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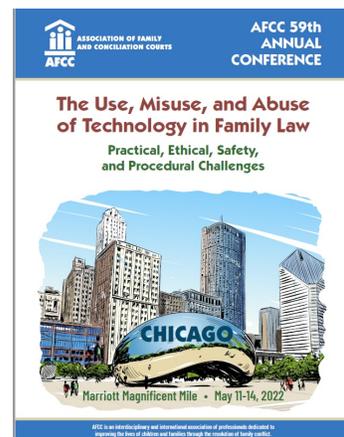
AFCC 59th Annual Conference
Chicago, Illinois
May 11-14, 2022

AFCC 59th Annual Conference

The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Technology in Family Law: Practical, Ethical, Safety, and Procedural Challenges

May 11-14, 2022

Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile



The AFCC 59th Annual Conference Portal Is Live!

The conference portal is your source for information about the AFCC 59th Annual Conference!

- [Register for the conference online](#)
- [View the full conference schedule](#)
- [Read the conference program brochure](#)
- [Browse sessions for each day of the conference](#)
- [Review continuing education information](#)
- [Read about AFCC conference sponsors and exhibitors](#)

Need more information? Contact us at afcc@afccnet.org or 608-664-3750.

AFCC Banquet, Entertainment, and Live Auction

Join us for dinner and a show! After the conference sessions on Friday, May 13th, a lively evening awaits you. Enjoy the company of your AFCC colleagues at the banquet, where

Thank you to our annual conference sponsors!

Diamond Sponsors



attendees will share laughs, courtesy of Greg Schwem. Greg will also conduct a live auction of a few very special items, including vacation condos in Maui and Kauai! Want a preview? [Watch the comedy stylings of Greg Schwem](#) now!

Reserve Your Hotel Room Now!

Make your hotel reservation today for the best availability. The Marriott Chicago Downtown Magnificent Mile is offering a special rate to AFCC attendees of \$229 per night for single/double occupancy. **We encourage you to make your reservation early because rooms frequently sell out before the room block is released.** [Reserve online](#) or call 1-877-303-0104 and request the AFCC special rate.

Conference Registration

Register now for the AFCC 59th Annual Conference! Choose the best method of registration for you:

- [Register online](#)
- **Email your registration form to afcc@afccnet.org**
- **Call the AFCC office** to complete your registration over the phone (608-664-3750)
- **Mail your registration form and payment** to 6525 Grand Teton Plaza, Madison, WI 53719
- **Fax your registration form** to 608-664-3751

AFCC is waiving all cancellation fees for the conference due to any health and safety-related issues.* We hope this makes your decision to register for the conference easier in these uncertain times.

[Register Now!](#)

*Simply provide notice in writing to AFCC at afcc@afccnet.org by Monday, May 9, 2022.

Exhibit with AFCC!

Sign up now to exhibit at the AFCC 59th Annual Conference. Fewer than 10 spots remain -- don't miss your chance!

Promote your business to hundreds of AFCC conference attendees! [Read the prospectus](#) and contact [Gina Wentling](#) to sign up.

Conversation Corner: Tom Altobelli A Column Throwback to the AFCC Newsletter of the 90's

After 25 years in legal practice, **Dr. Tom Altobelli** was appointed as a Federal Magistrate in 2006. When the Federal Circuit Court was established, he became a Judge of that Court and then in 2020 was elevated to the Family



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**Online
Parenting
Programs**

15th Symposium on Child Custody

When a full house becomes parenting apart, change in the family can become all-consuming. While most families can successfully navigate these changes, some struggle due to a variety of issues, including substance misuse, parental alienating behaviors, intense partner violence, and other challenges. How can family justice professionals help when children are shuttled from place to place or left in the care of high-conflict families? Join AFCC in Las Vegas as we examine the challenges of parenting apart.

AFCC is accepting proposals for 90-minute workshops. All proposals must be submitted using the online form by April 29, 2022. See reverse side for submission instructions. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Online dispute resolution
- Parenting coordination
- Psychometric testing
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Culture and parenting time
- Services for self-represented parties
- Interventions for mother or father cases
- Building resiliency
- Court-involved therapy
- Cost-effective evaluators
- Effective videoconferencing techniques
- Mediation for unrepresented parents
- Conducting virtual evaluations
- Hybrid dispute resolution processes
- Voice of the child in high-conflict cases
- Prevention programs for divorcing parents

Call for Proposals
Submissions are due
April 25, 2022.

AFCC Chapter

Court of Australia. Before his appointment, Justice Altobelli was accredited as a specialist in the areas of Family Law, Children's Law and Mediation. He was also a member of the Executive of the Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia. He has authored four books on family law and dispute resolution, as well as 50 articles in Australian and international journals. Justice Altobelli is the Case Management Judge for three registries of the Court in his state and has served on the AFCC Board of Directors since 2018.



Conferences

Louisiana Chapter Annual Conference
March 18, 2022
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Colorado Chapter Webinar
March 29, 2022
Being held virtually

Massachusetts Chapter Webinar
April 8, 2022
Being held virtually

Colorado Chapter Spring Conference
April 8, 2022
Being held virtually

AFCC: How did you get involved in the practice of family law?

Tom Altobelli: After law school, in the early 1980s, I started out as an in-house lawyer for a bank, and after three years decided that I just wasn't me. I moved to a country general practice firm and simply fell in love with family law so as the years went by, that is where I focused. [Read more.](#)

AFCC is Accepting Proposals for the AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody!

Submit your proposal for a 90-minute workshop to be presented at the AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody!

AFCC 15th Symposium on Child Custody
From a Full House to Parenting Apart
November 10-12, 2022
Planet Hollywood Resort and Casino

AFCC strongly encourages including presenters representing diverse perspectives. University faculty members are encouraged to involve students as co-presenters.

Please read the [Call for Proposals](#) for full details and submit your proposal using the [online form](#). The deadline to submit is **April 25, 2022**.

Ask the Experts: 5 Ways Microaggressions Cause Harm & 5 Ways to Fight Back

Lindsey Sank Davis, PhD

Microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, negative racial [or ethnic, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, anti-Semitic, etc.] slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).

Microaggressions subtly reinforce existing societal disparities in power and privilege. A verbal microaggression might be an insult or a joke about a particular marginalized identity. Behavioral microaggressions include non-verbal communications, like ignoring members of a particular marginalized group or creating physical space from them. Environmental microaggressions include exclusionary legal policies, lack of representation in visible roles in government and media, and forms or procedures that are not inclusive of certain identities. Though microaggressions may vary widely in both content and form, they tend to express one or more of three overarching themes: devaluation, invalidation,

or exclusion/rejection. [Read more.](#)

Nominate a Colleague for an AFCC Award!

AFCC acknowledges the accomplishments of leaders in family law by presenting awards annually at the AFCC Annual Conference. Read below to learn about the awards. Nominate a colleague to recognize their contributions to the field!



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

Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award, sponsored by the Oregon Family Institute, recognizes outstanding research and/or research achievements in the field of family and divorce. [Submit a nomination!](#)

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

Awards will be presented at the AFCC 59th Annual Conference in Chicago at the AFCC Luncheon on Thursday, May 12, 2022. Nominations will be accepted online through **March 21, 2022**. Submit yours today!

AFCC Webinar Corner

DE&I Clients and "-Isms": Recognizing and Addressing Discriminatory Behavior

Chioma Ajoku, JD, PhD, ABPP; Kelly Browe Olson, JD; Jacqueline Font-Guzmán, PhD; and Hon. Linda Fidnick

April 7, 2022 | 4:00-6:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on April 6, 2022 at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

[Register now!](#)

*This program will include one hour of panel discussion, followed by one hour of discussion by all participants. The program is free to attend and includes a certificate of attendance, but **you must register.***

What Do Judges Want?

Hon. Dianna Gould-Saltman and Hon. Herman Walker, Jr.

April 12, 2022 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on April 11, 2022, at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

Apart from statutory requirements, what do judges REALLY want when they decide child custody cases? What is helpful and NOT helpful to the Court? Two family court judges discuss the most essential information to provide the Court to best get your points across, and the best ways to make your point, whether you are an attorney, child custody evaluator or other participant providing information to a family court.

Judge Dianna Gould-Saltman sits in a dedicated family trial court in Los Angeles. She was appointed to the court in 2010, having practiced family law for 25 years. She is a Judicial Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers and the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

Judge Herman Walker, Jr. sits in Superior Court in Anchorage, Alaska; a general jurisdiction court. He was appointed to the court in 2015. He was a trial attorney that litigated family law, criminal defense and personal injury cases. He is a Judicial Fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers and is a Board member 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!](#)

Authentication Issues with Digital Evidence in Child Custody Cases

Nicholas Himonidis, JD and Moderator: Larry Braunstein, JD

May 19, 2022 | 1:00-2:00pm Eastern Time US/Canada

Registration closes on May 18, 2022, at 9:00am Eastern Time US/Canada.

[Register now!](#)

Chapter News

Frank Davis, PhD, AFCC member in Berkeley, California, is the new president of the California chapter of AFCC. Frank has over 20 years of clinical experience and has worked in various mental health settings with various populations. He provides custody evaluations, brief focused assessments, family mediation, parenting coordination services, consultation to attorneys, and expert witness testimony for court referred children and parents involved in post-divorce or separation high conflict scenarios. Frank provides co-parenting therapy for parents in disagreement about parenting practices and philosophies, and intensive re-unification for children and families wherein resistance and/or refusal dynamics are

at play. Congratulations, Frank!



Member News

Judge Philip Marcus (Ret.), AFCC member from Jerusalem, Israel, reports that the Center for the Study of Child Development, in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Haifa, Israel, has developed an innovative program for judges of the Family Court and the Juvenile Court. The Interdisciplinary MA Program in Child Development for Judges is designed to expand and deepen judges' knowledge, providing them with the tools for handling complex proceedings involving children. The program is part of a trend for interdisciplinary studies, which create a bridge for professionals between their main disciplines and child development. [Contact Philip](#) to learn more.



Ronnie Beach, EdS, AFCC member from Gladstone, Missouri, is the 2022 recipient of the Ellen Cowell Award, presented by the Missouri chapter of AFCC. The award is given to professionals who demonstrate leadership, initiative, creativity, and dedication. In the award announcement, Ronnie was hailed as "a regional 'Godfather' of mediation" and "an impressive and charismatic community leader." Ronnie is the owner of Conflict Resolution Services, Inc., an entity specializing in dealing with high conflict families. He teaches graduate and undergraduate classes in conflict resolution, mediation and social psychology, and conflict management. Congratulations, Ronnie!



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

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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Ann Ordway, JD, PhD

ASSOCIATE EDITOR:
Gina Wentling





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Conversation Corner: Justice Tom Altobelli

A Column Throwback to the eNEWS of the 90's

After 25 years in legal practice, Dr. Tom Altobelli was appointed as a Federal Magistrate in 2006. When the Federal Circuit Court was established, he became a Judge of that Court and then in 2020 was elevated to the Family Court of Australia. Before his appointment, Justice Altobelli was accredited as a specialist in the areas of Family Law, Children's Law and Mediation. He was also a member of the Executive of the Family Law Section of the Law Council of Australia. He has authored four books on family law and dispute resolution, as well as 50 articles in Australian and international journals. Justice Altobelli is the Case Management Judge for three registries of the Court in his state and has served on the AFCC Board of Directors since 2018.



AFCC: How did you get involved in the practice of family law?

Tom Altobelli: After law school, in the early 1980s, I started out as an in-house lawyer for a bank, and after three years decided that I just wasn't me. I moved to a country general practice firm and simply fell in love with family law so as the years went by, that is where I focused. I practiced in the southern highlands of New South Wales, just a couple hours from Sydney, then returned to Sydney after two years and established my own practice in the suburbs, where I stayed until 2002. But I also grew a bit restless, so I accepted an academic position and was associate professor at the University of Western Sydney between 1996 and 2006, where I principally taught family law and ADR while I maintained my full-time practice – I had a good staff supporting my practice! Then, in 2006 I was appointed to the bench as a Federal Magistrate in the Magistrates Court, which was later rebadged, and I became a Judge of Federal Circuit Court. In 2020, I was elevated to the Family Court. In 2021, the two courts merged into Division 1, the old Family Court, and Division 2, the old Federal Circuit Court.

AFCC: You've been a member for decades, long preceding the AFCC Chapter in Australia. How did you first learn about AFCC?

TA: In 1997 I attended the World Congress San Francisco, a collaboration with AFCC's Annual Conference. Alastair Nicholson was the Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia, Chair of the World Congress, and President Elect of AFCC, so it was well attended by Australians. It was a fabulous conference, and San Francisco was a wonderful place and the interaction with people from all over the world was spectacular. While World Congress dealt with a wide range of family-related issues, my real focus was family law and I sensed that AFCC was a great fit to expand knowledge and network. Now, ask me about my second AFCC experience.

AFCC: Okay, what about your second AFCC experience?

TA: It was unforgettable. I came to New York for AFCC's Fall Conference in 2001. I arrived the evening of September 10. My plan was to attend the conference and continue to the World Congress in Bath the following week. The morning of Tuesday, September 11, I was jet lagged, and up early, walking the streets of midtown Manhattan, and I was just a couple of miles from the World Trade Center when it was hit. I felt as though I was experiencing the entire world ending on the ground around me. It was a surreal experience and the physical signs of what transpired were everywhere. I am still triggered at times when I smell a dust in the air which is reminiscent of the dust of the buildings collapsing. It took me five years until I picked up a map to see how close I was to the Towers.

AFCC: You also found yourself in the middle of one of AFCC's great controversies. Can you share a bit about that experience?

TA: One of the great benefits of being an AFCC member and engaging in conferences and reading *Family Court Review* is that it makes me a more sophisticated consumer of social science knowledge and therefore helps me to craft better outcomes for the children whose cases I hear. I love the robust debate about issues related to my work, particularly to children because it leads to greater understanding based on what everyone brings to the debate, and AFCC does that particularly well. So, I agreed to participate on a plenary panel in Chicago in 2012, with Alan Schore and moderated by Robin Deutsch about attachment, and overnights and young children. Many, but not everyone, disagreed vehemently with Dr. Schore's position. Unfortunately, people lost sight of the issue and it turned into something intensely personal. While I found that to be unbecoming behavior for family professionals, by participating with an open mind I became far more sensitive to the issue and a more sophisticated consumer of the expert evidence that I receive in court.

AFCC: As an Australian, the AFCC International activities are a long distance. What do you gain from being a member?

TA: AFCC is such a great facilitator of learning, of building professional relationships, and personal friendships. We have a lot to share in Australia, and we also have a lot to learn, and so much at a conference happens at a grass roots level in the conversation with the people you meet. I also love the egalitarianism of AFCC. Everyone is there because they are passionate about their

work. Whether they are a Chief Justice or whatever role they play, everyone seems approachable. And when I am in Australia, *Family Court Review*, the recorded webinars, and other resources on the website are amazing. There are times that the work takes you into a dark place and where you must make a decision but don't necessarily have information or evidence to inform it. The absorbed knowledge and wisdom I often get from AFCC helps me at these times.

AFCC: What is the role of pizza in your life?

TA: Ha! I am of Italian descent - my father was the only one of his three brothers to emigrate to Australia from Italy. And my wife and I love to entertain, so we bought a pizza oven. It is quintessentially Italian, and we often entertain outside around the oven. It is casual and fun, there are limitless choices in terms of casual dining. We lived on a property where we had the space, and it was logical to use the wood growing on the property, and we even used olive oil from the olive grove next door!

AFCC: When did you meet your wife?

TA: I met my wife in 1981 at church, just after I graduated. We got to know each other, fell in love, and married in 1983. During the first years of our marriage, we did foster care for about 10 years. We had 25 kids in care over different periods of time, including a long-term placement of four siblings. We got to practice on other kids before we had our own, and for a family lawyer it gave me an insight into some of the things I would ultimately encounter in practice, such as a father who did not show up for a visit or called it off at the last moment. This left those four kids absolutely devastated. Then, in 1992, our first child was born, and he was married just last month. Our second is to be married at the end of March. I have the privilege of performing both services.

AFCC: Is there anything else our members should know about you?

TA: I love to learn, and I am a lifelong learner. I recently completed a graduate diploma in Divinity and undertaking a graduate diploma in Chaplaincy. I am planning for a new career after mandatory retirement from the bench at age 70. I have a calling to go into a ministry that involves working with people who have problems, which is what I am doing now, but in the future, I will not do it from the highly formal structure of the bench. The most rewarding part is helping people going through relationship breakdowns. I like seeing good outcomes for children, and occasionally transformation happens. Not often, but it happens, and that makes up for a lot of the other things that I see.



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5 Ways Microaggressions Cause Harm & 5 Ways to Fight Back

Lindsey Sank Davis, PhD

Microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, negative racial [or ethnic, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, anti-Semitic, etc.] slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Microaggressions subtly reinforce existing societal disparities in power and privilege. A verbal microaggression might be an insult or a joke about a particular marginalized identity. Behavioral microaggressions include non-verbal communications, like ignoring members of a particular marginalized group or creating physical space from them. Environmental microaggressions include exclusionary legal policies, lack of representation in visible roles in government and media, and forms or procedures that are not inclusive of certain identities. Though microaggressions may vary widely in both content and form, they tend to express one or more of three overarching themes: devaluation, invalidation, or exclusion/rejection.

Research on microaggressions points to several significant ways that microaggressions can be harmful:

1. **Microaggressions may negatively affect the mental health of the target person(s).** Microaggressions can be as painful to experience as overt discrimination (e.g., verbal abuse using slurs), if not more so due to their insidious nature. Microaggressions aren’t just annoying or rude; they have been associated with short-term spikes in anxiety and stress, as well as long-term increases in anxiety, stress, depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and deficits in self-esteem. A microaggression in a public setting, like a classroom, courtroom, or workplace, can be particularly damaging, especially if no one steps up to address what has happened.
2. **Microaggressions can contribute to physical health problems, most likely due to chronic activation of the body’s stress response system.** People who report experiencing microaggressions rarely report that they experience one or two in isolation; typically, they experience them frequently and eventually become vigilant for the next slight. This level of persistent stress appears to affect physical health, just as other

chronic stressors do. Research has demonstrated significant positive correlations between the frequency of microaggressive experiences and an array of health issues, including sleep disturbances, fatigue, pain, general health problems, and health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking).

3. **Exposure to microaggressions can negatively affect academic and work performance.** Repeated exposure to microaggressions can contribute to the development of a hostile workplace or learning environment. Microaggressions can derail concentration, as affected individuals (and even witnesses) may continue turning the event over in their minds, questioning if what they experienced was an act of bias and wondering what to do about it. This can cause an individual to mentally disengage from whatever task they are working on or whatever information is being presented to them. Microaggressions also help to create the conditions that lead to *stereotype threat*, which is a cognitive-behavioral process triggered by situations in which an individual fears reinforcing a negative stereotype about their group. Research has shown, for example, that when prevailing stereotypes indicate members of a particular identity group are weak in a certain area, members of that group will often underperform in that area when exposed to reminders of their stigmatized identity. Microaggressions prime that association with the stigmatized identity, and therefore may trigger the performance deficits associated with stereotype threat.
4. **The impact of a microaggression may be far-reaching.** When someone hears about or witnesses a microaggression that is not directed toward them, they may experience vicarious traumatization themselves. This effect will likely be strongest among those who share the stigmatized identity with the target, but it can also affect others who are not members of the targeted group. For example, when microaggressions go unaddressed, others in that space may get the message that no one will stand up when *their* identity is the one that is targeted (e.g., if racial comments are ignored, then homophobic or sexist comments will likely also be ignored). Furthermore, a concept especially important for family court professionals is *emotional contagion*. Family members often experience a great deal of pain when they hear of microaggressions toward their loved one. This can spread the harmful impact throughout the family unit.
5. **When we enact microaggressions in the presence of our clients or colleagues, the quality of our working relationships suffer.** If we engage in unchecked microaggressions towards our clients or colleagues, it can damage their sense of safety and security. Microaggressions can alter your clients' and colleagues' perceptions of you, your trustworthiness, and your level of professionalism. Additionally, if we fail to recognize that our clients or colleagues experience microaggressions, we miss a significant part of their lived experience.

Fortunately, the research also points to some tips for minimizing the harm caused by microaggressions:

1. **Look inward.** To reduce the likelihood of enacting microaggressions in your everyday life, examine your own personal biases and the stereotypes you may be endorsing. Being aware of potential biases is a necessary (but not sufficient) precursor to managing microaggressions.

2. **Expand your horizons.** Consider your social circles, your workplace, the media you consume. Are diverse voices represented? Exposure to diverse personal narratives, even through engaging with fictional characters, allows us to take others' perspectives. This, in turn, develops our sense of empathy for people who may differ from us. Enhanced sensitivity allows us to slow down and consider the potential impact of our words or behaviors *before* we act.
3. **Apologize when you make a mistake and commit yourself to doing better in the future.** We are all guilty of committing microaggressions, though we may vary with regards to frequency and severity. I will be the first to acknowledge that I continue to catch myself (or someone else catches me) enacting microaggressions from time to time, despite my best efforts. If someone offers you feedback that indicates your words or actions were experienced as a microaggression, apologize as you would if you accidentally hurt someone physically. Reflect on what happened and what assumptions might have driven your behavior.
4. **Speak up.** If you witness a microaggression, use that opportunity to stand up for the person(s) targeted and to educate the person who enacted the microaggression. Often people are unaware that what they've said or done could be perceived as hurtful or offensive. The goal is to challenge the microaggression without being accusatory—when we feel attacked, we are not receptive to corrective input. Attempt to address the microaggression in a manner that preserves the safety of those involved. Try not to put the onus on the target, who is likely already experiencing stress in that moment.
5. **Support and validate those who experience microaggressions.** Sometimes speaking up in the moment is not the best move. When speaking up could jeopardize someone's physical safety or financial security, or when the setting does not permit speaking up, take steps to support the person(s) experiencing the microaggression. Listen to how they're feeling and what they need from you.

As family court professionals, it is important that we not only monitor ourselves and address others' behaviors as needed, but we also must investigate this idea in our evaluations to understand how they may be impacting the issues at hand. Consider hypotheses related to microaggressions when working with parties with marginalized identities, and ask about experiences of bias or discrimination, from the subtle to the overt. Keeping these tips in mind is a first step towards creating greater equity and inclusion in our family court systems and beyond.

Lindsey Sank Davis, PhD, received a doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, a master's degree in forensic psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and a bachelor's degree in Psychological and Brain Sciences from Dartmouth College. Dr. Davis teaches undergraduate and graduate psychology courses at William James College, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Harvard University. She is a licensed psychologist practicing in Massachusetts and New York and has testified as an expert witness in juvenile and family courts.

