

# Connections



*in Marriage and Family Therapy*

[www.MiddleAtlanticAAMFT.org](http://www.MiddleAtlanticAAMFT.org)

Winter, 2010

## President's Report January 2010

Happy New Year! Several important events are scheduled for this quarter. We hope that we can persuade you to brave the cold and join us.

Most importantly, our annual conference, co-sponsored by the Middle Atlantic Division and the University of Maryland's Department of Family Science, will take place on **February 5, 2010** at the Loyola College campus in Columbia, MD. Our keynote speaker, **Rick Lavoie**, will discuss effective techniques for achieving therapeutic success with families who have learning disabled children. Rick is widely known for his popular PBS special, *How Difficult Can This Be? The F.A.T. City Workshop*, along with many other books and videos. Our afternoon speaker, **Dr. Brad Sachs**, Psychologist and Marriage & Family Therapist, is the best-selling author of *The Good Enough Teen: (How to Raise Adolescents with Love & Acceptance (Despite How Impossible They Can Be)*. His workshop will present a humanistic approach to helping families manage the developmental anguish associated with teen-parent conflict. Dr. Sachs, a popular, informative and entertaining speaker, has been featured on *The Today Show*, *20/20* and other nationally televised programs. Don't forget to register as soon as possible in order to benefit from the early registration rate of \$175.00. We hope to see you all there!

I have written in the last several newsletters about a call for change in the policies and operating procedures of AAMFT Central. Most of you have received additional information through e-mails generated by AAMFT Executive Director and Board, and through articles and letters in the *Family Therapy Magazine* and the *Psychotherapy Networker*. The Middle Atlantic Division Board, after much discussion, has unanimously voted to hold a **General Membership Meeting on May 7, 2010**. The purpose of the meeting is twofold. First, we would like the opportunity to answer your questions and hear your comments on the recent happenings between some members/divisions and AAMFT Central. Second, in the interest of furthering the transparency and collaboration that so many are asking for on a national level, we want to provide a forum for asking what you would like more of from the division. Please mark the date on your calendars---we will contact you soon with more details.

Again, I hope the New Year brings all of you much health and happiness!

*Wendy Wilcox, LCMFT  
President*

## **Register Now for the Annual Conference!**

### **The Impact of Learning Disabilities: Therapy with the L.D. Family**

featuring

**Richard Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed.**



Including an afternoon workshop

### **When No One Understands: Compassionate Family Treatment of Adolescent Anguish**

with

**Dr. Brad Sachs**



**Friday, February 5, 2010**

**8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

**Loyola College**

**Columbia, MD**

### **The Impact of Learning Disabilities: Therapy with the L.D. Family**

*Richard Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed.*

Current research indicates that parents experience a wide variety of intense and conflicting emotions when endeavoring to deal with children who learn differently. Exploration of these emotions, and how they converge with the child's unique experience, is central to the process of helping families work together on these issues with a spirit of sensitivity, cooperation, and common sense of purpose. Topics to be discussed:

- Parental acceptance of learning problems,
- The impact of LD on siblings and extended family,
- How to teach parents effective ways of communicating with their LD children,
- Techniques to help improve the LD child's social competence, and
- Methods for helping parents improve home/school communication.

### **When No One Understands: Compassionate Family Treatment of Adolescent Anguish**

*Dr. Brad Sachs*

Adolescence represents a profound juncture in the family's development that entails every member striking a new balance between continuity and change, between attachment and separation. This balancing act requires each generation to find ways to grieve for what is being lost in order to cultivate what will be gained. When parents and/or adolescents are unable to resolve the depths of this grief, anguish is the inevitable result, anguish that often expresses itself in the varied symptoms that we are asked to address and ameliorate.

This workshop presents a humanistic approach to the family treatment of adolescents that enables clinicians to intervene with creativity and compassion when developmental anguish brings teens and their parents into treatment. Participants will be able to:

- Identify the nature and stages of the grieving process that adolescents and their parents undergo as part of normal family development,
- Discuss the ways in which an unresolved or incomplete developmental grieving process leads to behavioral symptoms on the part of adolescents and/or their parents, and
- Describe clinical strategies designed to assist families in completing their necessary developmental grief and preventing or ameliorating emotional and behavioral symptoms in both generations.

### **Registration is Quick and Easy!**

Go to [www.regonline.com/2010madaamftconference](http://www.regonline.com/2010madaamftconference)

Early Registration is \$175.00\*

Late Registration – \$195.00\*

\*Important: Social Workers please add \$10 fee for NASW CEU Certificate

**Be sure to visit the MAD-AAMFT website at [www.middleatlanticaamft.org](http://www.middleatlanticaamft.org) for the latest conference details.**

## Legal and Ethical Issues: Things Therapists Must Do To Avoid Trouble

While, on some issues, couple and family therapists have a very clear direction from applicable professional codes of ethics, others fall under gray areas that, instead, rely on therapists making ethical and legal decisions based on sound reasoning. Therapists need to develop both ethical and legal sensitivity to potential ethical and legal issues, in order to decrease their risk in the practice of therapy and increase how they properly maneuver in the therapy room. The following is a list of cautionary guidelines for therapists to follow in order to help reduce exposure to liability, complaints to licensing boards, and unnecessary conflict between therapists and their clients.

**1. Call AAMFT *Before* Taking Action:** As a current member, all AAMFT members are entitled to an unlimited number of legal, ethical, and business consultations. If you are uncertain about *any* ethical or legal decision you might need to make, contact AAMFT *before* you take action. You can contact an AAMFT Ethics Case Manager by telephone at (703) 253-0471 or by e-mail at [ethics@aamft.org](mailto:ethics@aamft.org). You will receive an Ethical Advisory Opinion that is rooted in the foundations of the AAMFT Code of Ethics and over 10 years of ethical opinions rendered by the AAMFT Ethics Committee. Remember that you may be unable to get the help you need, if you make that phone call or e-mail *after the fact*.

**2. Trying To Help the Client Too Much:** It might be easy for you, the therapist, to feel that only you can help your client. Remember that your ability to help your client may be limited by professional boundaries. The caution is to be constantly aware of transference and countertransference issues in any therapeutic relationship.

**3. Poor Record Keeping:** Legislation and ethical standards stipulate that failure to maintain records consistent with sound clinical judgment, the standards of the profession, and the nature of services being rendered, constitutes unprofessional conduct. In addition, from a liability standpoint, it is very important for therapists to include clinical process and treatment planning in clients' records, as it is imperative that you document *what* you are doing with your clients, and *why* you're doing it.

**4. Writing Letters:** It is often said that approximately 90 percent of letters written by therapists should never have been written. Contrary to popular belief, therapists are not required or mandated to write letters on behalf of their clients. This is the one instance when therapists should seek legal consultation prior to agreeing to write any letter or report at the request of a client or parent of a client. More importantly, therapists should always know to whom they are addressing a letter; therefore, "To whom it may concern" letters should never be written. Of course, there will be unique situations when it is appropriate to write a letter or summary report on behalf of a client.

**5. Treating Minors Without Appropriate Consent:** In most instances, it is wise for therapists to obtain the written consent

of **both** parents prior to treating a child. This is a general rule regardless of the marital status of the parents. Some therapists fail to require the consents of both parents, and this can result in an unintended consequence of alienating the parent whose consent was not provided. Ultimately, the rights and needs of *both* parents should be respected when a child is being treated by a therapist.

**6. Protect the Therapeutic Relationship:** Therapists should always remember that each therapeutic relationship is unique. Its power to help lies in the fact that it is like no other type of relationship. The challenge here is that you and your clients may constantly experience a pull towards making the relationship more like a friendship, a social relationship, or a business partnership. It takes constant vigilance on the part of the therapist to maintain the therapeutic stance between therapist and client; but this stance must be upheld.

**7. Failure to Obtain Written Authorization from a Client Before Releasing Confidential Information:** It is absolutely imperative that therapists must obtain authorization in writing from the client *before* releasing confidential information, for every occurrence. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as verbal authorization/consent to release confidential information.

**8. Keep Learning:** The best therapists and practitioners pursue lots of continuing education in order to stay abreast with research and therapy practice as their profession evolves. Doing so will help you:

- Know the evolving standards of care in the field.
- Be more effective as your competencies grow.
- Increase the value of your professional services.
- Expand your network of colleagues (it is not advisable to practice in isolation).
- Keep your career fresh, interesting, and satisfying.

In addition to all of the above guidelines, therapists are wise to always know the general legal and ethical duties that apply to their practice. It is important to keep a copy of state laws, regulations, and ethics codes that govern your practice, readily accessible. Consult colleagues, attorneys or other ethics experts to clarify any duties that are not clear to you. Know in advance exactly what you may and must do in mandated reporting; for example, in "duty to protect" and other emergency situations. Maintain and use up-to-date literature concerning your legal and ethical duties.

### *References*

Benitez, Bonnie R., J.D., (2004) "Bonnie's Top Ten List of Things Therapists Do to Get into Trouble", presented at the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists' 2004 Annual Conference.

American Association of Marriage and Family Therapist, Ethics Committee, "Tips for Maintaining an Ethical Practice".

*Kathleen M.A. Young, M.A., MFT*

## Maryland Chapter Update

### Connect and Create Community.

Need to meet with new colleagues? Interested in conversations about practice ideas? Want to learn about community resources? Crave more camaraderie and encouragement?

Volunteers or teams of volunteers are needed to help coordinate Regional Networking Events throughout the state.

This is a low-stress way to get involved with the Middle Atlantic Division and to have fun, too. So far, some members have successfully coordinated simple ninety- minute get-togethers at local coffee shops. Others have volunteered their homes and offices to encourage community networking. If you are interested and would like more details on how to get involved in your Region, contact Symone Colquitt.

#### Region 1

- \*Allegany County
- \*Frederick County
- \*Garrett County
- \*Washington County

#### Region 2

- \*Cecil County
- \*Hartford County

#### Region 3

- \*Howard County
- \*Montgomery County

#### Region 4

- \*Baltimore City
- \*Baltimore County

#### Region 5

- \*Anne Arundel County
- \*Prince George's County

#### Region 6

- \*Calvert County
- \*Charles County
- \*St. Mary's County

#### Region 7

- \*Caroline County
- \*Dorchester County
- \*Kent County
- \*Queen Anne County
- \*Talbot County

#### Region 8

- \*Somerset County
- \*Wicomico County
- \*Worcester County

#### Region 9

- \*Carroll County
- \*Frederick County

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### Office Space

Furnished, office space to rent part time or full time in Owings Mills for Mental Health providers.

Shared waiting room, free parking, and Internet access available.

Call Merlene at 410-902-5940 or 443-739-4429 or email [thethusong@gmail.com](mailto:thethusong@gmail.com) for more information

## **Middle Atlantic Division – AAMFT Executive Board, 2010**

### **PRESIDENT**

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### **Symone Colquitt,**

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### **Maryland, Joanna Waldman,**

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### **BOARD OF PROF. COUNSELORS & THERAPISTS (BOPC&T)**

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## **Schedule of 2010 Division Board Meetings**

Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup>  
Friday, May 7<sup>th</sup>  
Friday, July 9<sup>th</sup>  
Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup>  
Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup>

All Division Board meetings are open to the membership of the Division. Meetings are held at 9:00 a.m. at the Loyola Graduate Center in Columbia, Maryland at 8890 McGaw Road Columbia, MD 21045. Telephone: (410) 617-7600.

## **Call for Articles**

The Middle Atlantic Division newsletter is always looking for a good story. If you have an experience in your personal or professional life, or know of some news that you would like to share, please send this information to the Division Office.

## **Advertising Rate**

The Middle Atlantic Division, AAMFT newsletter welcomes advertising. Copy must be print-ready. All copy, payments, and inquiries should be directed to the MAD Office. Checks are payable to the Middle Atlantic Division, AAMFT.

¼ page, \$40  
½ page, \$75  
Full page, \$90

Web advertising, \$75 per month

The Middle Atlantic Division, AAMFT reserves the right to reject advertisements that do not meet the general purpose of the organization.

### **Editors**

Michelle Florimbio &  
Carlo Panlilio

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