



AFCC eNEWS

BI-MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
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JUNE 2008

AFCC eNEWS Requests *your* Feedback Win \$25 Toward AFCC Pamphlets or Publications

The *AFCC eNEWS* will begin monthly publication in July 2008. With more than 11,000 subscribers worldwide, we would like to know what you like about it and how it might be improved. The survey should take no more than a few minutes to complete and all respondents can enter a drawing to win \$25 toward AFCC pamphlets or publications. The winner will be announced in the next *AFCC eNEWS*. To begin the survey, please click the link below.

[Begin survey...](#)

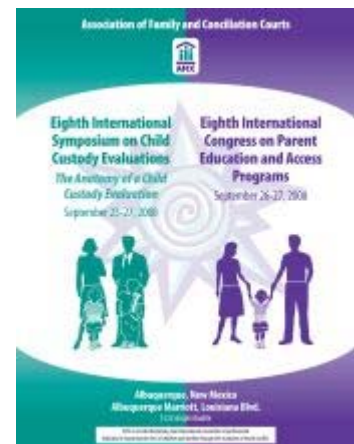
AFCC Eighth International Symposium on Custody Evaluations and Congress on Parent Education Online Registration and Scholarship Application Available

Online registration is now available for AFCC's *Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations*, September 25-27, 2008 and *Eighth International Congress on Parent Education and Access Programs*, September 26-27, 2008 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. AFCC will hold the *Symposium* and *Congress* simultaneously, maximizing networking opportunities for both audiences. The conferences take place at the Albuquerque Marriott, located in the heart of uptown Albuquerque and overlooking the Sandia Mountains. AFCC has secured a special room rate of \$122 per night for a single or double room. Please click the link below for online registration, hotel reservations and the scholarship application.

[More information...](#)

AFCC 45th Annual Conference Domestic Violence Plenary Session Audio Online

AFCC's 45th Annual Conference audio provider, Digital Conference Providers, Inc., is offering free online access to audio for the plenary session, **Domestic Violence in Separating Families: Debates and Dilemmas in Developing Appropriate Parenting Plans**. The session features experts Nicholas Bala, LL.M., Kingston, ON; Peter G. Jaffe, Ph.D., London, ON; Janet R. Johnston, Ph.D., San Jose, CA; and Jennifer McIntosh, Ph.D., North Carlton, Australia. *AFCC eNEWS* subscribers are invited to listen online by clicking the link below. AFCC members have access to all plenary sessions from the conference for free download in the [Member Center](#) on the AFCC Web site.



AFCC Eighth International Symposium on Child Custody Evaluations

September 25-27, 2008
Albuquerque Marriott
Albuquerque, New Mexico

AFCC Eighth International Congress on Parent Education and Access Programs

September 26-27, 2008
Albuquerque Marriott
Albuquerque, New Mexico
[Conference Brochure \(PDF\)](#)

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

46th Annual Conference
May 27-30, 2009
Sheraton New Orleans
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.afccnet.org

AFCC Trainings

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ASK THE EXPERTS

Top Ten Tips for Reducing Work Stress

AFCC eNEWS asked AFCC members Ellie Izzo and Vicki Carpel Miller, co-directors of the Vicarious Trauma Institute in Scottsdale, Arizona, for their top ten tips for reducing work stress. Click the link below to view their tips to reduce your brain strain.

[Read their top ten list...](#)

AFCC NEWS SPOTLIGHT

Member Profile, Jenn McIntosh, Ph.D.

The *AFCC eNEWS* occasionally features an article from AFCC's quarterly print newsletter, the *AFCC NEWS*. This issue features an interview with Jenn McIntosh, AFCC member from North Carlton, Australia. Jenn is the Clinical and Research Director of Family Transitions, a child and family psychology and mediation practice in Melbourne, and holds adjunct positions as Associate Professor at La Trobe University and Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne. She serves on the Editorial Board of the *Family Court Review* and was a plenary presenter at AFCC's 45th Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia.

[Read now...](#)

NEW! AFCC PAMPHLET OF THE MONTH

My Mom and Dad Are Getting a Divorce

AFCC eNEWS subscribers are invited to download AFCC's popular pamphlet *My Mom and Dad Are Getting a Divorce*. This pamphlet helps young children understand about their parents' divorce. AFCC offers eleven different pamphlets including two in Spanish. Many court programs, private practitioners and direct service agencies distribute AFCC pamphlets to clients or make them available in their waiting room. The pamphlets are priced at .25 each and just .20 each for orders of 1,000 or more. A description of each pamphlet and ordering information can be found at AFCC's Online Shopping Center at www.afccnet.org.

[View pamphlet \(PDF\)...](#)

RESEARCH UPDATE

Parenting Styles Predict Children's Adjustment

Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.

We have reviewed a number of articles regarding what the authors refer to as parenting style. For example, we have examined the importance of an authoritative parenting style in a number of previous reviews. This study goes much further. Here, the authors examine the parenting styles of both parents and compare their styles to the adjustment of their children.

[Read more...](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Parenting Coordination

Matthew Sullivan, Ph.D.

October 23-24, 2008
Kansas City, Missouri

Parenting Coordination

Christine Coates, J.D.

December 8-9, 2008
Baltimore, Maryland

Father Involvement

Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D.

December 10-11, 2008
Baltimore, Maryland

AFCC Chapters

Texas Chapter Annual Conference

October 3-4, 2008
South Texas College of Law
Houston, Texas
www.texasafcc.org

Arizona Chapter Annual Conference

January 30-February 1, 2009
Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa
Sedona, Arizona
www.azafcc.org

California Chapter Annual Conference

February 6-8, 2009
The Mark Hopkins Hotel
San Francisco, California
www.afcc-ca.org

Florida Chapter Annual Conference

February 27-28, 2009
Renaissance Hotel
Tampa, Florida
www.afccnet.org

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It's Time: African Women Join Hands Against Domestic Violence

The Law Court's Education Society of British Columbia, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association and the National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa are proud to announce the release of the documentary *It's Time: African Women Join Hands Against Domestic Violence*. The documentary depicts the desperate plight of women and girls in South Africa and Ethiopia, and the groundbreaking efforts of the women working to change the system. Click the link below for more information and to view a trailer from the documentary.

[View Web site...](#)

FEATURED VIDEO INTERVIEW

Mediate.com Featured Interview with Clarence Cramer

Courtesy of Mediate.com

Clarence Cramer has been director of the Family Services of the Conciliation Court in Pinal County since 1977, a divorce and family mediator since 1980 and a mediator trainer since 1983. Clarence is a longtime AFCC member and serves on the Association for Conflict Resolution Family Section Advisory Council and is the Chair of the Family Section Ethics Committee. In this hour-long interview, Clarence talks candidly about the history of family mediation, mediation and domestic violence, using dogs as tools in mediation and much more.

[Watch now...](#)

FEATURED ARTICLE

Resource for Custody and Visitation Decisions in Cases of Domestic Violence

A new article titled *Child Custody and Visitation Decisions in Domestic Violence Cases: Legal Trends, Risk Factors, and Safety Concerns* is available online. The author, Daniel G. Saunders, Ph.D., AFCC member from Ann Arbor, Michigan, describes the major legal and social trends surrounding custody and visitation decisions and the social science evidence supporting the need to consider domestic violence. Click the link below to read the article.

[Read now \(PDF\)...](#)

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ABOUT AFCC eNEWS

AFCC eNEWS is a bi-monthly e-newsletter published by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC). *AFCC eNEWS* provides professionals with time sensitive and up-to-date topics including case law updates, research innovations and international news.

[AFCC eNEWS archive...](#)

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Editor:

Dave Vigliotta

AFCC welcomes your comments, questions or feedback. Please email the editor by [clicking here](#).



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AFCC Member, Jenn McIntosh, Ph.D.
 North Carlton, VIC, Australia

The *AFCC eNEWS* occasionally features an article from AFCC's quarterly print newsletter, the *AFCC NEWS*. This issue features a member profile interview with Jenn McIntosh, AFCC member from North Carlton, Australia. Jenn is the Clinical and Research Director of Family Transitions, a child and family psychology and mediation practice in Melbourne, and holds adjunct positions as Associate Professor at La Trobe University and Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne. She serves on the Editorial Board of the *Family Court Review* and was a plenary presenter at AFCC's 45th Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia.

How did you become interested in studying the impact of divorce on children?

I had been researching high-risk child protection issues, when I took a side step into a study of supervised contact centers. I devoted a year of weekends observing children of extreme conflict divorce, studying what helped their security with the visiting parent to recover after traumatic, usually violent parental separations. From the corners of those contact centers where I sat, a strong interest grew to better understand these children's needs and build interventions that might prevent some of the damage that I saw. Around that time, I heard AFCC member Jan Johnston give an incredible, insightful lecture on the topic, a tour de force, which sealed my interest in divorce research. Finally, watching my nephew deal with a messy separation continues to motivate me at the deepest level.

How do you juggle being a researcher, clinician, teacher and trainer?

Having my own clinical dilemmas to grapple with continually informs the research questions I want to ask, and keeps my training and supervision of others honest. It's an important juggle and when I get it right, each part of my work benefits from the other aspects.

What area of your work do you enjoy the most?

Writing crosses them all and is the most satisfying part of my work. I enjoy making complex assessments, data or theoretical ideas user friendly and accessible to multiple professions.

Can you briefly explain your research into child responsive and child inclusive models of intervention?

I had the privilege of putting together the current edition of the *Family Court Review* on child inclusion and my research is outlined there for those interested. In a nutshell, I have been exploring the impacts of assessing children's emotional responses to parental conflict and discussing this with their parents in therapeutic conversations within the mediation process. In court and community settings, we have found short to medium direct effects on parental acrimony, cooperation and emotional availability, and tertiary effects on children's emotional well-being. We are currently following up our main sample of families, four years after mediation, and wait with baited breath to see what effects have washed away and what longer term differences might remain in families' post separation adjustment.

What are the major developments in the mediation models that comprise your research?

I suppose my mediation epitaph will read "she included children." I have worked hard over a decade to integrate early child inclusive mediation ideas with what we now know about restoring attachment security and gaining therapeutic leverage with parents in conflict. It's a complex intervention, which can be very powerful.

What are the greatest challenges in the field of family mediation?

There is a strong need for better knowledge and application of developmental theory, especially the nature and importance of children's early psycho-emotional development. I attribute most of my new grey hair to those moments when I read mediation agreements or lawyer driven settlements clearly shaped by adults' sense of entitlement and devoid of developmental insight.

What area of research do you see yourself conducting ten years from now?

I would like to drill down on the developmental sequelae for pre-schoolers and infants of various parenting plans and parenting styles post divorce. I want to see the precision and scope of attachment research applied to the divorce field.

What important lessons can those working in family courts in other countries learn from our Australian colleagues?

Australians have acquired hard earned experience with large scale reform of our out-dated family law structures. We have been through an incredible decade of transformation, with significant reforms to legislation and practice. Some changes came before the evidence was really there, so we anxiously wait to see what real difference this revolution will make to children and parents. Other lessons? Well, we're also adept at picking a good wine.

What lessons have you brought home to Australia from colleagues in other parts of the world?

Aside from Bob Emery teaching me how to pick a good whiskey, I continue to be inspired professionally by my overseas colleagues. I admire the empirical rigor and the quality of review and debate that goes on in the United States, and like the honesty and depth inquiry of many United Kingdom researchers.

What is your first memory of AFCC?

Seattle (AFCC's 42nd Annual Conference, May 18-21, 2005)! Big, fun, welcoming, rigorous, long plane trips... very worthwhile.

What do you like most about AFCC?

The connections with others, the *Family Court Review* and Peter Salem's sense of humor.

What is the difference between AFCC and other organizations that you associate with?

AFCC is a living, breathing network of people, responsive to members, empirically grounded and multidisciplinary. There is a strong sense of camaraderie and generosity, as people join together to share the complexity of this work. And it's fun.

What is the favorite part of your work?

Enabling a "psychological truce" between warring parents, motivated by a new understanding of their shared role in creating a healthier pathway for their child. The favorite part of my research is when SPSSX (our statistical program) churns through our data and shoots back some thought provoking findings, that I can make sense of!

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

The very simple things. Favorite down time activities involve long family bush walks with our dogs, baking, teaching my daughter how to rollerblade, playing piano with my son, gardening, good wine, good friends and laughter.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

That my kids are interesting and lovely people. Forward gazing a little, one of my proudest accomplishments would be to facilitate an AFCC conference in Australia!

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Parenting Styles Predict Children's Adjustment

Courtesy of J.M. Craig Press, Inc.

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

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

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

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

Critical Analysis

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

Recommendations

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

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

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

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ASK THE EXPERTS

Vicki Cappel Miller, LMFT, Scottsdale, Arizona
Ellie Izzo, Ph.D., Scottsdale, Arizona

Vicarious trauma is what happens to us when we listen to clients' trauma stories day after day. We listen to these stories, while controlling our empathic response. This puts an enormous strain on our brain, leaving us vulnerable to physical, emotional and spiritual disturbances. Take a look below to read our top ten tips to reduce your brain strain and protect you from the ravages of vicarious trauma.

Top Ten Tips for Reducing Work Stress

1. Schedule your Day Realistically

Your work is not meant to envelop your life. Make sure you have breaks or down time. Go to the bathroom, call a friend, step outside and breathe.

2. Schedule Difficult Clients in Between Less Challenging Ones

Working with difficult clients is draining; don't see them back-to-back. Your tolerance will be reduced and you might get impatient or irritable.

3. Know your Triggers

We all have a personal history, our childhood. Reveal your history to yourself or someone else you trust so you remain aware and conscious of your own personal triggers and impasses. This will allow you to function more competently and professionally.

4. Schedule Exercise, Lunch and Frequent Breaks as Though They Were Regular Work Day Appointments

These balancing activities are as important to you as you are to your clients. Our physical health is paramount to providing clear thinking and ethical practice.

5. Debrief or Talk with Other Professionals in a Safe, Confidential Setting

This is essential for releasing stress from our work and preventing Vicarious Trauma.

6. Take Care of your Health

Schedule check-ups routinely with your doctor and dentist. Don't put it off and set yourself up to worry about some unaddressed physical symptom.

7. Pay Attention to you Visceral Reactions, such as a Gut Kick or Positive Gorney Reflex (Hair Standing up on the Back of your Neck)

These are internal red flags to take notice of something coming from the client that warrants your attention. Ignoring gut level reactions can lead to more complicated circumstances later on in dealing with difficult cases or clients.

8. Stay within your Scope of Practice

Our desire to help can sometimes lead us astray. Don't be afraid to ask for support from adjunct services.

9. Don't Procrastinate and Put Off Completing Important Paperwork or Less Desirable Tasks Required in your Work

Worrying about completing these tasks is far more stressful than completing them on a regular basis.

10. Spend Time in Spiritual Activities that Access the Higher Left Side of your Brain

These are activities that elicit positive emotions such as joy and calmness for you. These activities are different for everyone, but essential for all.

Vicki Carpel Miller, LMFT and Ellie Izzo, Ph.D. are co-directors of the Vicarious Trauma Institute in Scottsdale, Arizona. They have recently co-authored *Day After Day the Price you Pay: Managing Second-Hand Shock* and *The Second-Hand Shock Workbook*. For more information, please visit their Web site at www.vicarioustrauma.com.

Do you have a question that you would like answered by an AFCC expert? Let us know and your question could be answered in the next *AFCC eNEWS*.

[Click here to email your question!](#)

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