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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**J. Benjamin Stevens**  
*AAML President*

Since I'm already a few days past Larry David's "statute of limitations" to say it, let me be the last to wish each of you a Happy New Year! I believe that 2024 will not only be a year of change, but also a year of promise for the AAML. Our new Executive Director, [Cindy Tomej](#), CAE, started earlier this week, and she is working to get up to speed as

our last meeting there in 2019, you know how beautiful and serene this resort is, but with their recently completed renovations, it's now even better with additional amenities and restaurants. We hope you'll consider bringing your family as the resort has a wonderful array of activities to entertain everyone from spa lovers to adventure seekers, and this year, receptions, two dinners, and most breakfasts are included in your registration. All events will be held on-site, including a show by a stand-up comedian, actor, author, writer, and producer, who was named Comedian of the Year at The American Comedy Awards.

I also encourage each of

candidates to apply to the Academy now or in the future. This is a unique opportunity for non-Fellows to attend AAML-quality CLE and learn more about our organization. Please [share the information](#) about this first-of-its-kind conference with your friends, colleagues, local and state bars, etc.

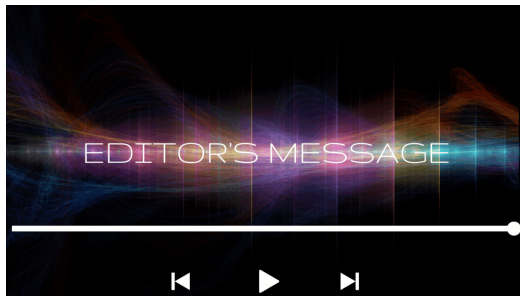
Finally, I want to wish all of our Fellows a year full of prosperity, purpose, and professional success. The Academy is such a special group, thanks to the professionalism, compassion, and dedication of the finest family lawyers in the nation. I am grateful for all your support, and I look forward to our continued growth and success as we

quickly as possible with our new team at Smithbucklin. You will hear more about and from Cindy next month.

Registration is now open for our [2024 Midyear Meeting](#), March 11-15, at the Fairmont Mayakoba in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. If you attended

you to help spread the word about the AAML's [National Family Law Conference](#) in Nashville, May 16-18, 2024. This inaugural seminar was specifically planned to attract attorneys who are not yet Fellows but who should be good

continue to support each other and provide exceptional services to families going through difficult times.



[Play a message](#)  
from Newsletter Editor  
[Rod Firoozye](#)

Check out the [American Medical Association's 10 recommendations](#) to help make the most impactful, long lasting improvements to your health in 2024 and beyond.



[CLICK HERE](#) or above to view  
the latest Fireside Chat with Daniel  
Gray  
Check all past FCs on YouTube!  
[Fireside Chat Playlist](#)

## THE EDITOR'S NOTE

By [Rod Firoozye](#), AAML Newsletter Editor

Happy New Year everyone!

So, if you watched my [Editor's Message](#), I'm not actually preparing for the next Rocky Movie, but "Eye of the Tiger" can signify a state of mind. With the theme of New Year's resolutions, we aim to focus on health and wellness for this month's edition.

Firstly, I'd like to introduce you to our new AAML Marketing Director, Lisa Kamen. With Lisa and her team's support, we hope to enhance the Newsletter in the coming months.

Starting this month, we'll feature a "guest" article from a non-AAML Fellow. Please inform me if you happen to come across similarly intriguing articles.

Also, please send us more pictures of your pets; otherwise, I'll just have to post another [photo of myself](#)!

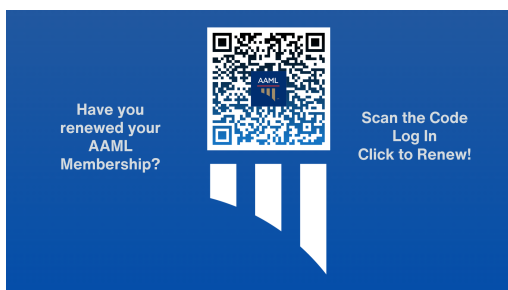
This Month's Videos and Webinars:

- Latest Fireside Chat: [Interview](#) with AAML Fellow David Grey.

- Don't forget to [register](#) for the latest AAML webinar on Jan. 24, 2024: Unveiling the Unconscious: Exploring Implicit Bias in Expert Cross. You can also view past webinars [here](#).

#### This Month's Articles:

- Lisa Ann Sharpe's [article](#): Mindful Mondays: Incorporating Meditation into Your Weekly Routine.
- Steven N. Peskind [article](#): Winners and Losers.
- Our [guest article](#) by Laura Lin and Rachel June-Garber: And the sponsoring witness is ChatGPT: generative AI as an evidentiary tool in court.
- Joani Moberg: Health & Wellness Update.
- Mark E. Sullivan's [article](#): The Survivor Benefit Explained.
- Brian Vertz: AAML Foundation's President [update](#).
- Julie Auerbach's [blog](#): Providing Access to Justice for Those in Need.



### Still Time to Renew

#### *Your 2024 AAML Member Dues*

scan the code to the left or

[CLICK HERE](#)

The Grace Period Deadline is:

**January 31, 2024**



### Latest Webinar:

#### **Unveiling the Unconscious: Exploring Implicit Bias in Expert Cross**

*\$50 for Fellows (must log in), \$75 Non-Fellows*

January 24, 2024

12:00 p.m.-1:30 p.m. CT

[REGISTER](#)

Join Speakers [April Harris-Britt, Ph.D.](#), [Honorable Cheryl A. Joseph](#), and Moderator [Dawn R. Smith, J.D.](#) as they focus on the art of conducting a cross-examination of an expert witness, with a particular focus on identifying areas of bias, and share practical tips to structure your questions to elicit valuable information while maintaining control of the examination. Discover how to develop targeted questions that expose potential bias and that challenge the expert's credibility. A member of the judiciary will also share what is important to the court in looking at bias, and a seasoned custody evaluator will discuss how to avoid the pitfalls of personal and cognitive biases.

This is a *must attend* event for the family lawyer who wishes to learn how to effectively present evidence of bias to the court, including through expert testimony, cross-examination, and supporting documents. This webinar is offered by the Race, Ethnic and Religious Considerations in Family Law Committee.



## UPCOMING NATIONAL EVENTS/MEETINGS

[Webinar - Unveiling the Unconscious:  
Exploring Implicit Bias in Expert Cross](#)

[January 24, 2024  
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m. CT](#)

[AAML National Executive Committee  
Meeting](#)

[January 26-27, 2024  
Oklahoma City, OK](#)

[2024 AAML Midyear Meeting](#)

[March 11-15, 2024  
Playa del Carmen, Mexico](#)

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## UPCOMING CHAPTER EVENTS/MEETINGS

[AAML-SoCal 32nd Annual Institute of Trial  
Advocacy](#)

[Santa Monica, CA  
January 12-15, 2024](#)

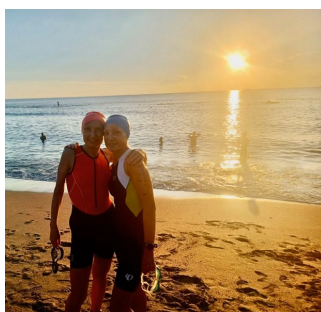
[AAML-VA - Dangerous Intersections with  
Family Law](#)

[Richmond, VA  
January 16, 2024](#)

[AAML-FL 2024 Marital & Family Law  
Review Course](#)

[Bonnet Creek, Orlando  
January 26-27, 2024](#)

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## Mindful Mondays: Incorporating Meditation into Your Weekly Routine

how leveraging the best phone apps can elevate our meditation and mindfulness practices, offering both practical benefits and user-friendly experiences.

In this article, let's explore how leveraging the best phone apps can elevate our meditation and mindfulness practices, offering both practical benefits and user-friendly experiences.

### There's an App for That

Integrate meditation into your routine with apps.

### Let's Review Four to Start

- [Headspace](#) "*Be Kind To Your Mind*" will deliver a new guided meditation to your phone every day. You can set the duration between 3-20 minutes for their daily version.
- [Ten Percent Happier](#) "*Do what it actually takes to be happier*". This app has guided meditations.
- [Calm](#) "*Calm your mind. Change your*



Do you want to fulfill your New Year's resolution of incorporating mindfulness into your hectic legal schedule? In the ever-evolving landscape of family law, we recognize the significance of maintaining balance and mental clarity amidst our responsibilities. In this article, let's explore how leveraging the best phone apps can elevate our meditation and mindfulness practices, offering both practical benefits and user-friendly experiences.

These apps offer meditations for various purposes, including stress reduction, focus enhancement, and emotional balance. The apps range from a quiet meditation, where you can simply set a timer and meditate to intermittent bells, calming ambient noise, or soothing music, to a guided meditation.

*life.*" This app also offers guided meditations with a focus on sleep health.

[Click to read more](#)



## Winners and Losers by Steven N. Peskind

I'm currently reading a book about Adlerian psychology\*. The authors, Ichiro Kishimi and Fumitake Koga, reformulate the teachings of the great 20th-century psychotherapist Alfred Adler. Adler was a contemporary of Freud and Jung who wrote widely on personality theory. One of the principles examined in this book is Adler's belief that one should not look at life as a competition. Ironically, as a trial lawyer,

I find the concept of a competition-free life liberating. On page 80, the authors observe, **"Once one is released from the schema of competition, the need to triumph over someone disappears. One is also released from the fear that says, *Maybe I will lose.*"**

Is there a way to actually do this in family law? I'm as competitive as anyone. I suppose that's what attracts me to the courtroom. But I also see the long-term toxic effects of competition on the soul. As proof, consider the many lawyers in our field either cracking up or becoming mediators by their mid-fifties (if not earlier)

I've observed how some lawyers become a bit crazy dealing with contested matters, exhibiting all kinds of aberrant behavior to cope with their fear and nerves. In the short term, most people weather the storm and are better for it. But in the long term, a chronically competitive mindset is corrosive. What if one could reframe their thinking to overcome fear and anxiety entirely? Here is a mental exercise that will help. Assume you're in a relay race, with the baton being the contested issue to be resolved. Until the client meets and retains you, she is running with the baton. Once you take the case, the client passes...

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**And the sponsoring witness is ChatGPT: generative AI as an evidentiary tool in court**

**by Laura Lin and Rachel June-Garber**  
*from The Daily Journal Corporation*

There are safeguards that can be put into place to protect against AI-created misinformation or misleading the judge or jury as to the origin of the evidence. For example, experts or counsel may be duty-bound to inform the court when AI has been used to generate evidence presented.

Popular generative AI tools can now create complicated written and visual works – including trial exhibits and demonstratives if courts allow it. Lawyers and the general public are increasingly aware of AI's ability to create complex works such as essays, poems, summaries of written works, and detailed images conditioned on certain text descriptions or parameters. AI tools can mimic the style and form of other creative works and are trained on vast amounts of online data relating to existing information, including images, visual art, literature, and other written works. This means that generative

AI can aggregate or summarize existing information and data, or create new analyses or visual representations. The High Court of Delhi at New Delhi late last month considered the admissibility of AI-generated evidence in a trademark case, *Christian Louboutin SAS & ANR. v. M/S The Shoe Boutique*. The famous shoemaker in the Louboutin case argues that its shoes, and the corresponding red soles and other distinctive design elements, have acquired “enormous reputation and goodwill” and have been depicted in popular culture and the media. Drawing from AI, plaintiffs alleged that “the reputation that the plaintiffs have garnered can also be evaluated on the basis of a ChatGPT query.”

**[Click to read more](#)**



**From Chicago to Playa del Carmen**

The Health and Wellness Committee is challenging all Academy Members to step into 2024 with health and movement. **For just the month of February**, track your miles and report them

moving our group from Chicago to Playa, or 2,816 miles. All participants will receive a sticker to add to their favorite water bottle. So, strap on your gear and walk, run, swim, bike or row and report both your miles and your method of travel!

By: Joani Moberg

by emailing [Joani Moberg](#). We'll add up the totals and give weekly updates with the goal of virtually

Let's get moving! Be sure to [register](#) for AAML's upcoming **Midyear Meeting** in March in Playa del Carmen!



**The Survivor Benefit Plan Explained**  
by [Mark E. Sullivan](#)  
Author of the *The Military Divorce Handbook*

One of the most important retirement benefits for uniformed services personnel is the death benefit associated with retired pay. This survivor annuity is known as the Survivor Benefit Plan, or SBP. Whether you are advising a servicemember, a spouse, a former spouse, a military retiree, or a Guard/Reserve member,

it pays to understand the costs and benefits, the rules and exceptions for SBP. This article covers the basic information which a family law practitioner needs to know in a divorce case, in the form of questions which might be asked by a client, followed by proposed answers by the attorney.

**1. Q. WHAT IS THE SURVIVOR BENEFIT PLAN, AND HOW DOES IT WORK?**

**A.** The Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) is an annuity paid to a designated beneficiary of a deceased service member (SM) or retiree. It's a death benefit which enables uniformed services personnel to provide monthly income to surviving beneficiaries.

The beneficiary of one's SBP can be a spouse, former spouse, dependent children, or any other person with an insurable interest.

**2. Q. HOW DO I DECIDE HOW MUCH MY BENEFICIARY WILL RECEIVE? A.**

To determine how much the beneficiary will receive, you must first designate a "base amount," and this is related to your retired pay. The minimum base amount is \$300 per month, but the base may be any greater amount...

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It was a moving tribute, and I've been asked to share the text, which is truncated here for brevity. I look forward to serving for the next two years in hopes of meeting the high

The AAML Foundation remains a strong and loyal ally to the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, now led by my good friend J. Benjamin Stevens and his team.

Happy New Year, Fellows and friends! I'm Brian Vertz, the Fellow who has served as President of the AAML Foundation since November 10, 2023. The baton was passed to me at the AAML Foundation Lifetime Members Luncheon, where we hosted a memorial in honor of my great friend and predecessor, Hon. Anne Lamkin Durward.

standard set by Anne and our predecessors, with the unwavering help of our Executive Committee, Directors, Advisors, Committee Chairs, members, volunteers, sponsors, and donors. I am grateful to all of you.

We welcome our new partners at Smithbucklin, the association management company who will carry out Ben's bold plan for the future.

[Click to read more](#)



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**AAML January  
Newsletter Journal  
Blog: Providing  
Access to Justice for  
Those in Need**

**By: Julie Auerbach**

It will come as no surprise to our fellows that the majority of litigants in family law cases are pro se. Obtaining a divorce decree is off limits to a segment of the population that cannot afford a lawyer to assist them in navigating the complicated and cumbersome process of obtaining a divorce decree. A Harvard study found that many underserved individuals were essentially “Trapped in Marriage” because of the difficulty and expense of obtaining a [divorce decree](#).

This barrier demonstrates a clear lack of access to justice for those without financial means. Further, individuals of color are disproportionately denied access to justice given that many individuals of color live below the poverty line. As we all know, failure to obtain a divorce affects individuals' property and estate rights and prevents individuals from planning for their and their families financial future.

[Click to read more](#)



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*If They Could Talk* is your animal companions' section.



Rod's buddy - Zilla

This month, check out our editor in chief's buddy - Zilla!

Have a [look at the gallery](#) to see this and past newsletter submissions. Send us your furry and non-furry animal's photos and we will post them in an upcoming edition of the monthly newsletter! Please send to: [office@aaml.org](mailto:office@aaml.org)



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**Editor:**  
[Rod Firoozye](#)

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