

Message from the President August 2020

Dear TAM Family,

In a time of so much uncertainty, fear, anger, suffering, and loss, we may at times feel lost ourselves. We may even find ourselves more isolated, not only due to quarantine, social distancing, and other Covid-related rules, but we may feel isolated socially based on ideological differences that were never quite as glaring as they are now.

Where in the past we may have all felt united through our shared passions and profession, we very well could now find our friends, colleagues, and acquaintances on “opposing sides” and even this phenomenon could vary by issue.

As mediators we know all too well the destruction that can result when opposing parties stop communicating effectively and respectfully, stop listening to one another’s underlying needs and interests beyond their positions, and lose empathy as human beings, seeing the opposition as “the other.”

In our work, we listen to others all the time. But how often do we really listen to *ourselves* with both an objective and empathetic ear?

As human beings, we love our beliefs. We hold them tight and often become triggered when they are questioned or threatened in any way. While beliefs have inherently positive characteristics, like providing us a base for our values, helping us understand where we fit within different groups or societal structures, and keeping us focused on our true intentions, beliefs become risky when they are so hardened, and made so significant, that it starts to impact our relationships with others and more importantly, the relationship we have with ourselves.

While there is very little externally happening right now that is within our control, and we all know too well it is a fool’s errand to try to control other people, the thing we *always* have control over is our inner self and its voice. Those who practice any kind of spirituality, believe the key to growth and transformation resides within and with our connection to a higher source of truth. Now is a time ripe for transformation.

Our powerful minds and thoughts are helpful for running our businesses, accumulating resources, and making logical decisions. However, our thoughts are often blocking our path to inner enlightenment, freedom, and peace. Across cultures, time periods, and different religions, most concur that inner enlightenment comes from a deep and honest relationship with self, a fearlessness to push past one’s comfort zone, a quieting of the mind, and presenting of one’s self to what’s actual so in the now.

If you take an honest self-assessment, now is a good time to look at your beliefs, your stories, and any meaning you may have added to life, other people, and yourself, and ask yourself, how

many of these are actually mine? How many of our beliefs come from other sources without us even being aware?

Amidst all this external turmoil, we all now have an exciting opportunity to take full responsibility for our own inner selves. Our inner voices become clearer, more loving, and free of fear and anger when we can let go of thoughts, beliefs, stories, and feelings that no longer serve us. The more we develop and strengthen our relationships with ourselves and our own integrity, then our inner voice becomes clearer and more steadfast. With an inner voice that's clear, the more peace we experience, and the better peacemakers we can be for others.

As you navigate these challenging times, question everything your inner voice is saying until it aligns with *your* higher truth. Make choices and engage with things that work for *you* and *your* life. Do your own research. Critically evaluate information from all sources. Educate yourself on individuals, organizations, funding sources, and the beliefs that are held by others that are not your own. Practice self-care and do things that fill you up, bring you joy, and restore you to a state of balance.

While you all take this time, the TAM Board is busy working to serve our diverse membership in new and creative ways while simultaneously honoring our traditions. Our conference co-chairs are hard at work designing the first virtual conference for 2021 and finding engaging and dynamic speakers with valuable educational content. The Outreach Committee has reached out to all the DRCs in the state and are also leading the charge on the latest membership benefit through monthly virtual TAM Talks, which will continue thanks to popular demand. Our newsletter editor continues to search for new content and contributions from members interested in sharing. And the newly formed Awards Committee is looking at additional ways to honor and celebrate our members at different stages of their professional careers.

In the upcoming weeks and months, listen to others who think like you, listen to others who do not, but most importantly, listen to yourself.