

## **AFCC President's Message**

January 2025

Vol 20 No. 01

*Michael A. Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW*

Happy New Year, and All the Best in 2025!

As we enter the new year, I'm excited to reflect on our shared commitment to building solutions for families navigating complex transitions. My focus for 2025 will be on Framing, Reframing, and Depolarizing—three interconnected approaches that I believe can inspire innovation, collaboration, and transformation in family law practice. I hope you will join me in centralizing these themes in your work this year.

### **Framing: Building Bridges**

Framing allows us to set the foundation for understanding and addressing the core challenges families face. It involves presenting issues, identifying shared goals, and ensuring our strategies are inclusive and evidence-informed. When we frame our work effectively, we create clarity—a shared understanding that enables professionals, families, and stakeholders to work together more effectively. This clarity builds bridges between disciplines, perspectives, and practices, helping us align our efforts toward solutions prioritizing children's well-being, safety, and stable parenting plan arrangements.

Framing also emphasizes the importance of understanding context. By framing issues focusing on the broader social, emotional, and cultural factors affecting families, we can design responsive and tailored interventions to their unique needs. This approach helps us identify common ground, even when stakeholders initially seem far apart in their views.

### **Reframing: Shifting Perspectives**

Reframing challenges us to reimagine how we approach persistent issues. By shifting perspectives, we unlock new pathways for addressing longstanding challenges. For instance, in discussions around coparenting children post-separation and divorce, reframing the problems away from blame towards shared responsibility for children's safety and well-being can allow the focus on solutions that minimize harm and promote children's adaptive adjustments.

Reframing also inspires creativity. When we view entrenched problems through a fresh lens, we often discover previously obscured opportunities for growth and collaboration. Initiatives like the AFCC Peace Talks have demonstrated the power of reframing by bringing together diverse perspectives to foster mutual understanding. By encouraging participants to shift from a

problem-focused to a solution-focused mindset, reframing enables us to move beyond polarization and achieve meaningful progress.

## **Depolarization: Bridging Divides**

Depolarization is the essential thread connecting framing and reframing. In a field where entrenched viewpoints can often create impasses, depolarization calls on us to seek common ground while respecting differences. This process requires intentionality: creating spaces where opposing perspectives are heard and valued as essential contributions to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the issues.

Depolarization does not ask us to erase differences; instead, it asks us to embrace them as opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. Depolarization attempts to connect the divide and build trust among professionals, families, and communities by fostering respect and openness. The AFCC Peace Talks exemplify this approach, demonstrating that when we prioritize shared goals—such as the safety and well-being of children—we can transcend polarization and work together toward sustainable solutions.

The interconnectedness of framing, reframing, and depolarizing makes these themes powerful. Framing gives us the structure to understand the issues; reframing helps us see them in new ways; and depolarization ensures that we can collaborate across differences to achieve our shared mission. Together, these approaches provide a roadmap for innovation and progress in family law.

## **Call to Action**

I invite you to consider how framing, reframing, and depolarizing can enhance your professional practice. How might a fresh perspective open doors to new possibilities in your work? How can you contribute to bridging divides and fostering collaboration in your community? Together, we can make 2025 a year of meaningful progress as we help families reimagine children's futures as we build toward brighter outcomes.

Let's work together to advance these themes and continue shaping the future of family law. I look forward to collaborating with you as we embrace the opportunities ahead.

Michael Saini, PhD, MSW, RSW  
AFCC President