

Snohomish County Bar Member Monthly Newsletter



SCBA Calendar of Events

September

17th - SCBA Board Meeting



**Congratulations to the first place team in the Annual
SCBA Golf Tournament!**



Chris Null, Bob Conrad, Colby Conrad, and Sam Jensen



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Bar Calendar

SCBA Board Meetings, 5:00 PM

Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81547773463>

Board Meeting Dates:

2/19	7/16
3/26	9/17
4/16	10/15
5/21	11/19
6/18	12/17

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Ads, articles, announcements and changes of address all go to service@snobar.org. Submissions are due by the 15th of the month.



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Hand Over the Phone

by Patrick Songy

When people get into treatment for alcohol addiction, a common component of the treatment is to go through their homes and get rid of every drop of alcohol there. Beer, liquor, wine... even mouthwash. (I can't tell you how many times I've actually had a client get desperate and drink Scope.)

The reason for this is utterly practical. If someone has alcohol in their house and they are an alcoholic... they'll drink it.

If someone has an addiction to drugs, a part of the treatment process is to actually contact former dealers and cut off contact. Typically it even involves getting a new phone just to make sure that aforesaid dealer will not have the means to "check in" on you in the future.

What does this have to do with divorce?

Toxic relationships have incredible power. Some people get trapped in them for years, and cling to them with the same tenacity that an alcoholic might their liquor or a drug addict might their prescription of choice. That same type of brain chemistry can be at work.

The only difference?

A bottle of Vodka can't do a background check and find your new address. You do not share children or a house with your illegal drugs. A toxic relationship is fundamentally different because even if you are ready to quit, there may be another party on the other side that is adamantly unwilling (or maybe incapable) of doing the same.

My standard advice to clients in high conflict divorces is "stop talking to them after they're served with paperwork." If it is a custody case, that typically is followed by instructions to only communicate about the kids and only through a court-verifiable application, like Our Family Wizard or Talking Parents.

Thank you to our golf tournament sponsors!



“Ululani “Lani” Akiona, a divorce and collaborative attorney and mediator at the Everett-based firm Akiona Law, PLLC, has been selected to the 2026 Washington Super Lawyers list for Family Law.”

With over two decades of legal expertise, Ululani combines rare empathy and unwavering integrity to guide clients through complex life transitions. As a champion of collaborative divorce and mediation, she excels at steering families toward peaceful, out-of-court resolutions that protect assets and preserve dignity.

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But there are some situations where the toxic dynamic is so powerful that even those restrictions are simply not enough. The person has to be cut off from their toxic ex the way that a drug addict has to be physically and practically removed from their drugs and go through an extensive and painful "detox" period.

In these instances, the person (like an addict in their early stages of rehabilitation) needs a lot of outside help. Just as people in AA have to admit they are powerless over their addiction and need help, so do people in these types of relationships.

Helpers need to be carefully selected. There are the legal ones (like me), clinical ones (like good therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists) and then the laypeople that have the knowledge, wisdom, and credibility to be part of the process.

In one instance, a woman came to my office with her best friend. As we got to the part of the discussion where we talked about whether or not she could communicate with her ex, her best friend asked my client to hand over her phone. It was an extreme measure, but in that instance, it was the right one. Best friend kept the phone until after the other party was served with papers (which included a restraining order) and we ultimately had to get rid of the old phone number.

Even then, it was a struggle. All in all, it took my client about four weeks to stop experiencing the physical symptoms (panic attacks, insomnia, compulsive behaviors, obsessive thinking) associated with ending the toxic relationship. My client's therapist pointed out that this was almost the same amount of time it took for physical withdrawal from alcohol addiction to run its initial course.

My point in sharing all this is to get you out of simplistic thinking. The easiest thing in the world is to say, "X person should leave Y person. It's so obvious."

Most drunks know they need to stop drinking. And yet...

You cannot be a meaningful part of the solution until you stop treating some of these behavior patterns as moral weaknesses and start treating them as what they are - behavioral issues that require professional intervention. There are certainly people that can be pushed, cajoled, or shamed into leaving a bad relationship, but for many, it truly is the same cycle somebody has to go through in overcoming an addiction.

If you are either in this place or know someone who is the same, I'm hopeful you will think about this and approach the situation with practicality and problem-solving instead of just strong opinions. It could make all the difference in the final outcome.

And if you're the proverbial person that needs to hand over the phone? Take the leap of faith. If good professionals are helping you, they're asking you to do the "scary unthinkable thing" for a reason. Future you (with your future much healthier life and relationships) will thank you.

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We are delighted to welcome attorney David D. Goodwin to our practice.

David earned his undergraduate degree in Political Science from Brigham Young University, graduating in the top 10% of his class. He received his law degree, *cum laude*, from Seattle University School of Law.

Throughout his career, David has represented clients in a wide range of family law matters, including divorce, parenting plan and custody issues, child support, and related family law disputes. He is known for his thoughtful counsel, steady approach, and commitment to helping clients resolve difficult matters with clarity, dignity, and practical solutions.

David is accepting referrals in all aspects of his domestic practice.



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More Than Membership Dues: Investing in Our Legal Community

By Michael Lang

SCBA Board Treasurer

When most of us pay our annual bar association dues, we probably don't spend much time thinking about what happens to those funds afterward. We pay the invoice, renew our membership, and get back to clients, deadlines, hearings, and the everyday demands of practice.

Serving as Treasurer of the Snohomish County Bar Association has given me a different view of our organization. I've come to appreciate that a budget is more than a list of income and expenses. It reflects what an organization values and what it can make possible for its members.

SCBA membership dues help sustain a professional community that connects attorneys across practice areas and at every stage of their careers. Those funds support continuing legal education, communication between the bench and bar, networking, mentorship, community involvement, and the exchange of information affecting lawyers in Snohomish County.

Our CLE programs are one of the clearest examples of that investment. In May, SCBA hosted an in-person ethics CLE featuring members of the judiciary and a representative of the Washington State Bar Association. The program focused on respect and professionalism in the courtroom, including concerns about disrespectful conduct and threats directed toward judges. It was well received and gave attendees a chance to hear directly from members of the bench.

SCBA and its practice sections also develop programs that respond to the practical needs of local attorneys. The Family Law Section has offered well-attended CLEs, and planning has been underway for specialized guardian ad litem training involving both Title 26 and Title 11 matters. These programs provide more than CLE credits. They let members learn from judges, experienced practitioners, and other professionals who understand our local courts.

Our investment in the legal community goes beyond formal education. SCBA's swearing-in ceremony gives us an opportunity to welcome newly admitted attorneys and recognize an important milestone. New attorneys are learning substantive law, local procedures, courtroom expectations, and how to build professional relationships, often all at once. Encouraging them to take part in SCBA programs helps connect them with colleagues and resources that may support them throughout their careers.

The Young Lawyers Division has launched a mentorship-matching program and explored social opportunities for newer lawyers. Many of the profession's most valuable lessons don't come from a rulebook. They come from conversations with colleagues who've handled similar cases and learned from experience.

Professional relationships matter at every stage of practice. Our legal system is adversarial, but it works best when attorneys maintain civility, mutual respect, and open communication. CLEs, mentorship programs, the annual golf tournament and dinner, and family-friendly gatherings -



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give members a chance to build relationships outside the courtroom. They remind us that opposing counsel isn't simply an obstacle in a case, but a fellow professional serving clients within the same justice system.

Our newsletter and other communications also provide value by keeping members informed about court developments, upcoming programs, professional opportunities, and issues affecting the local bar. Timely local information can save attorneys time and help them better serve their clients.

Good financial stewardship also means planning beyond the programs immediately in front of us. Maintaining appropriate operating funds and reserves allows the SCBA to handle unexpected expenses, respond to changing circumstances, and continue providing services when revenue or attendance fluctuates. Stewardship isn't simply about spending less. It's about using resources thoughtfully and making sure SCBA remains stable, flexible, and ready to invest in worthwhile opportunities.

Of course, SCBA's strength can't be measured only in dollars. The Association depends on the time, knowledge, and participation of its members. Attorneys volunteer to speak at CLEs, write newsletter articles, serve on committees, mentor colleagues, attend events, and suggest new ideas. Judges and court personnel contribute their time and perspectives. Our staff and leadership work behind the scenes to coordinate programs, communicate with members, manage finances, and keep the organization moving forward.

Every member contributes to this shared professional community. Paying dues is one part of that contribution, but participation gives the investment its greatest value. Attending a program, introducing yourself to a newer attorney, volunteering as a mentor, speaking on an area of practice, or suggesting a new event can strengthen the SCBA for everyone.

As Treasurer, I take seriously the responsibility to help safeguard SCBA's resources and make sure they're used responsibly. I'm also grateful for the chance to see what those resources make possible.

Thank you for your membership, your participation, and your continued support of the Snohomish County Bar Association. Together, our financial and personal contributions help build a stronger, more connected, and more effective local legal community.



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THE RESILIENT DIVORCE

A 10-Monthly Article Educational Series for the
Snohomish Bar Association Newsletter

Dates: September 2026 through June 2027

From: Jorge Manzanera, Founder and Director of Successful Co-Parenting.

The Resilient Divorce will be a series of ten scholarly, practice-oriented articles explicitly designed for publication in the monthly newsletter of the **Snohomish Bar Association**. Each article bridges the gap between state-of-the-art neuro-psychology—specifically the pioneering positive neuroplasticity and evolutionary brain models of Dr. Rick Hanson—and the daily realities of family law practice in Washington State.

Family law practitioners are uniquely positioned to help clients overcome the often severe trauma of divorce or separation. Under Washington law and Snohomish County Local Rules (including the mandatory and approved parenting seminars like “Successful Co-Parenting”), parents are legally compelled to cooperate and shield their children from conflict.

Severe stress frequently hijacks the human threat-detection systems, making cooperation and collaboration biologically difficult. This series provides family lawyers with both neuro-psychological theories behind high-conflict parenting & co-parenting and highly practical, actionable 'Parent Handouts' that can be distributed directly to clients to help them and their children heal, adapt, and cooperate.

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Mr. Pellegrini is an experienced family law attorney whose practice began in Seattle and has expanded to include continuous case actions in Snohomish, Whatcom, King County, Skagit and Island counties

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Article 1: September 2026

— From Reaction to Response: Navigating Custody Disputes in the 'Green Zone'

Divorce is one of the most intense psychological stressors a human can experience. In family law, attorneys often watch highly intelligent, otherwise rational clients disintegrate into aggressive, self-defeating behaviors during custody disputes. To the family lawyer, these behaviors look like litigation-seeking obsession. To the neuroscientist, they represent a brain that has been violently hijacked by its evolutionary threat-response machinery, leaving its natural homeostatic base and entering what Dr. Rick Hanson calls the 'Red Zone' of chronic reactivity.

Helping clients understand and manage this biological state is the first and most critical step in transitioning them from costly courtroom combat to stable, child-centered co-parenting.

The Neuro-Psychological Model: Green Zone vs. Red Zone

Dr. Rick Hanson explains that the human brain evolved in three distinct evolutionary stages, each associated with managing a core survival need: safety, satisfaction, and connection.

- Safety is managed by the avoiding system;
- satisfaction is managed by the approaching system; and
- connection is managed by the attaching system.

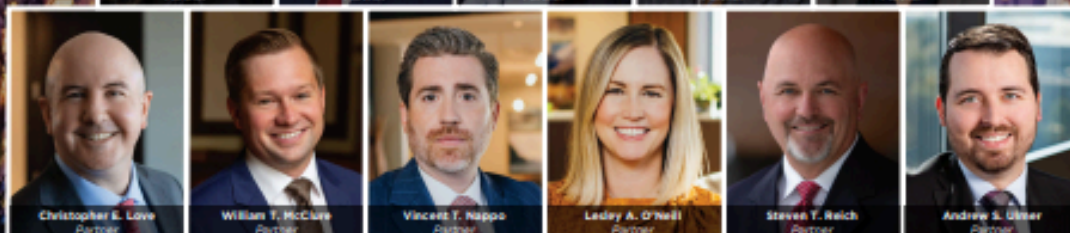
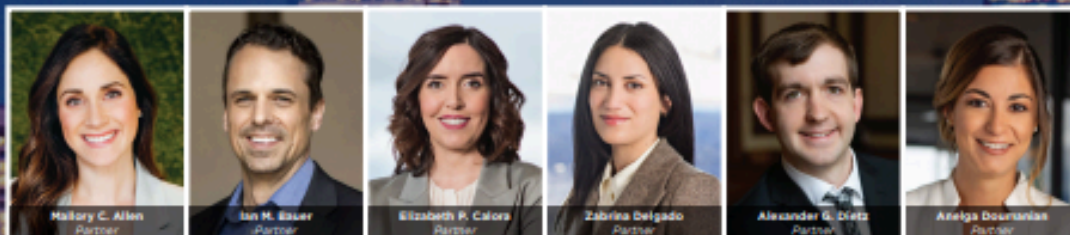
When the brain feels these core needs are being adequately met, it defaults to its home base—a responsive mode of functioning that Hanson calls the 'Green Zone'. In this state, the body repairs, refuels, and recovers from stress, while the mind experiences a general sense of peace, contentment, and love.

However, when a person experiences threat, loss, or rejection—the classic hallmarks of divorce—the brain perceives a severe deficit in its core needs. It instantly leaves its home base and activates the reactive mode, or the 'Red Zone'. In the Red Zone, the body fires up its stress response, outputting energy at unsustainable levels, and deferring long-term physical building and immune maintenance. Psychologically, the mind becomes flooded with fear (to avoid harm), frustration (at missed rewards), and heartache (over broken connections).

Chronic activation of the Red Zone leads to severe consequences, including increased systemic inflam-

Continued on Page 21

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-mation, weakened immune systems, impaired digestion, de-myelinated neurons, and clinical anxiety or depression.

Compounding this is the brain's evolved 'negativity bias.' To survive in ancient environments, the brain evolved to be like 'Velcro for the bad, but Teflon for the good,' rapidly converting painful experiences into enduring neural structures while ignoring positive, safety-affirming experiences. In relationships, negative interactions have far more cognitive weight than positive ones. To maintain relational stability, human interactions require a ratio of at least 3-to-1, or ideally 5-to-1, of positive interactions to negative ones. When a custody dispute triggers the negativity bias, clients overfocus on threats, catastrophize, and overreact to minor administrative delays or perceived slights from the other parent.

The Co-Parenting Challenge and Attorney Guidance A parent operating in the Red Zone cannot effectively co-parent. They view the other parent as an existential predator, misinterpret scheduling delays as deliberate acts of intimidation, and respond with aggressive legal maneuvers. This chronic state of fight-or-flight not only drains the client's financial resources through retaliatory litigation, but it also severely damages the children, who absorb the parental stress and experience their own chronic Red Zone activation.

As family law practitioners, our job is to act as a stabilizing presence—a secure harbor. We must counsel our clients that their intense anger, panic, and defensiveness are natural biological reactions, but that making legal or parenting decisions from the Red Zone is legally and financially disastrous. When a client calls in a panic over a late drop-off or an annoying email, the attorney's first task is to slow down the interaction and help the client transition back to a responsive 'Green Zone' state before responding.

PARENT HANDOUT: The 60-Second Green Zone Shift

Your brain is biologically wired to protect you by treating your ex-spouse's actions as an immediate threat. When this threat system fires up, you enter the 'Red Zone'—feeling hot, anxious, and ready to fight. This biological state is useful for escaping a predator, but it is highly destructive when trying to co-parent your children.

Use this simple, 60-second exercise to shift your brain back to the 'Green Zone' before you make a parenting decision or respond to an email: 1. Turn on the Brakes (0-20 seconds): Take three deep, slow breaths. Exhale slowly, making your exhalations longer than your inhalations. This physically activates your parasympathetic nervous system, putting the brakes on your body's stress response.

2. Find Safety Right Now (20-40 seconds): Scan your immediate surroundings. Notice that you are physically safe in this exact moment. Tell yourself silently: 'I am safe in this moment. My children are safe.'

3. Savor a Positive Connection (40-60 seconds): Think of a warm, loving moment with your child. Hold that image in your mind. Savor the feeling of love and connection. Let it fill your chest.

By doing this, you actively shift your brain out of the reactive 'Red Zone' and back into the responsive 'Green Zone,' allowing you to parent and communicate with wisdom and dignity.

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- Fully Bilingual: Dedicated class dates in both English and Spanish. Help your clients move forward with clarity. Direct your clients to www.SuccessfulCo-Parenting.com or explore our new Courts & Lawyers portal today.

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