

# AzAMFT NEWSLETTER

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*The new is but the old come true;  
Each sunrise sees a new year born.*

- from "New Year's Morning", Helen Hunt Jackson



### ***Melissa A Baker, MS, LMFT***

Happy 2018! The new year brings with it extraordinary transitions for AzAMFT and opportunities for continued service for our community of systemic and relational therapists. We are excited to share with you what we have on our organization's agenda for 2018.

\* Your AzAMFT board prepared and submitted our application for geographic **interest network** status in December, and hope to hear back from AAMFT's Component Evaluation Committee after their January application review meeting. When we are informed of the results of that meeting, we will update you all on the specifics in an email blast and on social media. As we have discussed in previous communications, after the bylaws vote this summer eliminated the mandatory two-tier dues structure for AAMFT, state divisions around the country have had the choice to dissolve, apply to reorganize as a geographic interest network, or apply to become an independent affiliate

of AAMFT. Since we do not have the MFT population needed for the requirements of an independent affiliate, but we do maintain an active leadership who continue to support our members and profession, we planned throughout 2017 to ensure that we could submit our interest network application during the early application windows. When you renew your AAMFT membership, you will be able to **check the box for Arizona**.

\* Our webmaster, Angela Phillips, has had several meetings with AAMFT in recent months to prepare our **new website** for launch. Our current site has served us well over the years, but has become outdated and does not meet the needs of our members as effectively and efficiently as it could. Therefore, we will be transitioning to a more modern site in early 2018. One feature that we are most excited about is a **community forum**, which will allow for year-round communication among our members. We are thrilled that everyone will be able to share resources and network on an ongoing basis. The rest of the website will include more updated information for Arizona professionals. Once the site is launched, our current [azamft.com](http://azamft.com) page will redirect to our new page. If you are interested in advertising on our new page, please contact Angela.

\* A new offering for 2018 will be an **Arizona MFT Open House** series. In even-numbered months throughout the year, members can host a CE-eligible training event at their places of business. We anticipate that this networking series will provide members with an opportunity to showcase their areas of expertise and their practices. This series will also allow our members in all areas of the state to interact and gain knowledge from each other. Attendance will be **free to members**, and there will be a nominal fee for non-members. The content of the presentation will need to be pre-approved for continuing education via our Program Approval Application process. If you are interested in

hosting an open house, please email [AzMFTOpenHouse@gmail.com](mailto:AzMFTOpenHouse@gmail.com).

\* As a pre-conference session, our Supervision Education Committee will be offering a **6-hour supervisor refresher training** on April 12, 2018. This training will be held at the Desert Willow Conference Center, which is the site of our Spring Conference. Registration information will be found in our conference brochure and on our new website.

\* Our **2018 Spring Conference** will be April 13 and 14, 2018. We are happy to present Dr. James Furrow, who will be speaking on *Building Bonds from the Inside Out: Resources for Resilience in Step families and the Couples Who Make Them*. Our ethics presentation on the 14th will be by Faren Akins, PhD, JD and Vera Akins, JD, on *The Open and Shut Case: Ethical and Legal Considerations for Starting, Changing, or Ending your Arizona Behavioral Health Practice*. Registration information will be found in our conference brochure and on our new website.

2018 is an important year in the history of our organization. We anticipate a transition from the Arizona Division of AAMFT to the Arizona Network of AAMFT. We seek to modernize our in-person and online offerings to our members. We advocate for practice parity for MFTs in Arizona. We strive to be the primary education, training, and networking resource for those practicing systemic and relational therapies in Arizona.

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

# DIVORCE MEDIATION: A PROTOTYPE FOR POSITIVE CO-PARENTING

*Oliver Ross, JD, PhD*

For many, the word “divorce” suggests images of angry interactions, family fractures, exorbitant attorney fees, and months if not years of court battles. Sadly, these images are realities for couples involved in divorce litigation. Statistics show that divorcing couples typically lose a third of their monetary net worth to litigation attorneys and frequently feel physically exhausted and emotionally drained. Statistics also show that the “win lose” mentality intrinsic to litigation increases spousal hostility and tension, and diminishes or even destroys constructive communication – all of which is virtually certain to negatively affect the ability of divorcing couples to positively and healthily co-parent.

Unlike divorce litigation, divorce mediation is a prototype for positive co-parenting. From the outset professional divorce mediators establish the centrality of constructive communication to the process of mediation. They help divorcing couples buy-in to not make disparaging and otherwise inflammatory remarks, and to otherwise speak and listen to each other with respect. Skilled divorce mediators recognize that this centrality of constructive communication not only facilitates resolution of financial issues during the divorce but also opens the way for the mediator to serve as a role model for positive co-parenting both during and after divorce.

During mediation, professional divorce mediators model constructive communication in numerous ways. They listen without interruption to gain a better understanding of the content and emotional underpinnings of what is said. They also listen reflectively, responding when

appropriate to what is said with a short phrase such as “I hear you” or with a quick nod of the head, to let the speaker know he or she has been heard. Skilled divorce mediators also selectively summarize or paraphrase what’s said, to make sure that their understanding is accurate. Here’s an example:

**Speaker:** *Since she left me, I haven’t been able to do anything – I can’t stay on top of the bills, can’t do a good job at work, and can’t really be there for my kids.*

**Mediator:** *I hear you. You said that being a single parent can be overwhelming and emotionally exhausting, and you’re having a hard time doing a good job at work and at home. Is that about right?*

Professional divorce mediators also act as a role model for positive co-parenting when they reframe hostile and otherwise quarrelsome statements by restating them with neutral or positive words, so as to decrease or avoid defensive reactions. For example:

**Speaker:** *He is a terrible father. He never spends any time with the kids.* **Mediator:** *So are you saying that from your perspective the kids are more likely to feel loved if their father spent more time with them?*

Yet another way in which skilled divorce mediators serve as a role model for constructive communication is when they validate or mirror what is said. Validating lets the speaker know that the emotions underlying what is said are legitimate in divorce situations. Mirroring – when the



mediator repeats one critical word or phrase of what is said – not only lets the speaker know that the emotions behind what is said are valid but also encourages further explanation. Here is an example of validating followed by an example of mirroring:

**Speaker:** *She wants all of the benefit of my working hard and making lots of money but constantly complains when I'm late to pick the kids up.*

**Mediator:** *I hear your frustration and want you to know that feeling that way is common and normal in divorce mediation.*

**Speaker:** *He can be so hostile when he talks to the kids.*

**Mediator:** *Hostile?*

Finally, professional divorce mediators function as role models for constructive communication when they demonstrate empathy. Being empathic makes known that having experienced a similar situation, the mediator can relate to how the speaker feels that way. Being empathic is not, however, the same as being sympathetic; it is not feeling sorry or pitying the speaker. It is a demonstration of care and compassion for how the speaker feels. For instance:

**Speaker:** *I just can't believe this is happening. I thought our marriage would last forever.*

**Mediator:** *I can understand how you feel. I felt very much the same when I was going through a divorce.*

All of the foregoing constructive communication skills modeled by professional divorce mediators give divorcing parents firsthand experience with ways to promote positive coparenting. While the adversarial and accusatorial nature of divorce litigation is antithetical to parents having any opportunity to learn how to constructively communicate and

promote positive co-parenting, the cooperative and collaborative nature of divorce mediation opens the way for parents to adopt the constructive communication skills required for positive coparenting.



Oliver Ross has mediated over 2500 Arizona divorces and legal separations. With his backgrounds in accounting, law, business, psychology and mediation, he is uniquely qualified as a mediator.

Dr. Ross earned a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting in 1965, a Juris Doctor degree in law in 1968, a Master's degree in clinical psychology in 1992, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in human behavior psychology in 1994. He was a trial attorney in California for nineteen years and operated a family-owned business for five years. For the past twenty years, Oliver has been Director of Mediation Services for his company, Out-of-Court Solutions®.

Oliver has achieved the prominent status of Advanced Practitioner Member of the Academy of Professional Mediators, and is a past Arizona chapter of the Maricopa County Association of Family Mediators. He has written several articles for professional publications, including, "The Anatomy of Anger," and a book titled, "Situational Mediation: Sensible Conflict Resolution".

**You may contact Oliver at:**

**[www.outofcourtsolutions.com](http://www.outofcourtsolutions.com)**

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## FAREWELL AND THANK YOU!

As Dr. Vicki Loyer (Carlson) steps down from her position as Past-President at the end of 2017, I want to ensure that time is taken to appreciate her presidential term with AzAMFT. Vicki stepped into leadership at one of the most crucial times in the history of AAMFT, as restructuring was at the forefront of organizational discussion. Vicki ensured that Arizona had a face-to-face meeting with Tracy Todd to discuss the rationale behind the restructuring and our options moving forward. Vicki's governance ensured that our state leaders and members were educated about the current events as they were unfolding, and set us up for early application for interest network status.

Personally, Vicki took me under her wing and showed me the ropes of division leadership. I will be forever grateful for her warmth in attending my first AAMFT leadership events together. I am appreciative of her guidance in helping me develop my voice as president of our division. Her determination and professionalism have been an excellent model in both division leadership and professional development.

Thank you, Vicki, for your friendship as well as your service!

Melissa



## ARTICLES WANTED! 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 & 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).*

# ADJUSTING TO ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY SYSTEM

*Alexia Colman, MAS-MFT, LAMFT*

Discovering that a parent or child has been consumed with an illness or disease often puts families in crisis mode. Thousands of questions are going through their minds about what is happening next, who is handling what, or how finances will be enough. During this time, if asked, a therapist may be useful to help the family push through the hardship. Sori discussed the importance of maintaining stability in the family life. That being said, it is necessary to assess for what the family is doing to maintain that constant, for example, making sure the children are still doing their homework, continuing to cook meals, or continuing to do the laundry. Assessing for this stability can give the therapist an idea of what might contribute to the anxiety and fear. Implementing the family's typical day by day activities can alleviate some inconsistencies in the family's life.

Similarly to stability, it is important to assess for what new family roles are assigned to adapt to the illness. The daily tasks still need to be done like cooking or cleaning and if the family member who did that is now ill, others need to step up. Depending on the ages of the family members roles can be delegated fairly, for example, a 16 year old adolescent may have to take and pick up siblings from school to help the family. If the breadwinner of the family becomes ill, then the other spouse may have to pick up the slack financially. It is important that when families are going through hard times like illness, they come together as a strong support system.

External support systems are also important to assess for within therapy. The article suggested that four out of the six factors of family resilience

were support related. Included were, supports from the healthcare team, supports from extended family, supports from the community, and supports from the workplace. Healthcare teams are extremely important for families to get reassurance and realistic hope while having information and assistance throughout the progression. Extended family can contribute tremendously, especially in maintaining stability in children's life. Support from the community can include friends, emotional support, home maintenance, and even financial support which can come as a huge help. Lastly, support from the workplace can allow flexibility and job security which gives the family the opportunity to spend more time together.

Throughout the entire process the family experiences when there is an illness encompassing their lives, it is important to assess for how the topic is being discussed within the family. Whether the illness is terminal or not, information is key, particularly for children. Sori explained being factual and honest about the conditions with a balance of hope and reality allows the children to be less fearful of the "unknown." Keeping the communication clear without secrets, generates a healthier understanding and joins the family to work together.

Alexia Colman graduated from ASU with a Masters in Advanced Studies in Marriage and Family Therapy. She continues to practice as an Associate Level Clinician at Arizona Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic. In addition, to stay connected to the academics in family studies, Alexia is an Adjunct Faculty member at Paradise Valley Community College.





2018 Spring  
Conference

# SAVE *the* DATE

**April 13 & 14, 2018**

**Desert Willow  
Conference Center**  
4340 East Cotton Center  
Blvd. Phoenix, AZ 85040

**Building Bonds from the Inside Out:  
Resources for Resilience in Stepfamilies  
and the Couples Who Make Them**

By: Dr. James Furrow

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**THE OPEN & SHUT CASE:  
Ethical and Legal Considerations for Starting,  
Changing, or Ending Your Arizona Behavioral  
Health Practice**

By: Faren Akins, Ph.D., J.D. & Vera Akins, J.D.



## *Letter From The Editors:*

Happy 2018! 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)



**EMILY BECK**  
MAS-MFT, LAMFT



**DEANNA MOOR**  
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