



Enjoying a yoga pose with my daughter, Bianca. She's been doing yoga since she was in my tummy!

In this issue, we feature Northern Chapter member, Darlene Serrano M.Div, M.Ed and who is working on her MFT. In her own words, Darlene shares some of the insights that have led her to this next step.

If you have a little girl, are taking care of your mother who has been diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia, your husband recently had a massive heart attack, and you have a demanding full time career --- what do you do for fun? You go for another graduate degree!

After working with teen parents and their families for over ten years at West Side Infant and Teen Parent Program in Englewood, New Jersey, where I am the executive director, I decided to enhance my counseling and therapy skills. Northcentral University has a wonderful on-line program with a degree in MFT that fit my hectic schedule and my career goals. Marriage and family therapy is my third career. As previous Director of Development and Education for The Salvation Army in Miami, Florida, youth pastor in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Director of World Literature for the Christian Reformed Church publishing branch, I have always valued the importance of working with family systems. MFT allows one to understand the organizational complexity of families, as well as the interactive patterns that guide family interactions-it's a holistic view of the family unit.

The essential life dilemma for me boils down to this: extraordinary changes can happen when people understand each other! If families learn to accept each member as individuals with hopes and dreams, our dysfunctions can become opportunities for extraordinary changes to live and love in healthy and productive unity.

If today were my last day on Earth, what would I do to change my life? Is my life making a difference? I ask myself these questions all the time....so at the end of the day I never want to think I wish I had, I should've! Perhaps at my age (I consider myself ageless), I should be concentrating on a retirement strategy (I don't believe in retirement), no way! I'm going for another accomplishment in the area of MFT and work toward the personal fulfillment of helping families connect and live with purpose and contentment, which is a precious gift!

Darlene and her family reside in Hackettstown, NJ. Her academic history includes a B.A. - New York University, M.Div. - Nyack College/Seminary and a M.Ed. - Calvin Theological Seminary.