

Washington Chapter AFCC Newsletter

Issue 13

January 30, 2020

Letter from the President

by: Elise Buie, J.D., GAL

Happy New Year - I hope that your year is going great and you are rockin' out your New Year Resolutions. I have a few resolutions (goals) this year that include the WA AFCC. One of them is that WA AFCC is seeking to engage practitioners around the state - not just here in Seattle. I know it might be a surprise to some but Washington is much larger than Seattle and we have a robust community of practitioners around the entire state who can both benefit from and contribute to the mission of WA AFCC. We will be scheduling coffees in Vancouver, Spokane, Bellingham and the Tri-Cities. I look forward to meeting many practitioners who might be members or who might be interested in joining the WA AFCC. We are also implementing more technology such as Webex and Zoom to allow for members around the state to participate in our Chips-n-Chat program as well as to participate in Committee Work.

I can't wait to see all of you at our Conference on April 24, 2020 at the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle. We have a dynamic team of speakers who will be discussing "Trauma on Trial." There are a few sponsorship opportunities available so contact me if you are interested in learning more about sponsoring the 9th Annual WA AFCC Conference.

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PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE!

<https://wa-afcc.org>

Member Showcase

An Interview with Jennifer Wheeler, Ph.D.
about their new book with co-author Stacy
Heard, JD

by: Dana Dean Doering

Q: How did your book come to be?

A: Stacy and I have been giving a presentation on this topic a few years ago, and were invited to write a book on the topic.

Q: Why did you write it?

In the best interest of all children, we would like to promote a more collaborative process between all of the professionals who work in family law.

Q: What was something entertaining about the writing of it?

Our dogs joined us for a writing retreat, and we all enjoyed an unexpected snowstorm that weekend (although I am pretty sure that the dogs enjoyed it more than Stacy and I did!)

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2020 Annual Conference Trauma On Trial

An AFCC Interdisciplinary Program
by: Dana Dean Doering

I am excited to see you all on Friday, April 24th. This innovative full-day program is designed to deconstruct the dynamics of trauma; detail how to use legal and mental health strategies to advocate when trauma is on trial, within essential roles, during the judicial process; and demonstrate trial skills and evidentiary objections in cases when the science behind trauma is at issue.



Our speakers, Allison C. Williams, JD, MS, of Williams Law Group, and Carla J. Cooke, EdD, of Sanctuary of Hope & Healing, LLC, will focus on the importance of trauma in the forensic/custody evaluation process and in the courtroom.

Registration Now Open

Join us for the WA AFCC Annual Conference, April 24, 2020, at the Washington Athletic Club, Seattle.

Early Bird Pricing Available
[Event Information & Registration](#)

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2020 Annual Conference (Cont...) About the Speakers:



Allison C. Williams, JD, MS, founder of [Williams Law Group](#), is a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, is certified by the New Jersey Supreme Court as Matrimonial Law Attorney, and is certified by National Board of Trial Advocacy in Family Law.

An international speaker in the field of child abuse and neglect evidence and trial practice, Williams has appeared on the Katie Couric show and has published articles in the Huffington Post addressing issues of child maltreatment. She has been selected among her peers as one of the Top 100 Super Lawyers in New Jersey and has been voted by her clients as one of New Jersey's Best Lawyers for Families.



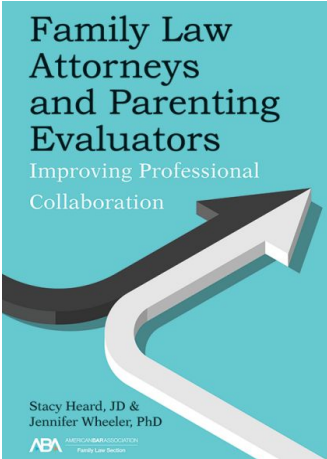
Carla J. Cooke, EdD, is a licensed psychologist in New Jersey and served as the assistant commissioner for child welfare reform efforts in the state. She is the founder and director of [Sanctuary of Hope and Healing](#), which is a counseling center, refuge, and place of restoration.

Dr. Cooke conducts forensic evaluations typically for child welfare agencies, is regularly successfully certified as an expert in parental fitness, and testifies during court proceedings. She has passionately advocated for the inclusion of trauma-informed forensic evaluations and has spoken on the topic for professional organizations locally, nationally, and internationally.

Member Showcase (Cont...)

Q: What is the value it provides?

The book provides concrete information and how-to's, for both attorneys and mental health professionals, including sample forms, templates, and basic steps for promoting a more collaborative professional relationship.

	<p>Family Law Attorneys and Parenting Evaluators: Improving Professional Collaboration</p> <p>By Stacy Heard and Jennifer Wheeler</p> <p>Giving attorneys insights and practical guidance on how to improve the collaboration between attorneys and parenting evaluators, this book examines all aspects of this collaboration. Looking at when this interaction occurs to the processes that can and should be implemented to prepare effective parenting plans for clients. The book also provides definitions of the roles of mental health professionals in parenting evaluations and the applicable laws and standards for each professional.</p> <p>Click here to purchase</p>
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Stacy Heard and Jennifer Wheeler, AFCC members from Seattle, Washington, have written a book, published by the American Bar Association, titled [*Family Law Attorneys and Parenting Evaluators: Improving Professional Collaboration*](#). Congratulations, Stacy and Jennifer!



Stacy Heard & Zulu



Jennifer Wheeler & Patrick

Letter from the President (Cont...)

Also as we start the New Year and the New Decade, I thought I would share an article I wrote last year for the ABA (American Bar Association) on self-care as I think all professionals doing this important work with families must consider self-care as part of their daily routine.

Happy January and Happy 2020 and Happy Decade. We got this - the more we can come together in learning and collaboration, the stronger our WA Families will be. Please email or call me directly if you have any questions, concerns, ideas, thoughts or just want to chat....I can be reached at eliseb@elisebuiefamilylaw.com or 206-389-1623.

Civility Encourages Gentleness: Self-Care for Clients (and Attorneys)

ABA Article by Elise Buie, J.D., GAL

When I meet with family law clients during a particularly challenging divorce, I stress that behaving with civility is closely tied to taking better care of yourself. You set the tone for the relationships you have with others. People will match the energy you give off. That includes your ex. When you have a difficult ex, you may feel compelled to act difficult, too. After all, this person has caused you quite a lot of grief, so why should you not give that troublemaker a taste of his or her own medicine?

If you are combative, you are likely to receive a combative response. If you act civilly, however, you are more likely to receive a civil response than if you acted like a jerk right out of the gate, though you have no guarantee.

So why bother trying at all? Because in my experience as a family and matrimonial lawyer, I have found that even if your ex persists in being a jerk despite your refusal to engage, it is still possible to enjoy an amicable relationship. But for that to happen, the change in your relationship must begin with you.

An amicable post-divorce relationship requires you to modify your energy. Put simply, be nice. And no, I am not telling you to be nice for the benefit of your ex. I am telling you to be nice for you. Responding with cooperation instead of conflict will not only improve your life and your ex's, it will also improve the lives of your children.

Research and just plain old experience show that children do not respond well to conflict at home. When parents fight, in addition to feeling uncomfortable in the place they should feel safest, children act out. When you are a happy parent, you foster an environment with positive energy, which means your children are more apt to be positive, too. By working with instead of against your ex, your ex will be happier, making life a lot more pleasant for everyone.

As a parent, you are responsible for offering your children the best possible environment for them to grow up in, so stop blaming your ex for everything. Instead, taking the lead. Begin by working on your cooperation skills. Be proactive and the one to engender civility with your ex. If you are not sure how or think your relationship is too far gone, here are a few practices to get you started.

Change your diet.

Not all calories are created equal. Keeping a natural diet will improve your mental health. When your body receives the correct balance of the nutrients it craves, you will feel better about yourself. When you feel good, you will feel less stressed and bitter and, therefore, will be more conducive to a productive and cooperative relationship with your ex. Everyone wins.

The food you eat, your children will likely eat, too. Remember, we lead best when we lead by example. If your children are happy and healthy, then your ex is more likely to be happy with you because your parenting style benefits your children. Happy, healthy children also tend to behave better because they have more natural energy and are less irritable.

Get out into nature.

When you are cooped up indoors all day, every day, a form of cabin fever will slowly build up within your psyche. You may feel angry and sickly because you are not getting the fresh air you need, ironically making you want to go out even less. Because you spend so much time indoors, you may not realize that the last thing you want to do, venturing outdoors, is the cure within your reach. It is easy to forget that humans survived for thousands of years outdoors as nomads and then as farmers. It is not natural for us to spend all of our time inside.

I am not saying you should never spend time indoors, but I am saying to spend more time than you currently are outdoors. Go for a hike. If hiking is not for you, try swimming. Walk with your friends or by yourself. Do whatever is necessary for you to receive the vitamin D and fresh air you need. When you get in touch with nature, you will feel more at peace and rested, giving you the strength you need not only to deal with your ex but cooperate. It sure beats feeling tired and crabby before you even engage with one another. No good can come of that.

Lovingly move your body.

You don't need to do grueling labor at the gym for 90 minutes a day, every day, to lead an active lifestyle. There are countless ways to get your body moving and not make it a chore. As I mentioned above, you could swim, hike, or walk with friends. If that is not for you, garden, bike, walk the dog, or accompany the kids on their walk to school.

There are countless benefits to exercise, including the release of dopamine. Dopamine is a hormone that essentially makes you feel happier. When you feel happier and healthier, you will be less inclined to argue and more amenable to getting along. Again, your happiness will make your relationship with your ex more amicable, additionally benefiting your children. An added plus to exercising more is that physical activity is a pastime you can share with your children, giving them the release they need.

Less irritable children put Mom and Dad in a better mood, making them less interested in conflict. See a cycle yet?

Rest.

When you are juggling your career with raising a family, you may believe sleep is for the weak. There are only so many hours in the day. Since we already spend about a third of our lives asleep, you may think you have no choice but to cut down on your Zs to maintain order. In actuality, not sleeping makes us weak and feel out of control. When we go to sleep,

our minds recharge so that we become mentally equipped to handle the demanding tasks of tomorrow.

Many people believe that sleep and stress counteract each other: if you feel stressed, it is impossible to fall asleep. But I have found that this is not the case. I like to take stress naps, meaning that when I am overwhelmed, I press the pause button and close my eyes. When I wake up, I feel better. Once my mind has been refreshed, I next address the source of my stress, hopefully preventing the stressful situation from turning into an ongoing one.

Educate yourself.

I tell my clients that education is empowering. It is logical that if you are going through a financially and emotionally stressful process such as a divorce, you should try to understand it as best as you can. That means researching the best practices for going through the divorce process and living as a divorced person afterward. Learn co-parenting techniques and discover ways to adjust to raising children as a single parent. Read relevant books and blogs. Speak to other divorced parents who are already past the process and listen to the advice they offer.

It is useful to be informed about divorce when you are going through one. When you know what is going on in your life and why, you can face obstacles and, more importantly, overcome them. The quantity of educational material available about divorce online should serve as a reminder that many people have survived what you are going through, there are support systems available to help you, and you will survive, too.

The goal is to take care of you and your children, if applicable, to the best of your ability. Being married or a married parent is not the same as being divorced or a divorced parent, so you will need to learn about life post-divorce and adjust to the new landscape. Being educated enables you to achieve independence; you will not have to rely on others, emotionally or logistically. When you have reached this state, you won't feel afraid. And as we all know, it is often fear which causes us to behave in ways we wouldn't usually, including fighting with our ex over trivial matters.

Keep a gratitude journal.

Especially after a stressful event such as a divorce, you may feel tempted to focus on everything that is going wrong in your life. Pessimistic thinking will trickle down into the way you present yourself to others, including your ex, who will pick up on your negative vibe and shoot it right back to you. Instead, be optimistic and do not focus on what is wrong. Focus instead on what is right. Be thankful for the smaller things. And, so that you can visualize every positive aspect of your life and reinforce optimism in your life, write every day about what you are grateful for in a gratitude journal.

Recently, my ex found an engine for my son on Craigslist, and the only time they could see it was at night. At first, I was annoyed because of the late hour, my ex scheduled the appointment. But after I thought about it for a few minutes, I realized that because they were going out, I would be able to go to sleep early. As good a night as I was planning on having, I knew my son would have a better one spending quality time with his father. If you look, you will see there is an upside to everything. The key is to find that upside and then allow it to turn you into a happier person. Trust me, it takes a lot more energy to stay angry and I, for one, love a good night's sleep.

Find joy.

If you want to lead a happy life, it makes perfect sense that you need to do things which make you happy. And no, that doesn't make you selfish. It is OK to treat yourself well for the sole sake of your mental and physical health. Go to dinner, spend time with friends, sit down, and watch a movie—do whatever you like. You deserve happiness as much as anyone else. The best part is, when you radiate joy, you will receive joy in return, especially when it comes from the one you thought took it from you.

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ADR Update by Paul McVicker

Alternative Dispute Resolution is a broad subject many with many facets in Washington. The practice of ADR is always expanding and evolving. Legislation on the subject is often introduced., and sometimes even passed in our Legislature. In the last legislative session, for example, mediation was included in Washington statutes for use in resolving disputes between private contractors and the State over procurement matters.

Major legislation affecting the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution comes up every few years it seems; in 2013 the Uniform Collaborative Law Act passed the legislature and in 2015, the International Commercial Arbitration Act became law in Washington.

This year HB 2806 was introduced in the Legislature by Representatives Goodman, Fey, and Davis. The Bill mandates early mediation in most cases involving Parenting and the establishment of a Parenting Plan. Parties would be required within 60 days of the filing or due date for a responsive pleading to schedule a mediation session to resolve parenting issues. The act includes opt-out provisions for domestic violence or behavioral disorders.

You can review the proposed act on the legislative web pages here: [HB 2806](#) .



PAUL W. McVICKER

The head of Seattle Law and Mediation, P.S. is Paul McVicker. He has been an attorney and litigator for over 40 years. He also has extensive experience as a family law mediator, having mediated hundreds of cases as an Illinois mediator since 2000 and a Washington mediator since 2006.

Admitted to the Washington Bar in 2007, he is an active member and has served as an executive member of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Section since 2008. He is the current chair of its legislative committee and has promoted education and best practices in ADR.

Many thanks to our conference sponsors!



2019 Gold Sponsor

Would you like to become a sponsor for our upcoming 2020 Conference?

Please Contact one of our Conference Co-chairs for more information:

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