

# Newsletter

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

WELCOME NEW  
PRESIDENT!



### MELISSA A BAKER, MS, LMFT

When reading about change, there exists one perspective of advice and quips suggesting that in order to change effectively, one should only look forward. “Never look backwards, or you’ll fall down the stairs” was a safety-focused suggestion from Rudyard Kipling. Being folks who work in a person-centered profession, we are likely to place a higher premium on some level of historical review, be that a comprehensive multigenerational assessment or a brief dyadic behavioral sequence of a recent event. We believe that where we came from informs what we are doing and where we are going, or at least how will we go about getting there.

The forward-looking question of where are we going is paramount in the profession of marriage and family therapy today. Demographically, especially in Arizona, we are experiencing a shift in our field with the retirement of baby boomer MFTs. Geographically, we are as mobile as ever, and seeking connection with like-minded professionals who may work in the office down the road or in a practice across the country. Legislatively, we are facing the possible consolidation of our licensure board with other professional boards as our state moves toward a more business-friendly regulatory environment. Culturally, professional associations are moving away from reliance on membership dues for sustenance and are increasingly focused on value-added content and deliverables. Financially, we face practice threats regarding MFTs’ ability to diagnose and provide Medicare-covered services, and a shifting industry focus toward value-based purchasing. Structurally, we are approaching a second AAMFT bylaws vote that proposes to replace the mandatory two-tier dues format with member choice in network/affiliate participation. Where exactly we are going is not quite clear, but we do have an idea of the obstacles and opportunities in our path.

As we contemplate these issues, we do

### AZAMFT

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### President:

**Melissa Baker**

#### President Elect:

**Justin Smith**

#### Past President:

**Vicki Loyer-Carlson**

#### Secretary:

**Aliza Cooper**

#### Treasurer:

**Ryan Johnson**

#### Director(s):

**CR Macchi, Keith Cross,**

**Lisa Gold**

#### Student/Associate Rep:

**Steven Tyree**

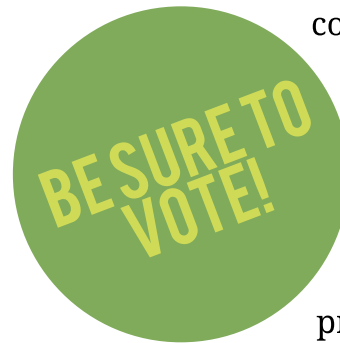


consider where we came from. Most recently, we have had the honor of our association being led by Vicki Loyer-Carlson. Vicki stepped into her role as President when the restructuring discussion was moving to the forefront of divisional focus. She took on this challenge with tenacity, seeking information and keeping us apprised of developments as they arose. Vicki spoke often of a president's responsibility as steward of our membership's resources and interests, and she truly demonstrated excellence in that role. Finally, Vicki always kept an archivist's eye on the rearview; she knows and respects the history of AzAMFT and the immense value of the organization to the MFT community in Arizona through the years. She sought counsel and involvement from those who supported our state through licensure and who helped to grow our profession, and insight from leaders who had served our profession on both the state and national level. We are truly grateful for the wisdom of her leadership.

Currently, we are also closely examining what are we doing. We are appreciative to all the members who took the time to participate in our membership survey. The feedback provided us with valuable insights as to why folks engage with AzAMFT – networking, conferences, staying informed, supporting the profession – and how we could improve our offerings – more continuing education opportunities, local networking events, and increased communication via a listserv, more robust website, or online trainings. This information is beneficial as we continue our strategic planning initiatives and create meaningful contingencies post-bylaws vote. In recent months, we have been working to update our website and social media pages as relevant information arises, whether regarding our Spring Conference activities, sharing information regarding AAMFT's Family TEAM, or advising how AzAMFT and AAMFT provided data to the BBHE to meet a Governor's request for information on licensure. This month, we solicited feedback from our members regarding their

experiences with the BBHE, so that Alan Asher could share these experiences and the perspective of AzAMFT at a BBHE public hearing. It is our goal that these efforts will continue to support our goals of providing the best source of information, support, and networking for MFTs in Arizona.

So, how will we go about getting there? Later this month, AAMFT will be distributing ballots via mail and electronically for the bylaws vote. The voting window will close August 15th. We will be updating our website and social media with information regarding the options for restructuring if the vote passes, which are revised from the options presented for the earlier vote. Any questions about the options can be emailed to our AzAMFT leadership, and we will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that may arise.



Be sure to vote!

Additionally, if you have questions about any of the myriad issues facing our profession, reach out to us. We are happy to provide citations for

BBHE information, connect members with resources, and connect members to each other for jobs or supervision opportunities. If you have a desire to actively support our profession, join us on a committee! We are always happy to welcome new faces.

At the end of the day, changes are on the horizon, as they always are. Lucky for us, we work in a change profession, so we have a unique understanding of the need for flexibility in a system. And, we understand the need for strong supports; we know that we are stronger together. If we do just enough looking backward to respect how far we have come, and if we move together, I think we can walk right down Kipling's stairs and out to our bright future as the MFTs of Arizona.

# USING EMOTIONALLY FOCUSED THERAPY FOR COUPLES, INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

CHARISE SCHWERTFEGER  
LMFT

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is quickly gaining popularity among couples in Arizona, as well as around the world. It seems that couples are seeking a solution that gets to the core issue of their misunderstandings, offering long term success. The trouble with some of the other theories and interventions is that many couples are left able to communicate a specific solution, but never really understanding why this issue even mattered to them in the first place or how handle this in the future. They do not understand why they had such a negative reaction or why they weren't able to discuss the importance with their partner, leaving them feeling even more confused disconnected from their partner. EFT offers a new approach to looking at problems within a relationship and delivers an authentic way to discuss these miscommunications in a way that leaves both individual feeling more understood, effective in meeting their partner's needs, and overall more satisfied in their relationship. This model is wonderful when addressing many of the relationship breakers that occur with our couples such as infidelity, various attachment injuries, phase of life changes, infertility, etc.

I have found that EFT pairs nicely with concepts of mindfulness. I often work with each individual, in a couple's session, to understand what emotions they are feeling, how those emotions may feel in their body, as well as how those emotions manifest into behaviors. This requires a lot of slowing down, as we often move so quickly in life from one situation to the next, that we do not

fully understanding what just happened or how we feel about it. Once each partner understands a little bit more about themselves, they are often ready to consider what their partner is going through as well as how they affect their partner. In this realization I often see a great increase in the empathy for the relationship. Many individuals are able to then shift from a "Me" mentality to an "Us" mentality where they are now working towards a common goal. As couples continue to listen to each other, see their impact on the relationship, as well as begin to feel heard and understood, the relationship takes on a deeper level of safety and openness. It is here that couples begin to connect everyday interactions to those relational needs they may be missing. Once



these connections are made, couples begin to learn new ways to reach out to their partner, rely on each other, and experience acceptance and success within their relationship.

This model also works similarly with families and individuals. In a family setting the same concept of self awareness can be useful in seeing how each person affects the family dynamic, as well as what is making open communication as a family impossible. As members begin to see the interconnectedness in their family they can begin to build the empathy earlier discussed, and learn new ways to effectively listen and share with each other for a common solution. Individuals and EFT is also very effective. Sometimes people see similar negative interactions in many of their relationships: romantic, professional, friendships. When they are able to organize and understand their needs, emotions, and their reactions, they can become better able to clearly communicate with others in a way that results in closer, more meaningful



relationships.

So as you see EFT can be wonderful for any client seeking closeness and connection within their relationships. EFT can be a long process, and as you may have guessed, an emotional process, but the outcomes are life changing and can really lead to lifelong change. There are various trainings offered in the valley if you are interested in learning more about EFT. If you or any of your clients are interested in learning more, I would love to speak with you! There are also numerous resources out there including [www.azeft.org](http://www.azeft.org) which is the website for the Arizona EFT community. You will find all of the trainings offered in the valley here as well as a list of EFT therapists in your area. Some resources for clients who may be interested in learning more about EFT or if it is right for them are: Hold Me Tight by Sue Johnson and Love

Sense by Sue Johnson, There are also various YouTube videos that are wonderful. There is so much to learn about EFT, these are just a few ways to get you started!

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQCg-jC25fo>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyCHT9AbD\\_Y&t=536s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyCHT9AbD_Y&t=536s)

**SUPPORTING ARIZONA'S  
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY  
THERAPISTS, CARING  
FOR ARIZONA'S  
FAMILIES**



## GET PUBLISHED!

*We welcome article contributions from AzAMFT members & supporters. Share your knowledge and experience with articles about an area of clinical practice or practical management, book reviews and news items of interest to our members. Please submit your query or manuscript electronically to: [eab99030@marymount.edu](mailto:eab99030@marymount.edu) & [dmoor@asu.edu](mailto:dmoor@asu.edu)*

*Please be sure to include your name, address, phone number, and email address on your manuscript and in your email. Please do not send your query or manuscript by regular mail. We prefer that you paste your article directly in the body of an email; we may not open attachments. Most articles are about 500 to 700 words. We also like it when writers deliver an entire "package," including a short and/or clever headline and subheads to break up the text. Be sure to include a headshot (.jpg, .gif, .png, or .tif).*

# FAMILIES WITH HIGH LEVELS OF ENMESHMENT

**ZACHARY CUNNINGHAM  
MAS-MFT, LAMFT**

Families are built on the love, intimacy and bonding that is shared between each other. A popular phrase that is used is that “a mom can only be as happy as her saddest child.” Does this phrase entail that a parent and a child’s emotions must be on the same level? When looking closer at family relationships, the relationship between family members are so unique and sometimes irreplaceable. So to create a stronger family the more love, intimacy and bonding the better, right?

Looking at the family

**"FAMILIES ARE BUILT ON THE LOVE, INTIMACY AND BONDING THAT IS SHARED BETWEEN EACH OTHER"**

therapy model of Structural therapy, Salvador Minuchin coins the term “enmeshment”, which has been commonly used in family therapy literature since the 1970’s. Enmeshment is introduced as the concept that families in which personal boundaries have high levels of undifferentiation that a child could ultimately suffer

developing their own independence.

Enmeshment, then, refers to families that exhibit signs of smothering, over-sharing and caring that reach beyond normal concern. Actually, it refers to any relationship in which personal boundaries are violated, unclear or dysfunctional (Shipley & Posner, 2014). Enmeshed relationships can be between parents and children, siblings, coworkers or even friends. Enmeshment can sometimes look like intimacy or love due to the large amount of attachment in the relationship. It is a form of engulfment and control which is disrespectful to the individual by not allowing autonomy. Enmeshment between parent and child has the capacity to be toxic. Enmeshment between a parent and child will often result in over involvement in each other's lives so that it makes it hard for the child to become developmentally independent and responsible for their own choices (Prior, 2011). Overcontrolled children do not learn to feel mastery over their environment and, as a result, come to exhibit fear and anxiety (McGinn et al, 2010).

The causes of enmeshment can be caused by different circumstances. Children

may have parents that become overly protective and get stuck in intervening in the lives of their children physically and emotionally that disables the child to operate independently. Another domain in which enmeshment occurs is a result of family patterns that have been passed down through generations. In result, family and personal boundaries become more and more permeable, undifferentiated, and fluid (Prior, 2011). Common symptoms that are attributed to enmeshment are depression, anxiety, and symptoms that mirror the emotions and feelings of the other member(s) in the enmeshed relationship. Adults who have grown up in enmeshed families may later present, in therapy, complaints about depression, burnout, anger, or resentment in their relationships, or a variety of other issues (Williams & Hiebert, 2001).

Just as much of our knowledge of human individuals and social psychology has come from the observation of animals (e.g. Pavlov’s study on dogs, and Skinner’s work on pigeons). Animal families have been observed to better understand the behaviors of systemic relationships. The “Flo” family, a troop of chimpanzees from Gombe, Tanzania with Flo and her off-spring were studied by Jane Goodall’s. One major finding Jane observed was

that Flint (the second youngest of Flo's children) becomes dependent on Flo long past the age when most chimpanzee children have begun to start fending for themselves (Goodall, 1986).

The birth of Flo's last child, the girl Flame, when Flint is about four, is especially traumatic for Flint as he is replaced as the most favored offspring (Johnson, 1996). Within a couple of months, Flame dies. Flint is taken as the favored offspring once more by Flo. Flo dies of extreme old age when Flint is eight-and-a-half years old (adolescence in the life of chimpanzees) Flint is dead himself within three weeks, refusing to eat or even to be cared for by his older sister Fifi (Johnson, 1996). A systemic point of view may show that it was notion of enmeshment that lead to Flint's death. Flint had become so inseparable from Flo, so undifferentiated from her, that the task of living independently was literally impossible for Flint (Goodall, 1986).

Another study looked at the parental anxiety being projected on a child, against family enmeshment impacting children experiencing anxiety. The study found that that parental anxiety was not associated with child anxiety and parental anxiety did not account for the relationship between family enmeshment and child anxiety. The

findings supported the importance of targeting family environment in therapy and suggested that family enmeshment had negative implications on child anxiety above and beyond possible effects of parental anxiety on child anxiety (Rowse et al, 2016).

Treatment for Enmeshment mostly involves some type of intervention, counseling or family therapy. Salvador Minuchin, the individual that defined Enmeshment as "diffuse" boundaries within a family, fashioned and implemented the Structural family therapy approach to help realign enmeshed boundaries to more clear boundaries that have a normal range. Murray Bowen, another advocate for family therapist and head of the Bowenian family therapy model, discussed "fusion" (similar to enmeshment) as unable to differentiate thought from feeling, such persons have trouble differentiating themselves from others

and thus fuse easily with whatever emotions dominate the family (Fritzlan, 2010). Both Minuchin and Bowen, used interventions to shift the unbalanced boundary or the undifferentiation (the enmeshment or fusion) to a more balanced differentiation of self.

Strategic therapy has also been an effective way to help treat enmeshment in families. Directives, Metaphors or Prescribing the symptom have been Strategic interventions that have been effective ways of treating enmeshment in families. With this family's patterns of dependent enmeshment, the choice of brief strategic therapy modeled for the family a different, more facilitative style of parenting. The strategic approach and techniques can produce rapid symptom removal and also steer the family towards a state of more adaptive functioning (Framrose, 1982). The overwhelming findings from the research reviews and the meta-analytic studies is that family therapy verified supremacy to standard and individual treatments for certain populations when working with enmeshment clients (Markus, Lange, & Pettigrew, 1990).



*The AzAMFT values and promotes lifelong learning, innovative professional practices and research. The mission statement is the strategic plan of AzAMFT. It is dynamic and adjusts to the Association's needs. The Strategic Planning Committee maintains a current working version of the Mission Statement at all times.*

—AzAMFT Mission Statement



 **Friday/Saturday July 14/15, 2017**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> International StoryPlay® Conference Event

**Creative Pathways for Healing Children & Families**

 Embassy Suites – Old Town Scottsdale Arizona

Enjoy a **Playcation & Learn**

CEU's 12 hours – Full details on line – [www.storyplayglobal.com](http://www.storyplayglobal.com)



### About the Conference

**You guessed it!** Upon participant request, we have expanded our one-day experiential conference to a two-day event. Content will demonstrate how **StoryPlay®, an Ericksonian, resiliency-focused, multi-cultural** model of Play Therapy has been used to successfully treat children, adolescents and families who have been psychologically and emotionally impacted by trauma, attachment issues, grief and loss, autism, sensory dysregulation, and PTSD. Join our commitment to healing trauma through resilience. The neuro-importance of metaphor, creativity and play will be central themes throughout.

### Presenters

In addition to Founder and author, Dr. Joyce Mills, presenters will include Certified StoryPlay® Practitioners & Facilitators, all licensed professionals and graduate students, who have completed more than 200 hours of training in the StoryPlay® Model. See video related on YouTube [http://youtu.be/v\\_sEH3CF3Lg](http://youtu.be/v_sEH3CF3Lg).



**Early Bird Special \$195 by April 1<sup>st</sup> ~ Thereafter \$225**  
**Student & Group Rates Available**

Contact Dr. Joyce Mills for information about Sponsorship & Vendor Tables for this conference. [drjoyce@drjoycemills.com](mailto:drjoyce@drjoycemills.com).

The StoryPlay Center (SPC) J. Mills, Provider #02-1.19 approved by the Association for Play Therapy to offer continuing education specific to play therapy. StoryPlay LLC is approved by the California Marriage & Family Therapists—Provider #89333 to sponsor continuing education for MFTs, LPCCs, LEPs, and/or LCSWs. StoryPlay maintains the responsibility for this program. For reasonable accommodations regarding special needs, ADA Accommodations, or grievances Please contact Joyce C. Mills, Ph.D. ~ [drjoyce@drjoycemills.com](mailto:drjoyce@drjoycemills.com)

Co-Sponsored by



**DEANNA MOOR**  
MAS-MFT, LAMFT



**EMILY BECK**  
MAS-MFT, LAMFT



## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS:

Thank you for taking the time to read the newsletter and to be a part of our wonderful AzAMFT Community. We welcome all feedback, comments and suggestions to make the newsletter better for everyone. Send us an email at: [dmoor@asu.edu](mailto:dmoor@asu.edu) / [eab99030@marymount.edu](mailto:eab99030@marymount.edu)

Visit  
**[www.azamft.com](http://www.azamft.com)**  
For More  
Up-to-Date Info,  
Events and to view  
previous editions of  
the AzAMFT  
Newsletter!

**YOUR  
AD  
HERE**