

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