



**CFAR**

CENTER FOR APPLIED  
RATIONALITY

# Essential Background

**Organization:** Center for Applied Rationality (CFAR)

**Mission:** “Actually trying to figure things out”

**Key Personnel:** Pete Michaud (Executive Director)  
Anna Salamon (President, Chair of the Board, Cofounder)  
Michael “Val” Smith (Research Fellow, Cofounder)  
Duncan Sabien (Curriculum Director)

**Our Research:** CFAR takes an optimistic view on cognitive biases. Recent scientific understanding of cognitive biases, or systematic thinking errors, provides an exciting opportunity for humanity to become smarter and more effective. We’re taking the results of cognitive science research, and turning them into techniques that people can practice and use in their own lives. That means going beyond understanding these errors, and actually training ourselves to overcome them. It also means knowing when to trust our instincts, and learning new thinking habits for situations in which instincts are less reliable.

CFAR is devoted to teaching those techniques, and the math and science behind them, to adults and exceptional youth. In the process, we’re breaking new ground in studying the long-term effects of rationality training on life outcomes using both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. We’re contributing to pedagogical knowledge about how to teach this emerging discipline at universities and elsewhere. And we’re building a real-life community of thousands of students, entrepreneurs, researchers, programmers, philanthropists, and others who are passionate about using rationality to improve the decisions they make for themselves and for the world.

# Key Personnel



**Pete Michaud**

*Executive Director*

Pete worked as a software architect and consultant before getting serious about developmental psychology. He cofounded an emotional intelligence and communication training organization, and joined CFAR after helping on several adjacent projects including EA Global and EA Action.



**Anna Salamon**

*President, Chair of the Board, and Cofounder*

Anna has previously done machine learning research for NASA and applied mathematics research on the statistics of phage metagenomics. She holds a degree in mathematics from UC Santa Barbara.



**Michael Smith**

*Research Fellow, and Cofounder*

Michael “Valentine” Smith develops CFAR training modules, and is responsible for pushing our research agenda forward. He taught Aikido as a black belt for many years, and he holds a joint PhD in math and science education from UC San Diego and San Diego State.



**Duncan Sabien**

*Curriculum Director*

Duncan is a writer, filmmaker, and educator, whose previous work included developing and teaching a special projects class for building rationality and agency in middle schoolers.



**Dan Keys**

*Research Associate*

Dan has conducted research on the psychology of judgment and decision making and published a paper on the science of human rationality. He holds a master's degree in social psychology from Cornell University and a BA in mathematics and statistics from Swarthmore College.



**Morgan Davis**

*Operations Manager*

Morgan makes CFAR run smoothly behind the scenes and is a good problem-solving human to email for general assistance. Her educational background is in psychology and neuroscience.



**Jack Carroll**

*Logistics*

This Jack of all trades coordinates logistics, ensuring that CFAR's workshops meet and exceed participants' expectations. He draws on his background in psychology and event planning in doing this.

# Overview of Media Coverage

**FAST COMPANY**

**lifehacker**

**MAINST**



CLEARER  
THINKING



**Skepticity**<sup>TM</sup>  
The Official Podcast of Skeptic Magazine and the Skeptics Society -

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

[TheHumanist.com](http://TheHumanist.com)

**The New York Times**



# Our Clients



For more information:

[www.rationality.org](http://www.rationality.org)