

# Your Emotional Potential



# How You Show Up Matters

## Foreward

Growing up as one of the little kids in a large family of 9, I was often bewildered, and sometimes frightened, at the exchange of harsh words, hot tempers, and bad behaviors that flew from the hearts and minds of those supposed "adults" in my life. These were the people I was told to love, that family is closest, and always show respect, particularly to our elders. Yet, I struggled with this contradiction, feeling internal turmoil, as I reflected on what I was taught versus what I saw firsthand.

I learned to watch in silence and withhold what I felt and wanted to say. My thoughts and emotions were like a chocolate mess, blending together with no clear beginning or end with messy boundaries. I had my own internal world and buried myself in books. Meanwhile, the comings and goings at our Minnesota farmhouse were strange, unpredictable, and uncertain.

Soon, the older six were off on their own, leaving the three little kids on the farm that was frequently fatherless with a tired, worn-out mother struggling to make ends meet. How very different our high school years were from the prosperous era of my older siblings when Dad was a thriving businessman and pillar of the community.

Filled with despair during my high school years, my world turned upside down when I took that first psychology class as a Junior in high school. My eyes were opened and "I began to see more clearly now" (Wayne Dyer, 2014) on how things could be different. It would still be many years before this truly became evident in how I could make a difference. It is this journey though that fostered the curiosity and courage to write this book for you so that you too can reach your emotional potential and make a difference in how you show up.

*"While we may not be able to control all that happens to us,  
we can control what happens inside us."  
- Benjamin Franklin -*

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"Health doesn't always come from medicine. Most of the time, it comes from peace of mind, peace in the heart, and peace of the soul. It comes from laughter and love.

- *Women Working* -

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*"We are responsible for the way we feel and have, within us the capacity, to change the way we view the events in our lives."*

- *Dr. Albert Ellis* -

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## Chapter One: The Significance of ATTACHMENT Styles

We all have a story, right? Sometimes, we know all the facts to the story...what happened, who did what, and how people reacted. However, we often miss the opportunity to dive deeper to really understand the impact of those events. Oftentimes, we may not know how much they've shaped our present, much less realize how those events continue to shape our future.

I started a journey during my high school years to dive deeper into understanding myself and understanding others. Little did I realize the course that journey would take. Sometimes it was painful, sometimes exhilarating, and sometimes lonely. While I tried to live life to its fullest, embracing new opportunities and experiences, pushing the envelope, I also realized that I was still trapped into old ways of thinking. So back to school I went in 2012. I needed a new journey and decided to pursue a dream that had been put on hold...getting my doctorate degree.

Where this notion came from is not one well understood. Both my parents were high school graduates. Only three siblings out of nine went on to college, graduating and two became teachers while the third went into accounting and financial planning. Certainly, there were not any role models for me to follow when it came to pursuing advanced education. Yet, somewhere out there I had this crazy notion that I could make a difference.

*"People who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do."  
- Steve Jobs -*

While I thought about becoming a medical doctor and did very well in anatomy, I knew that treating the body was not my end mission. Instead, I was fascinated by the human brain. And, what I learned in my graduate days some 30+ years ago proved to be vastly different from what I learned a few years ago. This journey...this study...opened up ever bigger doors when it came to understanding who we are and what drives us.

As Daniel Siegel stated in his Foreward for Louis Cozolino's [The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy](#) (2006), the triangle for well-being includes the mind, the brain, and human relationships. This represents our emotional potential as we now know that positive corrective experiences CAN turn things around.

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The triangle of well-being represents a flow of energy and information. The brain and the central nervous system distribute information throughout the body. The mind regulates how one sees and shapes energy and information. It is through our relationships that energy and information are shared with one another. This triangle approach facilitates our understanding of how humans are shaped from their early experiences well into adult life. This is where an understanding of Attachment Theory comes into play as it provides the foundation for how childhood experiences shape adult realities unless we exercise opportunities to do something different.

Cozolino describes attachment as the "evolutionary masterpiece." Through the mirror neurons in the insula of the brain, pain is felt when another feels pain. The insular part of the brain, deep inside in the limbic region, is believed to be involved in consciousness and plays a role linked to emotion and ranges from compassion and empathy, perception, motor control, self-awareness, cognitive functioning, and interpersonal experience. It is through the brain wiring that the value and importance of the science and art of compassion become real in how we show up.

Three key notions lay the foundation for attachment and how it evolves into adulthood

- (1) in intimate relationships, humans are wired to connect with one another emotionally;
- (2) a child's development is powerfully influenced by how their parents treat them, particularly the mother; and
- (3) these developmental pathways in early childhood can explain tendencies in adult relationships.

*"Those who are nurtured best, survive best."*

*- Louis Cozolino -*

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Attachment is a system similar to our physiological system that regulates body temperature, blood pressure and other bodily functions. When closeness to an attachment figure, such as our mothers, is challenged or blocked, anxiety is experienced until that closeness is re-established. The degree of closeness needed to soothe anxious feelings varies with the child's age, the emotional and physical state as well as the perception of threat. When there is close and safe proximity, feelings of security and love are generated. When that closeness is disrupted, there are feelings of anxiety and even anger or sadness.

From an evolutionary perspective, it is natural and a part of human development for young children to feel safe enough to explore only as long as a familiar caregiver is nearby to respond as needed. This is where we see 2- and 3-year olds begin to venture away but always with an eye on how close or far away is Mom or Dad. Events and influences in early childhood, particularly the first five years, lay the foundation for attachment theory.

Trauma experienced early in life becomes biologically encoded in the actively developing brain. This encoding creates structural changes in the brain that remain throughout life unless action is taken to redirect. Significant life events serve as a disruption to the neural functioning, impacting anatomical growth in ways that carry forward into adulthood. Simply put, attachment styles reflect our tendencies and patterns of how we connect to the people in our lives.

Based on the work of John Bowlby (1950s), Mary Ainsworth (1960s - 1970s) and others who followed, there are four distinct attachment styles that surface in adulthood:

**1) Secure Attachments:** People tend to see others as trusting and themselves as worth loving, and are able to control and cope with stressful events. There is confidence and boldness in their actions. They possess a positive sense of self and a positive sense of others.

**2) Preoccupied Attachments:** These are people who able to trust others but not themselves, tend to have low self-esteem, need reassurance and praise, pull away when getting feedback, and choose jobs based on salary, which can lead to low job and career satisfaction. They may be characterized by uncertainty, prone to anxiety, inconsistent, and act on behaviors to get attention. They tend to possess a negative sense of self and a positive sense of others.

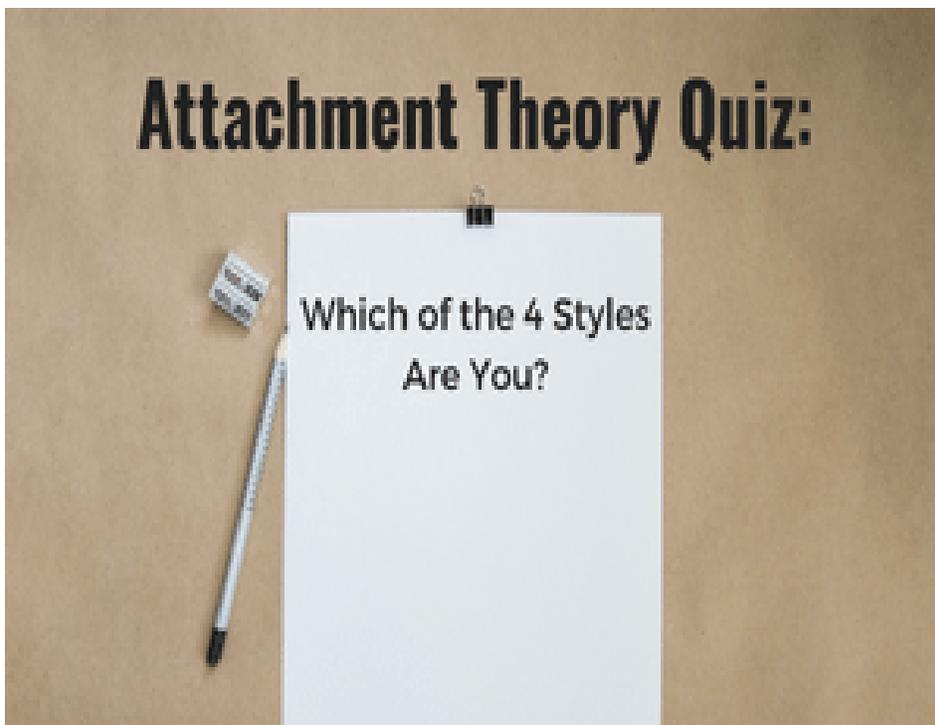
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**3) Dismissing Attachments:** This style of attachment tends to be independently motivated because others cannot be trusted to meet their needs, tend not to seek emotional support from others during stress, do not accept criticism well, and compulsively work to avoid relationships with others, work longer and harder than others, yet believe that work interferes with their personal life. They may expect to be rebuffed, display hostility and exhibit antisocial behavior. They demonstrate a positive sense of self with a negative sense of others.

**4) Fearful Attachments:** This represents those who do not trust others, have low self-esteem, refrain from self-disclosure, have low intimacy and romantic involvement, demonstrate poor social and emotional coping skills, and tend not to seek emotional support from others during stress or take orders well from bosses. Their view of self and others tends to be negative .

Attachment Styles are simply a reflection of our tendencies and patterns for how we connect to the people in our lives.

So which one are you? Here's an opportunity to learn how you might show up. And, once you do, choices and decisions about what and where to make some differences becomes possible.



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## Chapter Two: Understanding the Human Brain (Just a little bit)

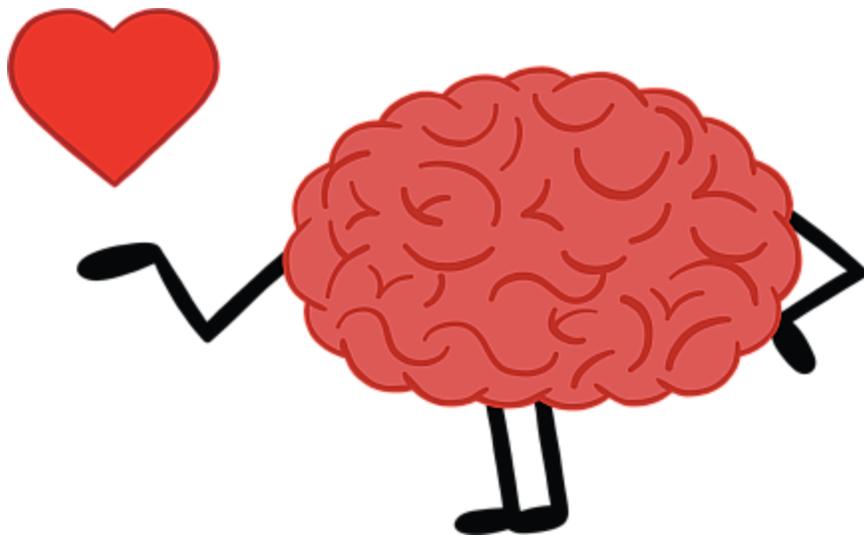
Attachment theory embraces the notion that every human being is born with an innate attachment system. This is a biological function designed to obtain or maintain proximity to significant others in times of need, the presence of threats, and to seek supportive behavior. This attachment, while innate, also overlaps with a period of significant neurological development of the brain.

Traumas come in all shapes and sizes and, when coupled with brain growth, those experiences can become encoded in our neural pathways. This attachment formation overlaps with a period of significant neurological development in the brain. This helps explain how and why those early attachment experiences shape behavior into our adulthood, oftentimes unknowingly.

*"To the world, you may be just one person; but to one person, you may be the world."*

*- Josephine Billings -*

It's no wonder then that the adults in our lives play a significant and influential role that continue to impact and shape how we view the world and others. Let's take a deeper dive into the neuroscience behind this...just a little bit!



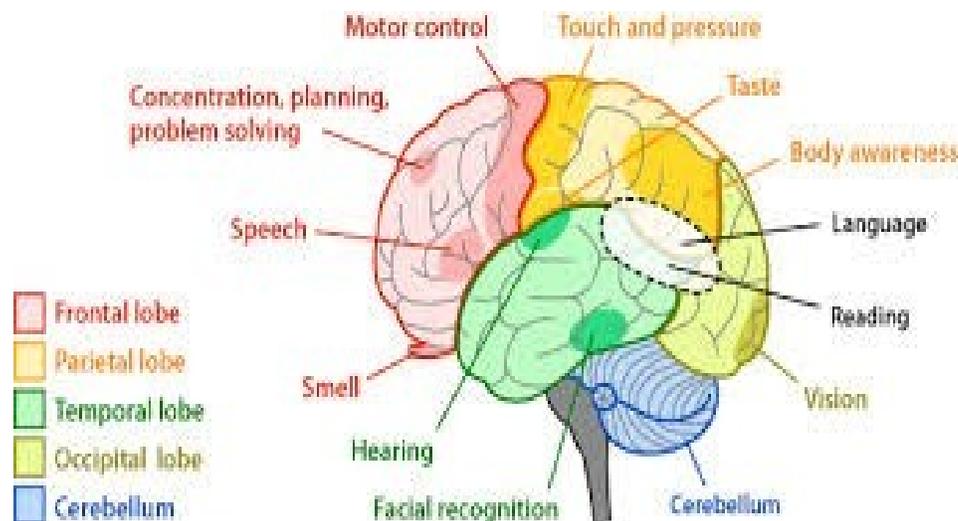
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How does our brain develop? Well, we now know through the medical breakthrough of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), that the various parts of the brain do not develop at the same time or at the same rate. A child may show advanced development in one area yet be delayed in another. For example, the Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC) is not fully developed at birth. An attentive parent or caregiver can help a child develop this part of the brain through the "mirror neuron" effect, i.e. infants take their cues from what they see in the caregiver's facial expression and the look of the eyes. Is it warm and loving, distant and vacant, or angry and fearful?

Personality also resides in the frontal lobes, a portion of the brain that begins to mature fully in middle school, continuing through high school into adulthood. Unlike other mammals, only humans have the PFC which allows us to evaluate, learn, and adapt our behavior based on past experience.

Social understanding and empathy reside in the frontal lobes as well. These forms of emotion are crucial for higher cognitive functions, appropriate social behaviors and the development of formal operations. We'll learn more about this as we uncover the role of compassion.

Development of the frontal lobes in an orderly fashion with positive experiences during early childhood contributes to the development of personality, planning and organization, reasoning, speech, writing, movement and sensory perception. When a disruption or trauma occurs, performance in these areas is impacted.



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We can redirect our physiology through development of our emotional intelligence, by engaging in exercises in mindfulness and practicing deep breathing...all pretty simple things. We can have a profound effect on how we show up, how we are impacted by life's mini- and major-traumas, and how we influence others. Just because we've been dealt a raw hand in our families of origin doesn't mean we have to keep living that life and recycling into our generations forthcoming. The question to you is then "what are you going to do about it?" Let's keep diving deeper.

*"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."*

*- Dr. Wayne Dyer -*



Let's take a little journey before you go on.

Check out this exercise "[Be in the moment, breathe through the moment, and break from the moment.](#)" The first step in creating that space between now and the next moment that leads to the mindshift.

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass the world is too full to talk about." — Rumi

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## Chapter Three: The Psychology of Conflict and the Art of Compassion

Compassion is a constructive emotion that requires awareness and emotional, rather than intellectual, intelligence. The good news is that both compassion and emotional intelligence (E.I.) can be taught and learned. The process starts with building our emotional intelligence in four key areas to help us shift our mindset and dive deeper in ways that create psychological safety for ourselves and others around. Daniel Goleman, the Father of E.I., says it starts with self-awareness and self-management followed by other awareness and then relationship management.

Many people worldwide connect a sense of happiness with a feeling of warm-heartedness. If you have a pet, particularly a dog or a cat, you know that even animals display behaviors of compassion. When it comes to human beings, we have the ability to add the notion of “intelligence” to compassion. But just what type of intelligence are we talking about? Is it our intellectual intelligence that makes a difference or is it something newer to our understanding, i.e. emotional intelligence? Destructive emotions are related to ignorance of human dynamics and tend to fuel the conflict no matter how smart anyone is.



When the stakes are high, conflicting opinions prevail and difficult behaviors surface, trying to remain cool and logical can feel like a losing proposition. Understanding the cognitions, behaviors, and reactions (aka the psychology) behind differences is vital when dealing with people in any walk of life.

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Our ability to connect and build trust quickly is strengthened when we show up with empathy, creating a sense of well-being. However, empathy is not enough. When coupled with action, it becomes a display of compassion that is felt. A lack of compassion and social connectedness leads to isolation and fear, a sense of abandonment, feelings of exclusion, as well as negative self-worth. Each of these elements are core tenets behind the psychology of people in conflict and can trigger the basic drive to survive, i.e. the fight, flight and freeze responses.

A show of compassion reduces fear as it reflects a concern for others' well-being and builds trust. Influence is not about money or power; it's about building trust. And, trust is the foundation of any relationship, particularly when dealing with people who are emotionally charged. When we're under the influence of anger or some other negative emotion, we're limited in our ability to use our cognitive brain to take a realistic view of the situation. When the mind is compassionate, it is calm and we're able to use our sense of reason practically, realistically, and with determination.

You probably have asked yourself "Why do sensible, intelligent, rational people appear to act so irrationally? Why do commercial business people behave so unprofessionally and in such a child-like manner when in conflict? What is it that so quickly drives people into intense and bitter disputes?" These very questions, as Randolph put forth in his book, were the very questions that led to my doctoral dissertation in 2014 when I studied the psychology of good bosses vs. bad bosses. As a workplace mediator with over 25 years of experience, I was intrigued to dive deeper to understand why and how some really intelligent people could be such poor stewards of others, particularly as leaders. Those research findings now serve as the foundation of my book in progress called [Leading Consciously Now](#).

When we use the [360-perspective](#), we quickly learn that our truth is merely subjective. No matter how intelligent, experienced, or advanced, we can only see or understand so much until we seek to understand how others perceive the same issue or circumstance. The emotionally intelligent person is comfortable in bringing out perspectives from different vantage points.

Without a shift in mindset or a change in attitude, people are likely to stay stuck. I ask two simple questions, "How's that (position) working for you? Is it getting you what you want?"

The shift in their brains becomes evident through their subtle shifts in behavior. Check out this [activity](#) and uncover how positional you might be!

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## CHAPTER FOUR: Your Emotional Potential

We have the capacity to learn about ourselves and others by reading the clues readily available in behavior. Developing our active listening skills also facilitates our ability to dive deeper. This is how we grow our emotional intelligence.

Using the analogy of an iceberg, the tip represents our Intellectual Intelligence (IQ), only about 30%. What's below the water line, the bigger part of the iceberg (the part that sank the Titanic) represents our Emotional Intelligence (EQ or EI). This is where we can develop our skills to better understand self, understand others, manage self and manage the relationships with others.



Remember our earlier discussion about "mirror neurons?" It is quite simply explained by the following: I smile...you smile back. I frown...you most likely will look back puzzled or perhaps fearful, frowning back. I open my arms, extend a warm handshake and you respond in kind. We reciprocate what we see, what we get, and it triggers us to respond in kind. It's the "Law of Reciprocity" coined by Steven Covey in his book on the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (1989). When we show up with positivity and warmth, we evoke a like response. When we show up stressed, tense, or upset, we trigger others' negative emotional response. Where there's an action, there's a reaction. The reaction is often what dictates the outcome.

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This is where we have the potential to develop our emotional intelligence to influence positive engagement and outcomes with others. This applies to us as leaders at any level and in any walk of life so that we display our emotional potential as professionals with diplomacy, tact and influence.

Through our study of human behavior coupled with the advances in neuroscience, we now know that 55% of how we communicate is through our behavior...what we see in others and how we show up. 38% of how we communicate is how we sound...out tone, volume and inflection. Only 7% of how we communicate is through the words we say. If we show up with a look on our face, a frown instead of a smile, sound curt or dismissive, and use words that are less than friendly, we are creating a mirror for others to react.



Engaging with others cannot be accomplished by avoiding emotions and personal differences. A state of openness is required with a mindset and a willingness to explore, rather than shy away from, different beliefs and values. It means acknowledging emotional reactions openly and exploring what led to them, rather than pretending they don't exist. Otherwise, emotions are the driving force that overwhelms reason in difficult situations and explains the 'irrational' behavior that can result from those caught up in conflict.

Developing our emotional intelligence, expanding our communication skills for active listening and assertive speaking, and building self-confidence are the keys to our success with others. I present to "The **BEACH**" is a metaphor for diving deeper in our active listening. When we structure our listening using "The BEACH," we can focus on what BELIEFS people are trying to express, their EXPECTATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS or ATTITUDES, their CONCERNS as well as their HOPES. As active listeners in any conversation, the ability to pull these nuggets out from what people are saying is magical and people truly feel that you "get" what they're saying. "Acknowledging" what someone says is NOT the same as "agreeing" with his/her position.

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The ability and capacity to create trust and rapport does not necessarily come intuitively or naturally. Instead, just like compassion, it can be learned. As Stephen Covey says in 1989 book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "the biggest problem about communication is that we do not listen to understand, but instead listen to reply."

We want to shift from seeking to be understood to seeking first to understand. To listen, we must first be silent! This is where "The BEACH" comes in as a powerful tool in structuring our listening for understanding and demonstrating the compassion needed for trust.. All conflict is emotional and all emotions are both thoughts and sensations. The magical power of emotional intelligence lies in our ability to read behavioral clues and facilitate our conversations using skills and techniques that help people to feel truly heard.

What does your mindset (or perspective) reflect when you show up with others? What are your attitudes about emotion that might just be getting in your way? Perhaps it's time to develop your emotional intelligence and build your understanding around the psychology of conflict!

*"Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.*

*Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."*

*- Rumi -*

So are you ready to take the first step on doing something different? Let's start with [The SPICE Game](#) to discover and uncover your Communication Styles and what you can learn about others! Download your complimentary Communication Guide for Dealing with Different, and sometimes Difficult, People and gain Five Tips for Communicating through Difficult Times.

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Dr. Debra Dupree is the MINDSET Doc providing services to people just like you as a Workplace Mediator, Conflict Coach, Trainer and Keynote Speaker. She provides organizational and government consultation on disability and reasonable accommodation practices, employee-management relations, and communication/conflict management strategies. Debra has an extensive training and conflict management background, training professionals throughout the United States and Canada in workplace mediation, the interactive process, and leadership strategies for challenging employee behaviors. She currently provides mediation and conflict management consultation to the San Diego County Office of Education serving some 57 different school districts throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties.

Debra served as the President of the California Association of Rehabilitation Professionals (CARP) when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed and on the Board of Directors when major changes to the California Workers' Compensation were enacted by Legislature in 1994. Since then, she was featured in Newsweek as one of San Diego's top psychotherapists, recognized by the Los Angeles Federal Executive Board for her workplace mediation expertise, and distinguished as a leader in dispute resolution by the Southern California Mediation Association (SCMA) and the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR). She served nationally as the Workplace Co-Chair and Newsletter Editor for the Workplace Section of ACR. She was also President of ADR-San Diego. In 2016, she was recognized as one of the top ten trainers globally by training participants through training programs at SkillPath Corporate Strategies.

She has served as a Professor for California Western School of Law in ADR, National University in Conflict Management Systems, and at Ryokan College in the field of psychology. She is slated to teach on the Psychology of Conflict for USC's Gould School of Law in 2020. Today, Debra is the founder and president of Relationships at Work, Inc., a consulting practice founded in 2011 serving organizations and the professional community on the psychology of human dynamics.

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