

# ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

Edition 17: May 2006

### Special points of interest:

- We welcome your input about the newsletters and encourage you to submit articles and features

## Conference Highlights

### An Update from the AGM and Board Elections:

Kent Taylor has completed his last term as President. The New AFMS President is Geeta Bharadia. Jane Warren is now Vice President, the Secretary is Kim Rieger and Kate Wood is now Treasurer.

### John Haynes Award:

Congratulations to Mary Jane Klein and Patricia Blocksom who were jointly presented the John Haynes Award at the Conference.

**S**ee page 6 for a Summary of the Narrative Mediation for Collaborative Practice Presentation by Gerald Monk and John Winslade

Thank you for attending the conference and the AGM.

Thank you to those that assisted with the conference planning and creating a successful event

### Inside this issue:

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## AFMS NEW Board of Directors

Ms. Geeta Bharadia (President)

Ms. Jane Warren (Vice President)

Ms. Kim Rieger (Secretary)

Kate Wood (Treasurer)

Lynn Parish

Dr. Trevor Neil

Mary Jane Klein

Mr. Michael Porter

Ms. Bonnie Murray

Ms. Shelley Taggart

Kent Taylor (Past President)

# Lunch and Learn Sessions

The location is always the Edmonton City Hall in the Heritage Room. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. and the presentations run from noon until 1:00 p.m. There is a question period and mixer beginning at 1:00 to 1:30. This is a great venue to learn, share information and network with

## Next Lunch & Learn:

**May 10, 2006**

There is no cost and you just need to bring your own lunch.

## A.F.M.S. Address :

#1650- 246 Stewart Green  
SW

Calgary, AB T3H 3C8

**PRESENTS A NEW SERIES OF LUNCH AND LEARN SESSIONS**  
**In Co-operation with Mediation and Restorative Justice Centre**  
**(NO COST / BRING YOUR LUNCH)**

EDMONTON CITY HALL, HERITAGE ROOM  
11:30 AM (doors open) to 1:30 PM  
(Presentation begins at noon to 1:00 PM.)

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

Dianne Dalley (Project Coordinator with MRJC)  
An Overview of Research Project: Assessing Domestic Violence and the Dynamics of Restorative Justice Mediation

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7

Gordon Andreiuk (Lawyer with Laurier Law Office) Summary, insights, funny stories of "Changes in Retroactive Child Support"

### Remember:

**AFMS members  
receive a  
discount at  
Master and  
Scribes  
Bookstore in  
Edmonton**

## From the newsletter Editor– Charmaine Hammond

Spring is here, flowers are blooming, families enjoying the outdoors and planning for their vacations.

In the June newsletter, we are interested in your tips and ideas for parents around how to develop parenting plans around

vacations, children's activities and other issues that arise for families during the summer months. We welcome your thoughts and ideas.

In preparing for the fall, we are interested in hearing from different communities around family mediation, and other news that

will be of interest to professionals and families in the province.

You can contact Charmaine at 780-464-3828.



## Blind spots in Communication

### Rob McBride in the conflict Management E Newsletter April 2006 #75: BLIND SPOTS

Dr. Bob Smith has developed a model with specific tools to discover and eliminate our “blind spots” (Smith). He defines human blind spots as the reactions we experience that create challenges in our ability to think and process. He asks you to think about the times that you have said something in the heat of the moment you wish you could grab the words as they leave your lips or reacting strongly to something someone said or did.

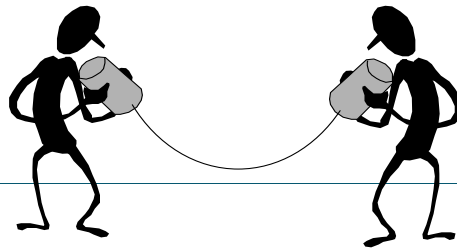
Dr. Smith, author of “Discover your blind spots”, describes six different areas of our brain which process information. Three determine how we view the world while the other three determine how we view ourselves.

He says that there are four ways that we process information;

- 1- Reacting (use of one dominant area of thought driven by impulse, also designed to protect us from danger and situations of threat or risk)
- 2- Responding (use of two or three areas of thought and is triggered after we have had a short time to reflect and introspect upon and process different elements involved in a situation)
- 3- Reflecting (the ability to use four or five areas of thought which is what we achieve when we are focussed on solving

- problems or dealing with challenges)
- 4- Relating (the ability and capacity to use all six areas of thought which is the result when we relate to others while in reflective thought exploring alternatives and creative solutions.

80-90% of our time is spent in the Reaction and response mode where we are using only a small portion of our brain. Our blind spots then impact our ability to respond adequately and sometimes we make poor decisions. To be more effective, according to Smith, becoming more aware of our blind spots and how they affect our thoughts is a great first step.



Book Review by C. Hammond

thoughts on asking questions

### Questions that Work—a resource for facilitators by Dorothy Strachan

This book offers readers an enlightening insight to the art and the science of asking questions. The author provides tools and insight to help facilitators learn how to ask the “right” questions. She then divides the book into different scenarios where one asks questions such as in opening sessions, to build opportunity for reflection, to encourage ownership, to provide a forum for people to share experiences, etc. In these thematic sections, Dorothy provides readers with a range of questions that are effective in these areas.

## Membership Categories with AFMS

**Registered Family Mediator (RFM)** specializing in separation/divorce mediation.

**Registered Family Mediator (RFM)** specializing in General Family Mediation.

**Registered Family Mediator (RFM)** specializing in Family Business Mediation.

**Practicing Mediator** (designation for those who are continuing to gain mediation experience or for whom mediation is a small part of their practice.

**General Member**  
**Student Member**

## ALBERTA FAMILY MEDIATION SOCIETY (AFMS)

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Alberta *family* Mediation Society

*Advancing the practice of  
family mediation.*

*We're on the web—  
look us up!*

### About AFMS

Established in 1984,  
the non-profit  
society provides  
services to family  
mediators.

The organization has a  
part time administrative  
assistant and is managed  
by a volunteer board of  
directors, with  
representatives across the  
province.

The society is dedicated to  
both professional and public  
education regarding family  
mediation.

**"Before we can forgive one another, we  
have to understand one another."  
-- Emma Goldman**

**"Make no judgements where you have  
no compassion."  
-- Anne McCaffrey**

**"Be the change you want to see in the  
world."  
-- Mohandas Gandhi.**

**To make one good action succeed another,  
is the perfection of goodness."  
-- Ali Ibn-Abi-Talib (7th century A.D.)**

**"It takes the efforts of many to  
make impossible feats possible."**

**Author Unknown**

**"you actually get better decisions when  
you work in teams and when you build  
consensus" by Eric Schmidt, CEO  
Google**

**"Emotional intelligences refers to an  
ability to recognize the meanings of  
emotion and their relationships, and to  
reason and problem solve on the basis  
of them. Emotional intelligence is in-  
volved in the capacity to perceive em-  
otions, assimilate emotions related feel-  
ings, understand the information of  
those emotion and manage them" by  
John D. Mayer**

Difficult conversations are those dialogues that we absolutely dread and often result in avoidance or a lot of unnecessary stress. Judy Ringer (in “we have to talk: a step by step checklist for difficult conversations) suggests that preparation and attitude are key in making difficult conversations a little smoother and a less stressful for all involved. The preparation questions to consider, according to Ringer are:

- What is the purpose of the conversation? What are you hoping to accomplish? What would be an ideal outcome?
  - o Make sure you go into the conversation positive and a “supportive purpose” (Ringer, 2006).
- What assumptions are you making about the other person’s intentions?
- What buttons are being pushed? What personal history is being triggered for you?
  - o This will help you prepare emotionally and know that some of the heightened emotional state has to do with you
- How is your attitude toward the situation influencing the perception of it? (e.g. if you think it will be an awful conversation, it is likely that will be the result. If you believe something good will come of it, there is good likelihood this will result)
- What might the other person be thinking of the situation? Is he/she aware of the issues, how do you think it is being perceived? See the other person not as an opponent but as a partner in resolving the issue.
- What are your needs and fears? What might the other person’s needs and fears be?
- Finally, Ringer (2006) suggest that you consider what you each may have contributed to the difficulty.

From here you can apply the four steps to a successful outcome (Ringer, 2006).

1. Inquiry- an attitude of discovery and learning about the other person’s perspectives with an open mind.
2. Acknowledgement- showing you have understood him/her (which doesn’t necessarily mean agreement)
3. Advocacy- Expressing your perspectives without minimizing the other person’s contributions.
4. Problem solving- begin crafting solutions together. Invite his/her point of view and ideas or options and alternatives. Together choose an outcome or solution that will address what it was you came together to resolve.

Getting the ball rolling- sometimes the most difficult part of the conversation is getting it started. Ringer (2006) provides some opening statements that can help the conversation start off on the right foot.

- “I have something I’d like to discuss with you that I think will help us in working together”
- “I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?”
- “I think we have different thoughts about \_\_\_\_\_. I’d like to hear your take on this.”

Reference:

Ringer, J. (2006). We have to talk: a step by step checklist for difficult conversations. Available at [www.mediate.com](http://www.mediate.com) or [www.judyringer.com](http://www.judyringer.com)

# NARRATIVE MEDIATION FOR COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

Presented by  
Gerald Monk and John Winslade



A Two-day Workshop Co-sponsored by the Alberta Mediation Society and  
The Association of Collaborative Family Lawyers

April 20 and 21, 2006

Narrative therapy and mediation start with the assumption that people live their lives in stories. The stories that our clients bring to us as mediators and lawyers tend to be “problem saturated”. Stories are selective and the version of the other person in the story can become particularly narrow. While it is essential that we listen to their full story with empathy, we also need to be listening for a possible “alternate story”. We need to watch for exceptions, contradictions, possibilities and good intentions from which to help to build an “alternate story”.

Timing is important. Clients need the opportunity to tell their story, but not get so embedded that there is no way they can emerge from it. We need to identify elements in their story from which we can infer opportunities for cooperation or intention to cooperate. We also need to listen for the “absent, but implicit” – something that the speaker wishes were different.

Workshop participants were asked to list 15 qualities we would hope for in a partner, and then analyze what it is in our personal culture which would cause us to give priority to these traits. Analyzing the sources of our own “culture” – our ideas of the “ideal” is a necessary step to self-awareness – an important quality for professionals any helping relationship. This self-awareness will reduce our tendency to make culture-based “essentialist assumptions” and look behind to understand the cultural sources of clients’ ideas.

A helpful technique to use in order to avoid essentialist explanations is that of “externalizing” problems. “The people aren’t the problem – the problem is the problem.” We look behind an “angry” person to discover the problem is “the fear”. We then talk about useful ways to deal with “the fear” – mapping the effects, present and future. We need to take the focus off of the person and on to the behavior.

- What is “the fear” doing to you? How is it affecting your life?
- What will “the fear” do if nothing changes?
- Can you take a stand against “the fear”?

With respectful curiosity, investigate the counter-story. Inquire into the possibility of a future counter-story. Help them evaluate the preferences and help them draft the spirit of the counter-story into an agreement.

Given our own cultural biases, and the difficult nature of the work we do, it is admittedly difficult to be “neutral”. Gerald Monk suggests that the goal is to be “even-handed” so that clients leave feeling that they have been listened to and understood. We need to avoid ways of speaking that objectify, label or totalize people and remember that humans as cultural beings are complex, contradictory, ambiguous creatures. The narrative model provides valuable tools to help us with that task.

Mary Jane Klein

## What else is happening across the province?

### **Vitalize Conference**

**"Unleashing Opportunities"**

**June 8, 9, 10, 2006 Edmonton**

**\$120 including GST**

**Many educational sessions to choose from.**

**[www.vitalize@gov.ab.ca](mailto:www.vitalize@gov.ab.ca)**

### **Health And Safety Conference**

**"Health and Safety– A Balancing Act"**

**November 2006**

**Watch for details**

### **CTC Train Canada (Edmonton courses)**

**a) Personal Safety Strategies at Work (May 16/06)**

**b) Communication in Difficult Conversations (June 6/06)**

Instructor: Charmaine Hammond—Contact 464-3828 or

CTC at 1-800-699-4007

### **Send us your favorite links and resources**

AFMS is always seeking to update the website by adding new web links and keeping a listing of its member's favorite resources. Please send us this information as you see fit.

### **Read any great books lately?**

Many of us enjoy purchasing new resources and adding to our resource libraries. The challenge is often "which book do I choose— there are so many." Send us your summary of books that you have read and feel free to submit your summary for an upcoming newsletter.