



Improving the lives of children and families through the resolution of family conflict



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Navigating the Holidays with COVID-19: Create a Roadmap for Success

Leaders of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts

The following are useful tools to help divorced/separated parents sharing custody get through the upcoming holidays in the midst of a continuing pandemic with a minimum of conflict and stress.

1. PLAN EARLY:

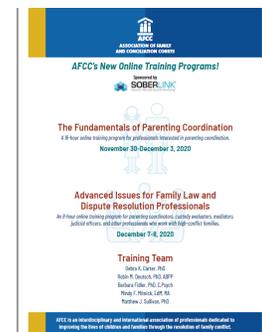
If there is one piece of advice you take away from these guidelines, it has to be this one. If there was ever a holiday season that could *not* be successfully navigated by the seat of your pants at the last minute, it is this season. Consider travel logistics, your holiday traditions, events with family and friends and the parenting time schedule, as usual. Include an accurate assessment of applicable guidelines and possible tracing requirements and quarantine times based on protections needed in each household. [Read More.](#)

Announcement: AFCC's 58th Annual Conference

The 58th Annual Conference will take place virtually due

AFCC's New Online Training Programs!

Nov. 30 - Dec. 3, 2020
Dec. 7 - Dec. 8, 2020



Thank you to our annual conference sponsors!

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to ongoing concerns about the coronavirus pandemic. It was originally scheduled to take place at the Sheraton Boston Hotel, June 1-3 and June 7-11, 2021.

The AFCC Board of Directors made the decision to prioritize the health and safety of AFCC conference attendees, presenters, exhibitors, staff, hotel personnel, and everyone else involved in the coordination of an in-person event.

AFCC will return to Boston in 2024. Stay tuned for more information on the schedule, program, social opportunities, and other details of the 58th Annual Conference, coming in the December 2020 AFCC eNEWS.



**Online
Parenting
Programs**

Considering Personality Disorders in Family Law: 4 Key Skills for Addressing Them in Family Court

Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq.

A landmark case in Australia and a study in California both reached the same conclusions this year: personality disorders should be considered in more legal cases. This is what we have been saying with High Conflict Institute since our founding in 2008. Most of us in family law are used to considering personality disorders as a form of mental illness because they are included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the American Psychiatric Association, 2013, currently the "DSM-5." In reality, personality disorders are interpersonal disorders, yet they can also be hidden disorders. [Read More.](#)

The 14th Symposium on Child Custody Draws Record Attendance, Rave Reviews

AFCC's First Virtual Conference Was a Resounding Success

Over 650 people registered for the 14th Symposium on Child Custody, held virtually during the second week of November 2020.

The opening session featured an impressive performance by former AFCC president, Judge Dianna Gould-Saltman, who sang, "We'll Be Back," a parody of a song from the hit Broadway musical "Hamilton." Click the picture below to watch the video!

AFCC Chapter Conferences

**Florida Chapter
Annual Conference**
Runs through
December 10, 2020
Being held virtually

**California Chapter
Annual Conference**
February 2021
Being held virtually

**Alberta Chapter
Annual Conference**
March 19, 2021
Being held virtually

Resource of the Month

Navigating the Holidays with COVID- 19: Create a Roadmap for Success

Leaders from the AAML and AFCC collaborated on these guidelines to help coparents handle shared custody during the holidays, amid a pandemic.



One attendee raved, "AFCC conferences are always the best organized and full of great topics and conversations. Like everyone, I worried about what would happen virtually. It did not disappoint. It was everything great about AFCC conferences from the comfort of my own home. I miss the in-person interaction, but this was absolutely incredible. Well done."

If you missed the symposium but wish you could view the presentations, you're in luck! You can purchase access to the recordings and handouts (\$165 for members, \$195 for non-members). [Learn more.](#)

Ask the Experts

Skill-Based and Solution-Focused Model Addressing Co-Parenting Conflict

Kenneth H. Waldron, PhD and Eileen McCarten, MS

Co-parenting conflict, especially the type that taxes the resources of the court system and the mental health services, has been the focus of professionals for many years. Most models suggest that at the core of persistent co-parenting conflict, there are intractable mental health problems. While that might be true, it does not suggest a solution.

A skill-based model suggests a simple solution: teach and train vulnerable co-parents the skills they will need and use in a functioning co-parenting relationship.

In this article, we identify ten skills and a tool for measuring those skills. [Read more.](#)

AFCC Training Programs Start Next Week!

AFCC's new online training programs begin next week. The first week features a four-day program on parenting coordination.

The Fundamentals of Parenting Coordination

November 30 - December 3, 2020 (16 CE hours)

The second training program focuses on advanced issues and is applicable to all family law professionals.

Advanced Issues for Family Law and Dispute Resolution Professionals

December 7-8, 2020 (8 CE hours)

Participants who sign up for both can earn up to 24 hours continuing education credit!

[View the brochure](#) for more details and [register online.](#)

AFCC Webinar Corner

[Shared Parenting Research 2020: The Envelope Please...](#)

Marsha Kline Pruett, ABPP, PhD

December 15, 2020 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on December 14, 2020 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

This webinar will highlight the latest shared parenting social science research as it pertains to family law matters. Empirical studies published in 2020 will be selected and analyzed for results, trends in the research, and ongoing debates or questions inherent in the empirical evidence. How the information informs practice with children and families involved in family law matters will be emphasized.

Marsha Kline Pruett, ABPP, PhD is a psychologist with a master's degree in law. Her expertise includes co-parenting, child development, and program development and evaluation of model ADR programs that help families resolve disputes. She is a chaired Professor at Smith College School for Social Work. She is the Past President of AFCC.



Registration

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$50

Certificate of Attendance

Members: \$15

Non-Members: \$20

Continuing education credit may be available for lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other professionals. [Learn more.](#)

[Register today!](#)

Stay tuned for January's webinar

Apologies in Difficult Family Situations

Robin Deutsch, PhD, ABPP

January 19, 2021 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

[Register now!](#)

Member News

Many AFCC members have news to share this month! They hail from Australia and throughout the United States (Arizona, California, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Washington).

Click "Read More" below to learn about the professional accomplishment of AFCC members **Judge Tom Altobelli, Annette Burns, Kevin Chafin, Bill Eddy, Anne Lucas, Andrew Schepard, Tom Wolfrum, and Susan Yates**. Well done, everyone!

Do you have a notable achievement to share? Email [Gina Wentling](#) with your story and a professional head shot (JPEG or PNG preferred), if you have one, to be featured in next month's Member News!

[Read More](#)

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](#).

AFCC members are free to share eNEWS content.

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Considering Personality Disorders in Family Law: 4 Key Skills for Addressing Them in Family Court

Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq.

A landmark case in Australia and a study in California both reached the same conclusions this year: personality disorders should be considered in more legal cases. This is what we have been saying with High Conflict Institute since our founding in 2008. Most of us in family law are used to considering personality disorders as a form of mental illness because they are included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the American Psychiatric Association, 2013, currently the “DSM-5.” In reality, personality disorders are interpersonal disorders, yet they can also be hidden disorders.

In Family Law

A September 2020, opinion article by California family law attorney and mediator Esther Rosenfeld reported on a study she co-authored by the Santa Clara University School of Law on the significance of personality disorders in family law. The study included interviews with family lawyers, judges, and a custody evaluator.

Rosenfeld specifically found that narcissists “fundamentally thrive on conflict.” Also, the “narcissist’s perceived sense of infallibility and accompanying resistance to settle is amplified by the traditional civil process.”

Of the approximately 10% of family law disputes that go to trial, many are conflict-fueled separations. While most divorce cases are settled out-of-court in less than two years, high-conflict cases typically last two to five years and can involve scores of filings, endless delays, tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees, and a high rate of attorney turnover. Worst of all, children become collateral damage and often wind up developing a wide range of mental-health issues.

Rosenthal also noted:

Rarely are formal diagnoses made in family court. Thus, attorneys unequipped to recognize NPD (Narcissistic Personality Disorder) traits struggle to meet their ethical obligations to serve as zealous advocates for clients taking untenable and unreasonable positions.

What should be done? Recommendations include attorneys becoming educated about personality disorders such as NPD and that the State Bar should develop continuing legal education addressing high-conflict personalities.

Rosenfeld also concluded that since “people with NPD see the courtroom as their stage, these cases may proceed more readily to resolution when judges encourage informal procedures such as in-chambers conferences, and avoid formal court hearings.” I would also suggest that mediation and collaborative divorce are informal procedures that can work even with those with personality disorders or traits in most cases, with well-trained mediators and other professionals.

People with personality disorders approach conflict differently—without self-restraint. Legal systems must understand them to make their lives better and society safer. The answers are not to be found in wasted efforts to give those with personality disorders more insight into themselves nor more opportunities for venting in court. The sooner we learn that the answers lie in giving them more structure (with empathy, attention, and respect), while setting firm limits on their high-conflict behavior from the start, the better off everyone will be.

In Criminal Cases

In Australia, on August 25, 2020, the Court of Appeal of the State of Victoria ruled that “personality disorders can be considered a mitigating factor in the same way a judge or magistrate can find mental illness reduces an offender's moral culpability.... Whether and to what extent the offender’s mental functioning is (or was) relevantly impaired should be determined on the basis of expert evidence rigorously scrutinised by the sentencing court.” (Cooper, 2020.)

This decision is important because legal systems in the United States, Australia, and probably most other countries have considered that personality disorders are *not* a mental illness and should *not* be considered in criminal cases as a reason to alter anything—up until now.

What Can We Do?

We all need to learn new skills—skills that help us to manage “high conflict” situations that we didn’t have to manage in the past. There seems to be 4 Key Skills that both professionals (and parents dealing with a high-conflict ex) need to learn, and 4 Big Skills™ that parents need to learn:

4 Key Skills for Everyone (the CARS Method®):

1. **Learning to CONNECT:** In high conflict situations, it’s easy to get stuck in all-or-nothing thinking, which includes people relating to each other as allies or enemies. Some people repeatedly get stuck this way, which we think of as high conflict people (HCPs). Once you recognize this, you realize that you have to work harder to show them Empathy, Attention, and Respect. This tends to indicate to them that we are allies, not enemies. With enough of these “EAR Statements™,” most HCPs seem able to calm down and work on solving problems with us.

2. **Learning to ANALYZE Options:** High conflict people and situations often get stuck in debating or dictating all-or-nothing solutions to problems. Training people to always look for choices and options, and to make proposals, opens their minds and reduces conflicts to simply problems to solve. Learning to use this skill in high conflict situations takes extra training, yet by learning to become more analytical ourselves (while staying calm) can be contagious. We can reinforce being analytical in others rather than reinforcing their rigid thinking with our own rigid thinking.

3. **Learning to RESPOND to Misinformation:** High conflict situations often arise because people are operating on different information and are closed to other points of view. By learning to respond to other people's hostility or misinformation with communications that are brief, informative, friendly, and firm (BIFF), we can calm conversations and provide useful information—just straight information, not opinions, arguments, defenses, etc.

4. **Learning to SET LIMITS on Behavior:** High conflict people are generally unable to stop themselves in conflict situations. They are stuck in adversarial behavior and they interpret efforts to set limits on them as hostile acts which require more high conflict behavior. Therefore, it is up to society to set limits on them. The key is to calm the conflicts while setting limits, so that combining all of the other skills (EAR Statements, analyzing options, providing accurate information) while setting limits can be much more successful than taking an aggressive position by trying to dominate HCPs or taking a passive position by simply avoiding dealing with them.

4 Big Skills™ for Parents

1. *Learning to MANAGE THEIR EMOTIONS (controlling one's anger, sadness, fear, and anxiety; learning to calm oneself when upset)*
2. *Learning to THINK FLEXIBLY (acknowledging that there is more than one solution to a problem, acknowledging that people are not "all-bad" or "all-good")*
3. *Learning to HAVE MODERATE BEHAVIORS (avoiding extreme actions)*
4. *Learning to CHECK YOURSELF (reminding yourself to use these skills when you feel yourself getting upset)*

Conclusion

Whether in criminal law or family law, whether in Australia, the United States or other countries, the growing impact of personality disorders on the lives of those involved with legal systems is significant. All legal professionals need to have full knowledge of the dynamics of personality disorders so that individuals can be helped, rather than harmed, and so our society can be more effectively protected from their at-times extremely dangerous behavior. When professionals don't understand personality disorders, cases are prolonged, resolutions do not truly address problems, and society becomes distracted—or directly harmed—by their dramas.

Hopefully, as more family law professionals understand high-conflict personality disorders, the legal system will provide the structure to focus them on learning self-management skills rather than letting them tie up the courts blaming each other. Our courts have a mental health problem. Now, let's address what to do about it.

References

Rosenfeld, E. "Opinion: Dealing with narcissists in the family law courtroom," *Mercury News*, September 1, 2020.

Cooper, A. "Landmark ruling gives judges power to consider personality disorders," *The Age*, August 25, 2020.

Bill Eddy is a lawyer, therapist, mediator, and the co-founder and Chief Innovation Officer of the High Conflict Institute, a training and consulting company focused on dealing with difficult people in high-conflict disputes. Parents can learn the 4 Big Skills and more on www.ConflictPlaybook.com/ through online courses (playbooks), support communities (groups) for parents, group coaching, and monthly virtual group Q & A with Bill Eddy. For more, HighConflictInstitute.com for professionals and www.ConflictPlaybook.com for parents.





A Skill-Based and Solution-Focused Model Addressing Co-Parenting Conflict

Kenneth H. Waldron, PhD and Eileen McCarten, MS

Co-parenting conflict¹, especially the type that taxes the resources of the court system and the mental health services, has been the focus of professionals for many years. Most models suggest that at the core of persistent co-parenting conflict, there are intractable mental health problems. While that might be true, it does not suggest a solution.

A skill-based model suggests a simple solution: teach and train vulnerable co-parents the skills they will need and use in a functioning co-parenting relationship.

In this article, we identify ten skills and a tool for measuring those skills.

Background. Serious attempts to address the development of post-divorce co-parenting conflict began as changes in law and culture promoted the involvement of both parents in their children's lives post-separation. Parent Education Programs were added to the court process beginning in the late 1980s, including a few experimental efforts, with the goal of preventing co-parenting conflict by mandating that parents be "educated" about its damaging effects. Parent education rapidly spread throughout the world, as a result of *some* success of these programs, with *some* parents. A variety of treatment programs also developed for those parties where parent education was not enough. These programs occurred in the private offices of mental health providers, group co-parenting training programs, online expanded education programs, and the like. A variety of efforts also developed, not to resolve co-parenting conflict but to manage it (e.g., Parenting Coordination, OurFamilyWizard.com, etc.).

Obstacles. One of the obstacles to reducing the percentages of cases that end up in high conflict has been the absence of a coherent model addressing the causes of co-parenting conflict, especially one that suggests a solution. Ascribing personality disorders or other mental health problems to one or both of the parents might be accurate, but does not suggest a solution.

Lagging Skills Model. The "Lagging Skills" Model first developed in childhood education. The fundamental assumption of the "Lagging Skills" model in childhood education was that struggling students might or might not have mental health problems, come from poverty, have weak support in their homes or community, have geographic instability, and so on, but the

¹ In this article, when we refer to "CPP," we mean "Co-parenting Partner."

fundamental issue is that they lag in the skills that successful students have. This suggests that training in those skills should improve their performance and functioning. The results of training indicate that this *was* the case! With skill training, struggling students can improve their functioning.

Can this model be applied to co-parenting conflict? If we make the assumption that high-conflict co-parenting relationships are the result of the co-parents lagging in those skills that successful co-parents demonstrate, training can be a solution. Ten skills were identified and subjected to a pilot study to determine if those skills validly apply to co-parenting conflict levels. The results suggest that the skills garnered from research and literature measured in the pilot study did correlate with co-parenting conflict level and that training in those skills might result in reduced co-parenting conflict.

Our purpose in this article is to not only give a brief description of the ten skills, but also to introduce a lengthier article (by request, at no cost) that provides more detail on the skills and reports on a pilot study validating those skills as undergirding co-parenting conflict. In that lengthier article, we also offer a skill assessment tool and a skill training protocol for professionals interested in assessing lagging skills in specific parties and providing a training approach to prevent or reduce co-parenting conflict.

THE TEN SKILLS

1. **Identifying and processing primary emotions, such as sadness, fear, and insecurity, and including the ability to tolerate mixed feelings and ambivalence.**¹ When a relationship comes apart, especially when there are children, the dominant primary emotions are sadness, fear, and insecurity. Rather than process those emotions, high conflict spouses focus on anger and blame—defending themselves and trying to restore a sense of wellness with these secondary emotions. Sadness comes from the many losses involved. Fear comes from the uncertainty involved in family and financial outcomes. Old insecurities masked in the marriage surface once again.

Additionally, most, if not all, marriages include mixed feelings about the spouse. That ambivalence often does not disappear with a separation, but the challenge of managing that ambivalence can lead parties to avoid contact with one another and to see each other as all bad and themselves as all good.

2. **Perspective-taking—looking at a situation from another person’s point of view.** People live in different worlds. We all have different bodies of information and different values, experiences, and things that we pay attention to or ignore. This leads to different perspectives, even when people are present to the same event. Perspective-taking is a skill

¹ Emotion Focused Therapy is an empirically supported humanistic treatment that views emotions as centrally important in human functioning and therapeutic change. Leslie S. Greenberg, PhD, is one of the originators and primary developers of Emotion Focused Therapy. He has authored the major texts on emotion-focused approaches to treatment of individuals and couples and has published extensively on research on the process of change.

that can be learned. Understanding the perspective of a CPP and the children can help reduce conflict.

- 3. Recognizing that people live in different realities, and having the skills to bridge the gap between those alien worlds.** Bridging the gap is accomplished with effective communication, or, when that is unlikely, by developing rules and procedures. When co-parents do not have and are unlikely to develop effective communication, establishing rules and procedures is the skill to be learned. Establishing rules and procedures for the key components of a cooperative co-parenting relationship include:

- Sharing information—what information to share and how to share it
- Listing joint decisions and how to make them
- Creating access and flexibility in the custody schedule
- Coordinating parenting across both homes
- Designing good transitions from home to home²

Rules and procedures for these key tasks can bridge the gap between two homes, even if the CPPs hate each other.

- 4. Having the ability to be vulnerable in relationships.** People make themselves vulnerable by being open about mistakes made, acknowledging responsibility for actions, apologizing, and letting go of, forgiving, and forgetting wrongs. Making ourselves vulnerable gives rise to our underlying insecurities. The more insecure people are, the more they defend themselves from those insecurities by rationalizing, blaming others, minimizing their own damaging behavior and so on.³ The skills involved are being rigorously honest, acknowledging personal responsibility, admitting to mistakes, apologizing for wrongdoing, and forgiving others.
- 5. Identifying a problem in a way that can lead to a solution.** How people identify a problem should lead to a solution so that they stop having that problem. Co-parents in high conflict relationships often identify a problem with one another, but not define the problem in a way that it can be solved. This is a skill that can be learned.
- 6. Resolving a disagreement when both people are “right.”** This is cognitively challenging because people are tempted to think that there is only one “right,” and if they disagree with another person, they tend to think that the other person must be “wrong.” Confirmation bias, in which people filter in information that supports their view and filter out information that supports the other person’s view, infects the process. In many situations, one person is right

² For more detail on these tasks and establishing rules and procedures for these tasks, see *Co-parenting Training Workbook*, by Ken Waldron, available at Unhooked Books.

³ “Errors in Thinking” has a large body of literature. Originally studied as “Criminal Thinking Patterns,” Errors in Thinking lists ways in which people attempt to escape responsibility for themselves, such as “blaming the victim” and “rationalizing behavior.”

and the other person is wrong, but there are many situations in which both people are right. Differences generally reflect different information (sometimes from different sources); different values, goals, or priorities; past experiences; predictions of the future; and that to which people pay attention. The skills to be learned are perspective taking and problem solving in a way that accomplishes as much as possible for both CPPs.⁴

7. **Having a method for making decisions that accomplish both people's goals.** It is not unusual for parents to disagree when decisions are to be made. Even happily married parents struggle with many child-related decisions. The skills to be learned are to develop and follow a procedure that accomplishes the goals of both parents.⁵ Research has shown that the best way to avoid being selfish when problem solving and decision making is to focus also on accomplishing what is important to the other person as well.
8. **Recovering from destructive conflict quickly.** By limiting conflict to just short periods, people can remain open-minded about one another, avoid holding grudges, and keep communication channels open. The skill is in establishing an agreed-upon set of rules and procedures for recovery.
9. **Hearing criticism in a healthy manner.** Here we rely on Toltec wisdom:⁶ “Never take a criticism personally.” Criticisms tell us about the person criticizing, not us. This is another skill that involves overcoming patterns of reacting to criticisms with anger and defensiveness. Their criticism tells us about their values and how they handle their emotions and their insecurities. However, many criticisms contain useful information. The skill to be learned is never to take criticism personally, but always listen closely for useful information.⁷
10. **Overcoming personal bias in moral thinking.** Robert Sapolsky in his book *Behave*⁸ points out that most people operate with three biases that can lead to misunderstandings: *Overconfidence Bias*, in that we give our thoughts and opinions more weight than they deserve; *Us-Them-Tribal Warfare*, establishing two “camps” of enemies taking sides; and, *Judgment Bias*, where people tend to judge others by their actions but judge themselves by their intentions. This can lead to intractable conflict.⁹ The skills to be learned are (a) not to have more confidence in our own thoughts and opinions than those of others, (b) plan for the future instead of going to war and (c) judge ourselves by our actions, not our intentions.

⁴ See Skill 7.

⁵ In Waldron, K. H. and Koritzinsky, A. R., *Game Theory and the Transformation of Family Law*, Unhooked Books, Inc. and in Waldron, K. H., *Co-Parenting Training Workbook*, Unhooked Books, Inc., Six Step Procedures, derived from research for making joint decisions, solving problems, and resolving concerns, are presented.

⁶ E.g., Ruiz, D. M. (1997) *The Four Agreements*. Amber Allen Publishing, San Rafael, Ca.

⁷ Sharon Ellison, in a presentation to the Wisconsin Inter-Professional Committee on Divorce, called this, “Powerful Non-defensive Communication.”

⁸ Sapolsky, R. (2017) *Behave: The Biology of Humans at our Best and our Worst*. Penguin Books.

⁹ Vallacher, R. R., Coleman, P. T., Nowak, A. & Bui-Wrzosinska, L. (2010) *Rethinking Intractable Conflict: A Perspective of Dynamical Systems*. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 65, No. 4; 262-278.

THE TOOL AND MORE

A pilot study was created and conducted (by your authors) to measure the relationship between these ten skills and the level of co-parenting conflict. The results indicate that these skills correlate highly with the level of conflict. We also developed a Co-parenting Conflict Assessment Tool (CCAT) to measure skill levels, which had content validity. The study also indicated that the tool had statistical validity.

A detailed article is available at no cost reporting on the study. In that article, the CCAT is offered, at no cost, along with related documents and a skill training curriculum. To request the article, write to laggingskills@gmail.com.

Our goal is to develop a coherent model of co-parenting conflict that leads to practical solutions and make this model and associated document available to other professionals. The lagging skills model identifies ten skills present in functioning co-parenting relationships that can be taught and trained with struggling co-parents. The assessment tool (CCAT) can also be used to measure skill levels in recently separated parents to identify those that are vulnerable to developing intractable high-conflict co-parenting relationships. This could lead to training in order to prevent that outcome.



Member News

November 2020

Many AFCC members have news to share this month! They hail from Australia and throughout the United States (Arizona, California, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Washington).

Learn about the professional accomplishment of Judge Tom Altobelli, Annette Burns, Kevin Chafin, Bill Eddy, Anne Lucas, Andrew Schepard, and Susan Yates. Well done, everyone!

Judge Tom Altobelli, AFCC Board of Directors Member from Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia, has been appointed as a judge of the Family Court of Australia after having served as a judge of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia since 2006. He holds a Master of Laws and Doctorate in Juridical Science, and is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Law, Western Sydney University. Judge Altobelli has authored four books on family law and dispute resolution as well as 50 articles in Australian and International Journals. Judge Altobelli is involved in a number of Court and external committees dealing with Judicial Wellbeing and Judicial Education. Congratulations, Judge Altobelli!



AFCC members **Bill Eddy** (San Diego, California), **Annette Burns** (Phoenix, Arizona), and **Kevin Chafin** (Kansas City, Missouri) coauthored *BIFF for Coparent Communications: Your Guide to Difficult Coparent Texts, Emails and Social Media Posts*. The third book in the BIFF Conflict Communication series, *BIFF for Coparent Communications* is especially devoted to parents dealing with issues in and after separation and divorce as they coparent their children, complete with instructions in the four-step BIFF method and numerous examples for dealing with coparent situations. BIFF stands for Brief, Informative, Friendly, and Firm and is the bedrock of programs led by Bill's training and consulting firm, High Conflict Institute. Learn more and purchase the book [here](#). Congratulations, Bill, Annette, and Kevin!



Anne R. Lucas, MA LMHC, AFCC member from Kirkland, Washington, is the new President of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals after serving as President of both King County Collaborative Law and Collaborative Professionals of Washington. She works as a Divorce Coach in Collaborative Practice, assisting couples in creating healthy divorce options and post-divorce relationships, a mediator helping resolve family disputes with creative solutions, and a parent coach for post-divorce families. She was a co-founder of the Seattle Collaborative Law Training Group, a frequent presenter at the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals forums, and, along with Nancy Cameron, developed and taught the IACP Leadership Academy in 2013. She is an adjunct faculty member of Saybrook University since 2010 where she has taught in the master's counseling program. Congratulations, Anne!



Andrew Schepard, AFCC member from Hempstead, New York, is an inaugural recipient of the AALS Section on Family and Juvenile Law Achievement Award. Andrew is the Siben & Siben Distinguished Professor of Family Law, Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University. He is the founding Director of Hofstra University's Center for Children, Families and the Law. Professor Schepard is the editor emeritus of the *Family Court Review*, the research and policy journal of AFCC. He is the author of *Children, Courts and Custody: Interdisciplinary Models for Divorcing Families* (Cambridge University Press 2004). Professor Schepard is an elected member of the American Law Institute and a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation. Professor Schepard is a 1972 graduate of Harvard Law School, where he served as Articles Editor of the *Harvard Law Review* and as a Law Clerk to former Chief Judge James L. Oakes of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Congratulations, Andrew!



Susan Yates, AFCC member from Chicago, Illinois, has been named the ADR Professional of the Year by the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR). ACR presents several awards at its annual conference in recognition of superior performance in and outstanding contributions made to the field of alternative dispute resolution. The Professional of the Year Award was presented to Susan “in recognition of her commitment and contributions to the alternative dispute resolution community, both in Chicago and across the nation, and her talent and skill in helping parties resolve their disputes outside the courtroom, along with her dedication to teaching improved mediation effectiveness.” Congratulations, Susan!

