



ASSOCIATION OF  
FAMILY AND  
CONCILIATION COURTS



eNEWS

## Q & A with AFCC Plenary Speaker Bernie Mayer

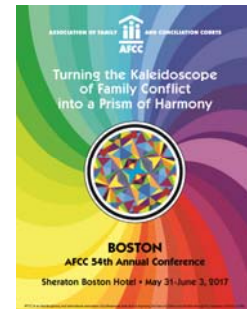
Dr. Bernie Mayer has been a member of AFCC for more than three decades and was presented with the AFCC President's Award in 2012. He is a Professor of Dispute Resolution at The Werner Institute, Creighton University, and a leader in the field of conflict resolution. Bernie has worked in child welfare, mental health, substance abuse treatment, and psychotherapy. As a founding partner of CDR Associates, Bernie has provided conflict intervention for families, communities, universities, corporations, and governmental agencies throughout North America and internationally for over 35 years. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Conflict Paradox*, *Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes*, *The Dynamics of Conflict*, *Beyond Neutrality*, and *Staying with Conflict*. Bernie will present a keynote at the AFCC 54th Annual Conference in Boston, May 31-June 3, 2017. [Read more.](#)

## AFCC 54th Annual Conference: *Turning the Kaleidoscope of Family Conflict into a Prism of Harmony*

Register Before March 6 for the Best Rates

MONTHLY E-  
NEWSLETTER  
VOL. 12 NO. 2  
February 2017

### Upcoming AFCC Conferences



### [AFCC 54th Annual Conference](#)

Turning the Kaleidoscope of Family Conflict into a Prism of Harmony  
May 31-June 3, 2017  
Sheraton Boston Hotel  
Boston, Massachusetts

Diamond Sponsor



Take advantage of early registration discounts and [register now](#) for the 54th Annual Conference in Boston. AFCC members can **save up to \$175** by registering early for the conference.

### **Attend a Pre-Conference Institute**

**Earn six additional hours of continuing education** when you attend a full-day pre-conference institute on **Wednesday, May 31**. Call the AFCC office to add an institute to your existing registration or include it with your online registration. [View the program brochure for institute descriptions.](#)

### **Apply for a Conference Scholarship by March 1**

Conference scholarships include a pre-conference institute registration, a full conference registration, and a certificate of attendance. In addition, a limited number of travel stipends are available to those applicants with high travel costs, international applicants, and those who demonstrate a financial need. The deadline to apply for a scholarship is **March 1, 2017**. Recipients will be notified mid-to-late March. [Apply now.](#)

### **Donate to the Silent Auction**

The annual AFCC Silent Auction is a longstanding AFCC tradition. All proceeds support AFCC special projects and initiatives. Donate an item and attend the auction to bid! You do not need to attend the conference to donate. Past auction items include tropical getaways, one-of-a-kind jewelry, sports memorabilia, the latest gadgets and electronics, books, and more. [Donate an item.](#)

### **Make your hotel reservations today!**

The Sheraton Boston Hotel is offering a special rate to AFCC attendees of \$209/night for single occupancy and \$229/night for double occupancy. Rooms frequently sell out before the room block is released on May 5, 2017 so make your reservations early. To reserve your room online, [click here](#) or call 1-888-627-7054.

### **Exhibit Onsite**

Exhibiting and advertising at the Annual Conference are great ways to share your products and services with an interdisciplinary community of dedicated family law professionals. Exhibit space is almost sold out—ensure your

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### **AFCC Chapter Conferences**

#### [California Chapter Annual Conference](#)

*Custody Complexities:  
Hard Decisions*  
February 10-12, 2017  
Costa Mesa, California

#### [Wisconsin Chapter Annual Conference](#)

Overnights for Young  
Children  
March 1, 2017  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

#### [Alberta Chapter Annual Conference](#)

*The New Millennial Family:  
Navigating Best Practice in  
a Changing World*  
March 16-17, 2017  
Calgary, Alberta

#### [Washington Chapter Annual Conference](#)

*Parents Come in All Sizes  
and Forms*

space by committing today. For more information, [click here](#) or contact [Corinne Bennett](#).

## Ask the Experts: Ten Ideas for Conducting a Substance Abuse Evaluation

*Harry J. Somers, EdD*

A substance abuse evaluation conducted when there is a child custody issue considers if a parent has a problem with substance abuse and, if so, how it effects parenting and the children. [Read more.](#)

## AFCC Regional Conference in Milwaukee

*Beneath the Surface of High Conflict and Troubled Families*

November 2-4, 2017

Hyatt Regency Milwaukee

### Call for Proposals

The AFCC Conference Committee is seeking proposals for 90-minute workshop sessions. Share your work with the interdisciplinary community of family law professionals who attend AFCC conferences. Proposals must be received using the online form by May 15. The program brochure and online registration will be available July 2017.

[View the call for proposals.](#) [Submit online.](#)

## AFCC Chicago Trainings

There is still time to attend AFCC's training programs on parenting coordination and child custody evaluation. In collaboration with Loyola University Chicago School of Law's Civitas ChildLaw Center, AFCC is proud to offer two training programs taught by Matthew Sullivan, PhD, and David Martindale, PhD, ABPP. **Earn up to 12 hours of continuing education by attending!**

*Parenting Coordination: Practice Foundations*

Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD

**March 6-7, 8:30am-4:00pm**

March 25, 2017  
Seattle, Washington

### [Missouri Chapter Annual Conference](#)

*How Coaching Matters for Family Matters*

April 6-7, 2017

St. Louis, Missouri

### AFCC Webinar Series

*Visitation Resistance*

Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD

April 12, 2017 1:00pm

Eastern

*LGBTQ Clients and Family Law in a Post-Obergefell Era*

Allan Barsky, JD, MSW, PhD

June 20, 2017 1:00pm

Eastern

### AFCC Trainings

#### Parenting Coordination: Practice Foundations

*Matthew J. Sullivan, PhD*

March 6-7, 2017

Loyola University Chicago,  
Philip H. Corboy Law Center

Chicago, Illinois

#### The Model Standards and Beyond: Custody Evaluations and Risk Management

*David A. Martindale, PhD, ABPP*

March 8-9, 2017

Loyola University Chicago,  
Philip H. Corboy Law Center

Chicago, Illinois

### Save the Date

*The Model Standards and Beyond: Custody Evaluations and Risk Management*

David A. Martindale, PhD, ABPP

**March 8-9, 8:30am-4:00pm**

[More information.](#)

## Give to the AFCC Scholarship Fund

Each year, through the generous support of donors, we are able to afford individuals the opportunity to gain access to emerging research, networking opportunities, and continuing education by experiencing an AFCC conference. Help your colleagues attend an AFCC conference by giving to the scholarship fund, every gift makes a difference.

[Donate online today.](#)

[Thank you to those who have donated already!](#)

## Member News

AFCC Board Member Robert Simon, was recently elected to serve on the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Board of Directors. He is the first forensic psychologist on the Board. Congratulations, Robert.

## Chapter News

[Meet Benjamin L. Deguire](#), President of the **Arizona Chapter**

## The Use of Research in Family Justice Systems: An International Call for Evidence

To better understand the current use of research in family justice systems, the Nuffield Foundation has commissioned a research team to complete a scoping study, which will inform the development of a proposed new family justice observatory for England and Wales. While the scoping study focuses on England and Wales, any observatory that is subsequently commissioned is expected to have a broader, more international reach and to learn from good practice in a range of international jurisdictions. [Read more.](#)

## Call for *Family Court Review* Submissions

### [AFCC-AAML Conference](#)

*Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation and Settlement*  
September 14-16, 2017  
Westin San Diego  
San Diego, California

Are you an AFCC member? [Join](#) or [Renew](#)

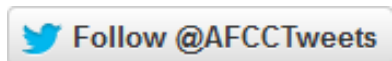
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The *Family Court Review (FCR)* is a peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal of AFCC. The editors invite contributions from the fields of law, court administration, mental health, medicine, the behavioral and social sciences, dispute resolution, education, public policy, and other disciplines concerned with the welfare of children and families. *FCR* is interested in articles involving all aspects of family law, family courts, and the resolution of family disputes. Articles are welcomed on topics such as divorce and separation, child custody, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, adoption, termination of parental rights, juvenile delinquency, alternative dispute resolution, and more. International perspectives on these topics are strongly encouraged. *FCR* is available in more than 4000 institutions worldwide, and articles from *FCR* are downloaded more than 100,000 times each year. For more information about submitting an article, [click here](#).

## **AFCC Awards Nominations**

AFCC awards acknowledge the many important contributions made by individuals and organizations to enhance the lives of children and families involved in family courts. Nominate a colleague for an award to recognize the important contributions they have made. Even if your nomination is not selected this year, the act of nominating a colleague helps to highlight the achievements in the field. Award recipients will be presented at the AFCC Annual Conference in Boston. Currently accepting nominations online through March 15, 2017. [Submit a nomination online, see past recipients, learn more about the awards and criteria.](#)



## **The Use of Research in Family Justice Systems: An International Call for Evidence**

To better understand the current use of research in family justice systems, the Nuffield Foundation has commissioned a research team to complete a scoping study, which will inform the development of a proposed new family justice observatory for England and Wales.

While the scoping study focuses on England and Wales, any observatory that is subsequently commissioned is expected to have a broader, more international reach and to learn from good practice in a range of international jurisdictions. Therefore, the research team would like to hear from **practitioners, policy-makers, organizations representing parties to cases and researchers outside England and Wales** about the availability of research in their family justice systems, the obstacles and barriers they encounter in trying to utilize it more effectively, and the kinds of solutions or practices used to try and address these issues.

**Members of the AFCC are invited to respond to this international call for evidence and to disseminate it among other colleagues.**

This international call for evidence follows a national call to practitioners, policy-makers and researchers across organizations in England and Wales. Respondents to the national call highlighted the following issues as problematic for them and therefore something they would want the proposed family justice observatory to address.

- Access to research
- Trust in research
- Knowledge exchange between researchers, policy-makers and practitioners
- Use of administrative data sets for both national and regional analyses
- Paucity of research relevant to private law

Respondents are asked to consider: (i) whether these issues are common to their own countries or jurisdictions and (ii) what kinds of solutions or practices have been introduced to address these issues? Respondents are also asked to list what they consider to be the priority topics for new research in their own jurisdictions (e.g. child contact in public and private law cases)

Full details of the international call for evidence and the process for responding are available online at: <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/observatory-scoping-study/cfe/>

The deadline for submissions is May 1, 2017

Submissions are invited from organizations and individuals representing one or more of the following stakeholder groups within the family justice system:

- Practitioners (e.g. judges, lawyers, barristers, experts, social workers).
- System-wide users (e.g. national and local policy makers).
- Researchers and analysts (e.g. academic, government, independent).
- Parties to cases (e.g. young people, parents, extended family members, other carers).
- Organisations and charities that represent parties to cases/service users

The scoping study is led by Professor Karen Broadhurst at Lancaster University, in partnership with the Alliance for Useful Evidence, University College London, Research in Practice, Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University, Family Rights Group and CoramBAAF.

A briefing paper setting out the fundamental purpose and functions of a new infrastructure for better use and application of research evidence in the family justice system is available on the [Nuffield Foundation website](#).



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VOL. 12 NO. 2  
FEBRUARY 2017

## Ask the Experts: Ten Ideas for Conducting a Substance Abuse Evaluation

*Harry J. Somers, EdD*

1. A substance abuse evaluation can be conducted within a child custody report or separate from a custody issue. In cases of child custody disputes, a substance abuse evaluation considers if a particular parent has a problem with substance abuse and the effect of a substance abuse problem on parenting and children.
2. A substance abuse evaluation utilizes a multi-method approach. The evaluation should include interviews with the parent who has an alleged substance abuse problem and with the accusing parent or others who allege a parent has a problem with substance abuse. Children can be interviewed along with professional and collateral witnesses. Professional witnesses can include therapists, medical doctors, medication providers, police, and clergy. Collateral witnesses can include friends, parents, extended relatives, etc. There should be a review of all professional records including medical reports, psychological reports, detox/rehabilitation reports, Child Protective Services reports, criminal records, occupational records, and letters from an occupational supervisor regarding job performance.
3. A substance abuse evaluation always contains current results of alcohol and drug testing. This can include urine testing, blood testing, and hair follicle testing. There are technological devices that can also be utilized such as breathalyzer testing and an interlock device which requires a driver to blow into a breathalyzer device in order for a car to start. A high reading will prevent the car from starting. Also available are devices from Soberlink and other providers which can provide multiple tests per day measuring the presence of alcohol. Tongue strips which measure the presence of alcohol can be purchased at most major pharmacies. Most pharmacies also sell drug and alcohol testing devices. A substance abuse evaluation may also contain published measures of substance abuse problems. These are generally paper and pen tests consisting of



questions, with relatively easy scoring. Such tests include the Michigan Alcohol Screening Test. A full list of these tests can be found by accessing the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA). These tests are dependent on people answering test questions accurately. Inaccurate answers will negatively affect the accuracy of the test results.

4. A substance abuse evaluation may also involve unannounced home visits especially when there are allegations of present alcohol and/or drug use. A custody evaluator conducting an unannounced home visit may want to consider conducting an unannounced home visit with the other parent whereby both parents are being treated equally.
5. While conducting a substance abuse evaluation the interviewer asks specific questions in a courteous and respectful manner. These questions should include when a parent began to use a specific substance, historical frequency of usage, amount of present usage, and the date of the last use if a parent claims to have ended use of the specific substance. A parent can be asked where and when they use a substance. Ask where the children are and what are the children doing when the parent uses. Ask if the children are aware of the parent using a substance. Was the parent driving under the influence? These questions are asked for every substance used. Additional questions can include what the parent liked about the substance. What were the disadvantages of using the substance? What effect did the substance being used have on parenting? If the parent is currently using a substance, ask what are the advantages of stopping the use? What would be the disadvantages of stopping the use? It is important to ask if the parent is being treated for any other psychological conditions. What treatment is being used and how helpful is the treatment?
6. If a parent claims to be sober and/or recovering, ask what the parent is doing to maintain sobriety. Ask how often the parent thinks about using or has cravings. What does the parent do when thinking about using or craving? Ask about attendance at self-help meetings such as AA, NA or Smart Recovery. How often does the parent attend meetings? What types of meetings do parents attend? Within AA and NA there are speakers, meetings, step meetings, discussion meetings and Big Book meetings. To what extent does the parent participate in meetings? Does the parent have a sponsor? What step of recovery is the parent working on? What are the benefits of attending meetings? What may a parent dislike about meetings? What is the parent learning at meetings? Under what circumstances might the parent use again? What would the parent do under these circumstances? What medications is the parent using as part of the sobriety process? How are these medications being monitored? Are any of the

medications being abused? Is the parent in psychological treatment? How often does the parent go to treatment? How helpful is the treatment?

7. If a parent has been alleged to abuse prescription medication, the substance abuse evaluator must speak with the prescribing physician asking if there is evidence of abuse. In addition, the substance abuse evaluator requests all copies of all prescription records from the pharmacy or pharmacies being utilized. Prescription records should be entered onto a spreadsheet program. This makes it easier to see when the medication was prescribed, in what amount, at what dosage over time. It is usually helpful to show the spread sheet (without identifying information) to a physician. The physician can offer an assessment about the prescription records including evidence of abuse.
8. With parents who claim to be sober and/or recovering, the evaluator can take a sheet of paper dividing the paper into four sections with a horizontal line through the center of the paper and a vertical line going down the center of the paper. In the top left section ask the parent to list what they liked about using. In the lower left section ask the parent to list what the disadvantages of using are. In the upper right section ask the parent to list the advantages of being sober. In the bottom right section ask the parent to list the disadvantages of being sober. When it appears that a person is remaining sober primarily to avoid the disadvantages of using, the parent is probably in short term sobriety. Generally, parents who remain sober over time are most motivated by the advantages of living a sober life. This four-part analysis has not been proven to be scientifically valid. The results do not mean a parent motivated by avoiding the disadvantages of using is about to use again or will use. The results do not mean a parent who is motivated to remain sober by the advantages of a sober life will not use again. This four-part analysis serves as a guideline to help assess the motivation of a parent to remain sober. When parents list the disadvantages of remaining sober they are acknowledging the challenges of a sober life. These are issues the parents may need assistance coping with.
9. A substance abuse evaluation describes the specific effects of parental substance abuse on parenting of their children. An excellent source describing substance abuse effects on parents and children can be found in the book *Parenting and Substance Abuse, Developmental Approaches to Intervention* written by Suchman, Nancy E; Marjukka, Pajulo & Mayes, Linda C. The book was written in 2013 and published by Oxford University Press.
10. A substance abuse evaluation contains treatment recommendations for parents and children. These recommendations should include the names and telephone numbers of the treatment sites. A substance abuse evaluation may include

specific recommendations for children having access to parents alleged to have problems with substance abuse. These recommendations may include professional visitation centers, the use of professional visitation supervisors and may consider trusted non-professional supervisors or conditions for no supervision. Recommendations should also include what should happen to a child's access or children's access to a parent who has relapsed.

Dr. Harry Somers is a licensed psychologist who has been a *Guardian Ad Litem* for the eastern Massachusetts Probate and Family Courts for 35 years. Dr. Somers also evaluates parents involved in the District Court System who are trying to have their children returned to their care. Many of these court cases involve allegations about parental substance abuse. Dr. Somers provides therapy for parents and families experiencing a variety of challenges including substance abuse. Harry Somers will be speaking at the AFCC 54th Annual Conference, *Turning the Kaleidoscope of Family Conflict into a Prism of Harmony* in Boston, MA, May 31-June 3, 2017. He will be part of a panel presenting a pre-conference institute titled Bringing the Opiate Crisis into Focus: Parenting Decisions in the Family Court; and will be presenting a workshop titled Theories, Evaluations and Decisions with Substance Abusing Parents.



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### **Meet Benjamin L. Deguire, President of the Arizona Chapter**

Benjamin L. Deguire has been practicing family law in Arizona since 2000. His practice is located primarily in the city of Flagstaff where he handles cases in Coconino County and the surrounding northern Arizona counties. He received his Bachelor of Arts degrees from the University of Arizona in Philosophy and Political Science in 1997 before enrolling in the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law. He received his Juris Doctorate in 2000, having served as an Editor of the University of Arizona Law Review. He was admitted to practice law in Arizona in 2000 and since that time has focused on representing the interests of parents and children in complex and high conflict dissolution and custody matters. He is an active member of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) and began his term as President of the Arizona Chapter of AFCC in January of 2017. He is also a member of the State Bar of Arizona Family Law Executive Council and the Coconino County Bar Association.



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## Q & A with AFCC Plenary Speaker Bernie Mayer



Dr. Bernie Mayer has been a member of AFCC for more than three decades and was presented with the AFCC President's Award in 2012. He is a Professor of Dispute Resolution at The Werner Institute, Creighton University, and a leader in the field of conflict resolution. Bernie has worked in child welfare, mental health, substance abuse treatment, and psychotherapy. As a founding partner of CDR Associates, Bernie has provided conflict intervention for families, communities, universities, corporations, and governmental agencies throughout North America and internationally for over 35 years. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Conflict Paradox*, *Seven Dilemmas at the Core of Disputes*, *The Dynamics of Conflict*, *Beyond Neutrality*, and *Staying with Conflict*. Bernie will present a keynote at the AFCC 54th Annual Conference in Boston, May 31-June 3, 2017.

**AFCC:** How did you get started working in conflict?

**Bernie Mayer (BSM):** There were really two strands. One was social work. I grew up as a child of social workers. My mother worked with adopting families and my father ran a treatment center in Cleveland, and I grew up in it. It was called Bellefaire, and it is still there. So I was born and bred in conflict and peacemaking. Then I became a social worker and worked with issues like mental health, substance abuse, child welfare, teens having problems with their parents, and parents having problems with their teens. It was all about conflict. The second strand was being a child of the 60s and participating in the civil rights movement and the antiwar student movement. And I was also a union organizer and then got promoted, which meant I was expected to take management's side. All of this led to my interest in conflict. Early in my life I was all about raising conflict, but when mediation came along it struck me as a way of connecting to a lot of different things in which I was interested.

**AFCC:** You spent much of your career with CDR Associates, a well-known and highly regarded nonprofit organization that worked with all sorts of conflict. How did that come about?

**BSM:** That came about in the person of Chris Moore, who I met when we were working on political issues together. Chris asked me to help him develop some courses and training in conflict resolution. At the time I was a social worker at a residential treatment center for children. CDR, which was originally the Center for Dispute Resolution, started before we had any resources to speak of. It was a community mediation center and all of the founders were still working our day jobs. Then we got a grant from the Hewlett Foundation that paid for staffing, and that allowed us to quit our jobs and devote full time to CDR. In the early years we were trying to figure things out, like how to construct good training models and how to create a model to use community mediation in the family arena, in the workplace, and on public policy issues. Then I started thinking about how to use mediation in child protection.

I think the creativity and supportiveness of the partnership was really the key to our development. Of course, we also functioned like siblings and argued like siblings, but that was part of the creative process too. Working with families in conflict was an important piece of the puzzle in CDR. We had a family mediation program with people we had trained. It was important because it gave CDR a local presence in addition to the larger scale work we were doing.

I always did family work, but one great thing about CDR is that we worked in all different areas. I see that as a strength because the work I did in one area always informed another, whether it was family, community conflict, labor management or public policy. Also, I found that if a framework was true across all of these areas there was some real power to it. We ended working in different areas, including public housing, in large organizations and in other countries, to help train and develop approaches to handling conflict. We worked in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Bosnia, and South Africa, among other places.

Working in all of these contexts taught me that the same issues and conflict dynamics play out at different levels, from interpersonal to conflict at the policy level. I thought AFCC always embodied that too. I always liked the way AFCC moved up and down that ladder from working with individual family conflict to disagreements over policy issues. So when AFCC wanted help with policy dialogues I was very interested.

**AFCC:** Tell us a bit about your work with AFCC policy dialogues.

**BSM:** I facilitated two policy dialogues with AFCC. The first was the Wingspread Conference on Domestic Violence and Family Law, which was a collaboration with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The second looked at research, policy and practice around shared parenting issues. I think the most impressive aspect of these was that AFCC was trying to address really difficult issues that were around for a long time. The issue of domestic violence was something I had dealt with on an individual case level, an organizational policy level, and community level. It was something that professional organizations and courts struggled with for years. It was great that in each dialogue AFCC hung in there and decided to do our very best to see if we could bring people together. And it was great that we brought research and practice

experience together. I thought it was gutsy, and important. Although there were different levels of success, I think they both worked because people came together and made the commitment to say what they believed and thought, but also to listen to others.

**AFCC:** What are the pressing issues in the family conflict professionals' community right now?

**BSM:** The biggest one is that people simply cannot afford the professional services they need to have a good divorce, whether it is legal representation, counseling, or mediation. We have to figure out what to do about this. We need to reach an understanding that it isn't just that people need more or cheaper access to a particular service. We have to address the real structural problem in the system. This can be a problem for mediators, because people think it is a quick fix. They want us to solve big problems very quickly, without the time, power, or resources to do so, and this makes many people skeptical about mediation. We can only help people do the best they can in a context that is limiting. And this is a problem for lawyers, and family counselors too. Furthermore, since many people cannot afford to do a divorce well, sometimes they just don't get divorced. They may stay together when they should not, and stumble along as best they can. This is often dangerous. In those situations, the less powerful person – often the woman – gets victimized, or doesn't get their needs addressed effectively. Of course, there are other issues as well. Cultural issues, domestic violence, conflict over values about different models of parenting and the increasing problems of substance abuse and economically marginalized families. The overall societal tensions we are currently experiencing also have significant family-related implications.

**AFCC:** What parallels do you see between the policy issues in the family law arena and the political conflicts we are currently experiencing?

**BSM:** I think that in both cases there is a rising sense that conflicts are not just conflicts, but that they are cataclysmic differences between world views. We see it in immigration, health care, climate change, and elsewhere. It isn't that there are just disagreements, but there are fundamental differences in how we see the world. This is reflected through all sorts of systems in a society – large agencies, NGOs, municipal governments and individual communities. That tension also seems to exist within families, in conflict over, e.g., how the kids are raised or religion. It seems a greater number of families see their differences as fundamental, something they cannot talk through.

**AFCC:** Do you think that our political climate is rolling back the work of the peacemakers?

**BSM:** It could be that the political climate is reflective, that is, if this is a time in which people are experiencing tensions and divisions in their world views, that is reflected upwards. Or it could be that political divisions lead people to feel that the way they should deal with any conflict is to take a no holds barred approach. Or both. But this can and will change again, and maybe we are seeing the lancing of the boil right now. I think all of this really impacts how people deal with conflict going on in their own lives, and that makes it all the more important to keep doing what we do. But it makes it hard sometimes to keep the optimism and confidence that is at the core of our work. One of the chapters in my most recent book, *The Conflict Paradox*, is about the

paradox between optimism and realism. The moment we give up optimism we are lost, but we can't maintain optimism and confidence naively.

**AFCC:** What's next for family conflict professionals?

**BSM:** I have no idea what will happen in the next fifty years. One lesson I've learned is not to trust my own predictions. But I think in the future we need not buy in too much to any particular approach or angle in our work so much so that we are not able to re-define or alter it. I also think we should prepare for opportunities and challenges that come with a truly interdisciplinary approach, which has always been both a strength and challenge for AFCC. We also need to be ready for an increasingly diverse society. Diversity breeds a need for diversity in approaches, practitioners and methodologies and we need to keep working on that.

**AFCC:** Do you have any advice to someone just getting into this work?

**BSM:** Everyone has to find their own path, so I am not sure I have the answer to that. There are a lot of opportunities, and a lot of ways to enter the field. People should educate themselves in an interdisciplinary manner. If you are a lawyer, learn something about psychology or mental health and if you are a mental health professional, learn something about the legal system. And find a good mentor.

**AFCC:** What advice would today's Bernie Mayer have given to yourself when you were starting out more than 40 years ago.

**BSM:** I'd probably say "don't trust anything the 70-year Bernie tells you!" I would certainly say to be less certain. I thought I probably knew a lot more than I really did back then. But in a way, that certainty is what drove me. Who's to say? And I would also say to keep developing myself as whole person.