

Co-Parenting Coach for Court-Involved Families Reveals Empathy-first Parenting Time Approach Even in High Conflict

The Center for Family Resolution shares a three-step response to help parents build resilience, not avoidance when children resist court-ordered parenting time.

COLUMBUS, OH, UNITED STATES, August 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Center for Family Resolution](#), a national co-parenting coaching practice serving parents in high-conflict family court cases, today announced an [empathy-first approach](#) for responding when children resist or refuse court-ordered parenting time. Founder Amy Armstrong, a co-parenting coach who has worked with parents since 1996 and specialized in complex, high-conflict co-parenting for the past 15 years, introduced the three-part framework during a recent appearance on [Parenting Shrink Wrapped](#), hosted by double board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr. Melissa Wellner and licensed therapist Samantha Straub.



Amy Armstrong, Founder of The Center for Family Resolution and Creator of the VOICE Boundary Framework

The approach addresses one of the hardest moments in separated families: a child who refuses to attend parenting time. Armstrong emphasizes that the first responsibility is always to discern emotional and physical safety, and when genuine safety concerns exist, those concerns take priority. When parenting time is safe enough to proceed, parents can respond in ways that build resilience rather than avoidance while protecting children from loyalty conflicts.

Armstrong points out that refusal rarely remains a private family problem. It reaches pediatric offices, school counselors, therapists and psychiatrists, where the child becomes the identified patient for conflict they did not create. Wellner described the challenge from inside her own practice during the Parenting Shrink Wrapped episode, saying that when parents arrive arguing over pickup times and belongings, "my focus gets pulled away from the child that's sitting in

front of me."



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that they will figure it out"

Amy Armstrong

Parents often respond by trying harder to change the other parent, filing another motion, writing another carefully crafted message or searching for the perfect argument. "The conflict is its own entity with a heartbeat,"

Armstrong said on the episode. Parents spend so much energy trying to change each other, she added, that they lose sight of the one person they can actually lead: themselves.

Rather than persuading, rescuing or forcing children through difficult moments, the empathy-first approach starts with empathy. Children need to know their feelings make sense, and empathy does not require removing the challenge. Parents calmly acknowledge the child's disappointment while holding the reality that parenting time will proceed.

From there, the child is invited to make meaningful choices inside the situation: what to bring, what activity to do or one way to make the visit more manageable. The goal is not simply getting a child through today's exchange. The goal is helping children discover they can move through difficult experiences without needing someone else to rescue them.

"Our children need to hear that they will figure it out," Armstrong said on the episode, "and we can't wait to hear what they came up with much more than they need to hear us fix their life for them." A parent who increases their own capacity for discomfort gives a child room to develop theirs. Parents need their own support, she added, but should not seek comfort from the child.

Wellner connected the approach to clinical practice, noting that "experiment" is "the exact word I use in therapy when I'm doing exposures." Straub said the three steps were practical enough to remember in emotionally charged moments.

At The Center for Family Resolution, Armstrong works most often as a neutral co-parenting coach, helping both parents increase their own capacity instead of trying to change one another. Her work focuses on helping parents recognize their own stress responses and triggers, discern emotional and physical safety, reduce behaviors that place children in loyalty binds and protect childhood from adult conflict. She encourages the preferred parent to seek support, uphold court-ordered parenting time when it is safe and let children discover their own relationship with the other parent instead of feeling responsible for protecting either adult.

Amy Armstrong, LISW-S, serves as a parenting coordinator, mediator, coach and educator, receiving court appointments and attorney referrals in complex cases across multiple states. She trains family court judges nationally and serves on committees for court reform with the Supreme Court of Ohio. Her TEDx talk, The Missing Piece to the Parenting Puzzle, along with features in The New York Times, Parents, USA Today and on CBS, ABC, NBC and Fox News, carried that message beyond the courtroom.

Her work rests on a simple belief: children should never have to wait for two healthier parents before they can experience one.

Parents who want the full empathy-first approach for children who resist parenting time can learn more at The Center for Family Resolution at www.thecenterforfamilyresolution.com.

About The Center for Family Resolution

The Center for Family Resolution is a national co-parenting coaching and conflict resolution practice founded by co-parenting coach Amy Armstrong, LISW-S. The practice serves parents in high-conflict family court cases through coaching, parenting coordination, mediation and professional education. Its focus is protecting childhood from adult conflict by helping parents lead themselves instead of managing one another.

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The Center for Family Resolution

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