

## 1: Resolving Blended Family Conflict Monday, February 26,

*The problem. Every family, irrespective of its structure and make-up, will experience conflicts. However, unfortunately, it can often seem that these issues are exacerbated within a blended family environment and there are several reasons for this, of which there are three main reasons that will need to be addressed.*

The key is not to avoid conflict but to learn how to resolve it in a healthy way. When conflict is mismanaged, it can cause great harm to a relationship, but when handled in a respectful, positive way, conflict provides an opportunity to strengthen the bond between two people. Whatever the cause of disagreements and disputes, by learning these skills for conflict resolution, you can keep your personal and professional relationships strong and growing. Conflict arises from differences, both large and small. It occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. Sometimes these differences appear trivial, but when a conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep personal need is often at the core of the problem. These needs can be a need to feel safe and secure, a need to feel respected and valued, or a need for greater closeness and intimacy. Conflicts arise from differing needs Everyone needs to feel understood, nurtured, and supported, but the ways in which these needs are met vary widely. Differing needs for feeling comfortable and safe create some of the most severe challenges in our personal and professional relationships. Think about the conflicting need for safety and continuity versus the need to explore and take risks. You frequently see this conflict between toddlers and their parents. The needs of both parties play important roles in the long-term success of most relationships, and each deserves respect and consideration. In personal relationships, a lack of understanding about differing needs can result in distance, arguments, and break-ups. In workplace conflicts, differing needs are often at the heart of bitter disputes, sometimes resulting in broken deals, fewer profits and lost jobs. When you can recognize the legitimacy of conflicting needs and become willing to examine them in an environment of compassionate understanding, it opens pathways to creative problem solving, team building, and improved relationships. Conflict A conflict is more than just a disagreement. It is a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat whether or not the threat is real. Conflicts continue to fester when ignored. Because conflicts involve perceived threats to our well-being and survival, they stay with us until we face and resolve them. We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions of the situation, not necessarily to an objective review of the facts. Our perceptions are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs. Conflicts trigger strong emotions. Conflicts are an opportunity for growth. You can feel secure knowing your relationship can survive challenges and disagreements. How do you respond to conflict? Do you fear conflict or avoid it at all costs? If your perception of conflict comes from painful memories from early childhood or previous unhealthy relationships, you may expect all disagreements to end badly. You may view conflict as demoralizing, humiliating, or something to fear. If your early life experiences left you feeling powerless or out of control, conflict may even be traumatizing for you. Healthy and unhealthy ways of managing and resolving conflict Unhealthy responses to conflict: When handled in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups. But when conflict is resolved in a healthy way, it increases your understanding of the other person, builds trust, and strengthens your relationships. For example, couples often argue about petty differencesâ€”the way she hangs the towels, the way he slurps his soupâ€”rather than what is really bothering them. The ability to successfully resolve conflict depends on your ability to: Manage stress quickly while remaining alert and calm. By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication. Control your emotions and behavior. Pay attention to the feelings being expressed as well as the spoken words of others. Be aware of and respectful of differences. By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can almost always resolve a problem faster. To successfully resolve a conflict, you need to learn and practice two core skills: Using Your Senses to Alleviate Stress Being able to manage and relieve stress in the moment is the key to staying balanced, focused, and in control, no matter what challenges you face. Foot on the gas. An angry or agitated stress response. Foot on the brake. A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion. Foot on both gas and brake. A tense and frozen stress response. Stress interferes with the ability to resolve conflict by limiting your ability to: Stress

may be a problem in your life if you identify with the following: Although knowing your own feelings may sound simple, many people ignore or try to sedate strong emotions like anger, sadness, and fear. Your ability to handle conflict, however, depends on being connected to these feelings. Why emotional awareness is a key factor in resolving conflict Emotional awareness—the consciousness of your moment-to-moment emotional experience—and the ability to manage all of your feelings appropriately is the basis of a communication process that can resolve conflict. Emotional awareness helps you to: Understand what is really troubling other people Understand yourself, including what is really troubling you Stay motivated until the conflict is resolved Communicate clearly and effectively Interest and influence others Assessing your level of emotional awareness The following quiz helps you assess your level of emotional awareness. Answer the following questions with: There are no right or wrong responses, only the opportunity to become better acquainted with your emotional responses. What kind of relationship do you have with your emotions? Do you experience feelings that flow, encountering one emotion after another as your experiences change from moment to moment? Are your emotions accompanied by physical sensations that you experience in places like your stomach or chest? Do you experience distinct feelings and emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear, and joy, which are evident in different facial expressions? Can you experience intense feelings that are strong enough to capture both your own attention and that of others? Do you pay attention to your emotions? Do they factor into your decision-making? If any of these experiences are unfamiliar, your emotions may be "turned" down or even off. In either case, you may need help developing your emotional awareness. Nonverbal communication and conflict resolution Nonverbal Communication: Reading Body Language When people are in the middle of a conflict, the words they use rarely convey the issues at the heart of the problem. This will allow you to respond in a way that builds trust, and gets to the root of the problem. Your ability to accurately read another person depends on your own emotional awareness. The more aware you are of your own emotions, the easier it will be for you to pick up on the wordless clues that reveal what others are feeling. Think about what you are transmitting to others during conflict, and if what you say matches your body language. Tips for managing and resolving conflict You can ensure that the process of managing and resolving conflict is as positive as possible by sticking to the following guidelines: Listen for what is felt as well as said. When you really listen, you connect more deeply to your own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Make conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or "being right. Be respectful of the other person and their viewpoint. Focus on the present. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem. Be willing to forgive. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can serve only to deplete and drain your life. Know when to let something go. It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on. Using humor in conflict resolution Managing Conflicts with Humor: Using Laughter to Resolve Disagreements You can avoid many confrontations and resolve arguments and disagreements by communicating in a humorous way. Humor can help you say things that might otherwise be difficult to express without offending someone. When humor and play are used to reduce tension and anger, reframe problems, and put the situation into perspective, the conflict can actually become an opportunity for greater connection and intimacy. Recommended reading CR Kit — Covers the causes of conflict, different conflict styles, and fair fighting guidelines to help you positively resolve disagreements. Conflict Resolution Network 12 Skills Summary — step conflict resolution training kit. Learn how to pursue a win-win approach, manage emotions, be appropriately assertive, map the conflict, and develop options. Conflict Resolution Network Effective Communication — Article on the art of listening in conflict resolution. Includes tips on how to make your point effectively and negotiate conflict in principled, positive way. University of Maryland Authors:

### 2: How to deal with conflicts in a blended family

*In blended families, you have the coming together of two sets of rules, discipline and expectations. If there isn't some discussion ahead of time about things such as values and beliefs about limits and discipline, it can lead to conflict between parents down the road, which will trickle down to the relationship between children and their.*

Closing comments The problem Every family, irrespective of its structure and make-up, will experience conflicts. However, unfortunately, it can often seem that these issues are exacerbated within a blended family environment and there are several reasons for this, of which there are three main reasons that will need to be addressed The reasons for conflict Emotional Perhaps the main reason behind blended family conflicts is the emotional and psychological stresses and disturbances that both parents and children in the blended family have experience as a result of the breakdown of past relationships. In essence, the after effect of a relationship breakdown, and the transition to a blended family, can be likened to a grieving process. There is sadness at the loss of what has passed and fear of the future. This is especially the case with children. Lifestyle disruption Second on this list of conflict causes is the fact that the blended family brings together halves of two families, which might have been use to totally different ways of family life and with different rules and standards. For example, when a wealthy family break-up it is often the fact that the blended family may start in less luxurious surroundings which means that things previously taken for granted might have to be foregone. Rebuilding The two single parent families that are blending are, in effect, rebuilding a family from scratch. Having been through this process once and seen it fail it is always going to be difficult to begin again, especially if the blended family is beginning at a time when the single parent thought the family life would have begun to ease. As stated in the introduction, all of these causes can give rise to conflicts within the blended family and often the obvious cause of the conflict is simply an excuse the covers the real cause that lies amongst those outlined above. The difficulty is in knowing exactly how to deal with these conflicts. Many might doubt that resolution can be found but it can. Furthermore, the manner in which these conflicts can be addressed is hidden in the three letters that make up the word can. Resolving the conflicts Communication Of all the tools that should be used to both reduce the incidence of conflict and resolve those that occur, communication is by far the most important. If open communication is set up as one of the key foundations for a blended family and everyone is encourage to use this approach either as a group or individually one to another, a lot of the problems that are likely to arise can be resolved even before they reach the conflict stage. Even after a conflict has occurred, after everyone involved has had a chance to cool off it is important to get together and talk about not only the main issues that seem to ignite the conflict but also any that run deeper, perhaps emotional in nature. Furthermore, it is also sensible to encourage regular discussion or talk sessions where the family get together and talk about what is happening and the benefits and problems that each might be experiencing. The family that talks together stays together and communication is the key to this objective. Agreement Secondly, it is essential never to allow an argument to continue overnight or for days on end. It is vital that to resolve conflicts and not to allow them to fester. The longer a conflict continues the worst it gets as both sides become entrenched in their own viewpoint, and start refusing to see the other side of the argument. Always, always work to reach an agreement, even if that means you have to discuss the cause of the conflict with outside help, such as a doctor or counsellor. There is no shame in seeking professional help to resolve conflicts, if fact, it might well make the blended family stronger. Addressing the need Finally those who are in conflict have to recognise the need of the other person. Often conflicts arise in a blended family because one of its members feels that their needs are not being recognised and addressed. Maybe they feel that they are not receiving enough attention from others, for example one parent from another or a child from its parents. Recognising that each member of a blended family has needs that have to be satisfied and working to achieve this position will go a lot way in taking the flames out of conflicts. Closing comments Blended families are like any other family. They will experience conflicts from time to time. However, simply because all of the members of the blended family will have experienced emotional upset it is likely that the real causes of these conflicts are quite complex.

### 3: Biblical Counseling Testimonies Â- FBC JAX

*Resolving Conflict in the Blended Family [Tom Frydenger, Adrienne Frydenger] on [www.enganchecubano.com](http://www.enganchecubano.com) \*FREE\* shipping on qualifying offers. There are now more blended families (couples with children from previous marriages) and single-parent families in the U.S. than traditional ones.*

The 10 Step Family Dragons The stepfamily begins with the breakdown of the biological family or families, creating what we call the Bi-Nuclear family system: When either or both parents get involved with new partners, conflict is escalated even more. There is an extended stepfamily system that now has to be taken into consideration and generally is not. We aim to help our new bi-nuclear families move into healthy, working relationships and develop a new family system which can safeguard and nurture the best interests of the children involved. One important way to do this is to by assisting families to face and conquer the Ten Stepfamily Dragons. The sooner everyone accepts that, the sooner we can get to work on addressing the new realities. Conflicting Forces of Blood and Sex: The blood which bonds people together in the biological family, Parent to Child to Parent , is absent in the stepfamily. By nature this blood bond is in opposition with the sexual bonds in the new partnership between parent and stepparent. Partnership Skills for the New Challenges are at a Premium. Going through divorce or separation, to be followed by remarriage and the building of a new stepfamily or blended family are all events that demand a high level of maturity and a new understanding of parenting and partnering. Chaos of Persistent and Unexpected Change: PARENTS rarely establish an infrastructure or a system which reflects the new reality for everyone involved; a new infrastructure would establish who does what and how, what are the new roles and rules. Boundaries between the nuclear and extended stepfamily remain fuzzy and unclear. Consistency and predictability are at an all time low in most new stepfamilies which naturally leads to conflict and chaos. Conflict of Loyalties are felt by every member of the system. Parent vs child re: Parents can be otherwise occupied with divorce, separation and the demands of a new relationship or family. Parenting between the custodial and visiting parent is often in conflict. Parents experience fear of the loss of popularity with and love of the child which in turn guides their behaviors. As a result there is often an increased amount of permissive parenting. Guilt creates overindulgence towards children and shame inhibits discipline. These can be caused or brought on by the traumatic stress of divorce and post divorce. There is a general lack of awareness of the dynamics of divorce and re-coupling. Individuals easily get into blaming each other instead of recognizing that divorce and the step dynamics themselves are the reason for most conflict and stress. Few parents have a concrete co-parenting plan but desperately need one. Many indulge in bad-mouthing of the other parent. The parent who is badmouthed does not know how to neutralize badmouthing. Often children are made to judge, and often choose, between their blood parents. Most often, upsets or conflict are due to lack of planning. The new parent may feel excluded, experience a lack of a role and receive little or no support from the blood parent their partner. Upsets occur between the new couple, not to mention between the custodial and visiting parents. Children are often caught in the middle or at the very least, are aware of the tension and conflict between those involved. Full acknowledgement is given to Jeanette Lofas, Ph.

### 4: Conflict Resolution Skills: Building the Skills That Can Turn Conflicts into Opportunities

*Resolving Common Conflicts of Blended Families* Joining two families is a major undertaking in any subsequent marriage. Use these common-scenario solutions to help squash your biggest worries.

With specific instruction, firm accountability, and gentle discipline, we were reminded weekly that the Word has practical answers, effectual truths, and an abundance of encouragement towards attainable goals that can be reached by making simple, but significant changes in how we respond to conflict, how we prioritize, and how we demonstrate love for one another, in spite of the temporal circumstances that sometimes seem to overwhelm us. Not only are we in a better place relationally today, but we have practical tools to use in resolving conflict, maintaining right priorities, recognizing furtive idols, and dealing with difficult situations "and each other" with even more love and an abundance of grace. I cannot recommend this powerful, precious ministry to you highly enough, and will be forever grateful to everyone involved for the restoration of gladness and joy that we had somehow lost in the process of learning to live with and to love all of our multi-faceted and very diverse blended family. We are all better for it, and are careful to give God the glory while also deeply appreciating His faithful servants at Grace who loved, listened to, comforted, encouraged and talked to us while we made our way back to the center of His will. Marriage Restoration After Adultery Biblical counseling saved our marriage of thirty plus years. We had grown apart to the point we were living separate lives and divorce was on the horizon. We barely talked much less express love for one another. Biblical counseling brought us back together and more importantly back to Christ. We thank God and give him the glory of saving our marriage through use of biblical counseling. Today we are in a happy healthy relationship endeavoring to worship Christ the best we can. And be a loving companion for each other. All we can say is thank God for biblical counseling and its Counselors. Ernie Baker one-on-one prior to meeting for mediation. After approximately weeks of preparation, we met with the Grace Counseling Team - we confessed our sins, giving glory to God. I am learning to live each day for Christ, and have a strong desire to tell others what He has done for me. Baker, and your Team Jackie, Brad, and Marilyn for all you have done, and the change I have experienced since reconciliation - a huge burden has been lifted. Family Mediation Our family was being destroyed Thanks to pinpointed Bible study and biblical counseling at the FBC Grace Center, we have been able to get focused back on the things that really matter to God, including eliminating the idol of comfort and digging out of the pit of depression and misunderstanding. The Word of God is the "key" to wholeness and healing. Through a process of mediation, we worked through issues, forgave one another and were reconciled. The counseling sessions have helped us tremendously in every aspect of our lives. It feels so good to arrive at my house now at the end of a busy, stressful day at work. We no longer have that feeling of frustration and hopelessness. We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

### 5: Three Problems and Conflicts of a Blended Family - Cyberparent

*Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.*

Three Keys to Forging Strong Relationships between Children and their Stepdads In a study published in the Journal of Social Work, Brigham Young University BYU researchers identified three keys that will increase the odds children and their stepdads will have a close, happy relationships and the stepfamily will thrive. The three keys are: However, the record needle scratched when I read number two. Can children really know their mom and stepdads relationship is a good one? Shafer seems to be inferring a minimum number of arguments whatever that is in front of the kids or the absence of arguments altogether is what will communicate to the children the couple relationship is a good one. Is conflict in a relationship bad? Several things come to mind: These discussions need to take place out of earshot of the kids. I liken this to forming an unhealthy alliance with someone who is not emotionally mature enough to deal with the information given. Everyone loses when you engage in secrets. Secrets undermine the credibility and authority of the parent and weakens the foundation of the marriage and in turn the family. If they are children of divorce they have already experienced an unhealthy relationship. Part of modeling a good relationship is engaging in conflict. Engaging in conflict is a natural part of our existence. Specifically, embracing and resolving conflict in a safe and healthy way is what we should want in our marriages and what we should be modeling for our children. I grew up in a household where the arguments I witnessed were loud and aggressive. Along the way, I internalized conflict was something to be both feared and avoided at all costs. This fear and avoidance manifested itself by suppressing my emotions because I felt they were wrong. We need to experience and embrace all of them and accept what they bring us. Like road signs emotions are signs that help you navigate the road of relationships. We need to accept the emotional expressions of those we are in relationship with and use them to adjust our course as necessary along the way. Our relationships and especially our marriage grows when we work through conflict and honestly confront our emotions. Consistently taking healthy action to resolve conflict in our marriage and blended families will prevent the build up of resentment and keep our marriages and blended families healthy and strong. Get the book *Resolving Conflict in the Blended Family*.

### 6: Managing the Fires of Conflict in Marriage | Smart Stepfamilies

*There are now more blended families (couples with children from previous marriages) and single-parent families in the U.S. than traditional ones. Here, the Frydengers outline different styles of resolving conflict, give practical advice on discipline, and stress the centrality of the couple's.*

Resolving this common issue takes a lot of time and patience. Encourage your children to talk openly about their feelings, but make sure that this is done in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

**Sibling Rivalry** When a blended family forms, the struggles for performance increase and become more complicated. While competition among siblings exists in all families, rivalry with non-biological siblings can be especially bitter. Expect more frequent fighting, and encourage the children to compete against their own personal best instead of what their siblings may be capable of doing.

**Identity Confusion** Several aspects of forming a new family can create identity issues for young children. Another common identity issue is for children to feel confused about their feelings for a step-parent. While many kids dislike the new spouse or partner at the start, positive feelings often develop fairly quickly. While this may seem like a positive thing, it can cause difficulties for children sorting out their feelings for their real father versus the father they live with on a day-to-day basis according to Dr. Jeanette Lofas of the Stepfamily Foundation.

**Legal Disputes** Two families becoming one can add to the legal issues that arose when each original family separated. In a divorce, one partner may get the family house, but when a new partner comes into the picture, the legal agreements may need to be changed.

**Financial Difficulties** Blended families often have large numbers of children, and all of the costs associated with raising them. Money may be scarce because of divorce proceedings. Solving these financial issues is difficult, but can take a large amount of worry off the shoulders of the parents. Get help from a financial advisor to get your finances on track; consult a lawyer if you think you are not receiving enough child support, or are paying too much in alimony to your ex.

Blending finances in blended families is difficult, but with a little help you can get things in order. If one half of the new family moves into the home of the other half, expect considerable amounts of fights and tears in the first few months. Start from square one on bedrooms: Create schedules for who may use the family computer when, and how long each child may play the Playstation. Encourage the children to share, and provide praise or rewards when they do so. Coordinating after-school schedules can be difficult. As with organizing the house, try to give each child equal amounts of time and extra-curricular opportunities. Scheduling in time with the parent with whom each child is no longer living can also throw a wrench in the scheduling. A few different options exist: Have all of the kids go to their other parent on the same weekend each month to ensure the kids are all in the blended family enough to bond with one another and work out the issues that arise. Have all of the children go to their other parent on alternate weekends so that you have time to share with your own kids without the new siblings being present. On a week-to-week rotation schedule, ensure that the kids are not ships passing in the night.

**Solving Blended Family Problems** While blended families face even more family challenges than most nuclear families do, these problems can be addressed and solved with a little patience, and a lot of love and good communication. Was this page useful?

### 7: Ways to Manage Blended Families for Stepfamily Success

*Consistently taking healthy action to resolve conflict in our marriage and blended families will prevent the build up of resentment and keep our marriages and blended families healthy and strong. Get the book *Resolving Conflict in the Blended Family*.*

I shared that I was concerned about how my adult stepdaughter was doing—she was facing a difficult situation thousands of miles away from home. We are expected to give our love, time and often money, as Real Parents do; to understand and always put the relationship of the biological parent and child first sometimes above the marriage; to provide our stepchild with a positive role model but defer to the biological parent on matters of house rules and discipline. Raising children in a blended family can be challenging, frustrating, and overwhelming at times. It can be a real test of endurance to manage to stay together through some of the tough times that can erupt with your stepchildren. Statistics show that the most common type of family in America today—65 percent of us—are part of a blended family where there are biological and non-biological parents present. Complex and often misunderstood, it offers unique challenges—and the opportunity for rich emotional rewards. These 5 tips can help you keep issues from escalating: Be mindful of your expectations. When blending a family, everyone has expectations. Unspoken or unrecognized expectations can set you up for conflict. You may be expecting your stepchild to love and respect you. That child may be feeling confused or insecure and actually behave in a way that communicates the exact opposite. Unmet expectations can lead to disappointment, anger, hurt and resentment. Ask yourself these questions: Was the expectation realistic or fair? Did the other person have any idea you had that expectation? Is it an expectation you can let go of, or is it important enough to discuss as a family? Remember, you can only control yourself and your own reactions. When you have expectations for others to behave or feel a certain way, you have no control over that. Also, be mindful of the expectations you have of yourself. We all have expectations for ourselves as parents. Rarely do we always live up to them percent of the time. He would give dirty looks, ignore him if my husband said anything to him and in general just treat him with utter disrespect. This is extremely challenging and requires patience. This stepfather worked hard at treating his stepson with nothing less than respect. This is an excellent way to role model respect for both your stepchild and yourself. If it feels like there are competing intentions occurring, communicate with your mate. You may need to speak with a therapist who can help you find common ground. Many stepparents have expressed feeling trapped in a situation with a stepchild whose behavior is awful: Whenever a child behaves this way, even biological parents can feel trapped and terrified. Communication is the key. In blended families, you have the coming together of two sets of rules, discipline and expectations. These differences in parenting can have a very tangible effect. This works as long as the two of you agree on a fair method of discipline for all kids. But remember, all families are different and have different needs. One stepchild we saw in therapy actually complained about her stepfather never providing any discipline for her. She felt he favored her half-brother over her because he would discipline his own son, but avoided giving her consequences or setting limits with her. Although this is a rare case, it brings up the importance of finding what works best for you, your spouse and your stepchildren. Communication between you and your mate is essential for a successful family, in any situation. Do you agree on parenting styles, discipline techniques, rules of the house and expectations? Blended and stepfamilies can be tough at times, but they can also be an opportunity for unique and loving relationships. Sometimes, surviving through conflicts can bring people closer together, but it takes commitment, forgiveness and an open heart. Show Comments 95 You must log in to leave a comment. Create one for free! Responses to questions posted on EmpoweringParents. We cannot diagnose disorders or offer recommendations on which treatment plan is best for your family. Please seek the support of local resources as needed. If you need immediate assistance, or if you and your family are in crisis, please contact a qualified mental health provider in your area, or contact your statewide crisis hotline. We value your opinions and encourage you to add your comments to this discussion. We ask that you refrain from discussing topics of a political or religious nature. She specializes in working with teens with behavioral disorders, and has also

## RESOLVING CONFLICT IN THE BLENDED FAMILY pdf

raised a child with Oppositional Defiant Disorder. She works with children and families and has in-depth training in the area of substance abuse.

### 8: Blended Family Problems | LoveToKnow

*Three common conflicts and problems of blended families and the parents who are blending their families. 1. One spouse feels his/her children are treated unequally in the family.*

Blended Family and Step-Parenting Tips How to Bond with Your Stepchildren and Deal with Stepfamily Issues Since many remarriages include children from previous relationships, blended families or stepfamilies are more common than ever. When families "blend", though, things rarely progress smoothly. While blending families requires adjustment for everyone involved, these guidelines can help your new family work through the growing pains. No matter how strained or difficult things seem at first, with open communication, mutual respect, and plenty of love and patience, you can develop a close bond with your new stepchildren and form an affectionate and successful blended family. What is a blended family? A blended family or stepfamily forms when you and your partner make a life together with the children from one or both of your previous relationships. The process of forming a new, blended family can be both a rewarding and challenging experience. Making your blended family a success Trying to make a blended family a replica of your first family, or the ideal nuclear family, can often set family members up for confusion, frustration, and disappointment. Instead, embrace the differences and consider the basic elements that make a successful blended family: Without the marriage, there is no family. All relationships are respectful. Respect should be given not just based on age, but also based on the fact that you are all family members now. Members of your blended family may be at various life stages and have different needs teens versus toddlers, for example. They may also be at different stages in accepting this new family. Family members need to understand and honor those differences. After a few years of being blended, hopefully the family will grow and members will choose to spend more time together and feel closer to one another. Planning your blended family Having survived a painful divorce or separation and then managed to find a new loving relationship, the temptation can often be to rush into remarriage and a blended family without first laying solid foundations. But by taking your time, you give everyone a chance to get used to each other, and used to the idea of marriage and forming a new family. Too many changes at once can unsettle children. Blended families have the highest success rate if the couple waits two years or more after a divorce to remarry, instead of piling one drastic family change onto another. Get to know them. Love and affection take time to develop. Find ways to experience "real life" together. Try to get the kids used to your partner and their children in daily life situations. Make parenting changes before you marry. Agree with your new partner how you intend to parent together, and then make any necessary adjustments to your parenting styles before you remarry. Your kids or new partner may put you in a situation where you feel you have to choose between them. Think of it as making small investments that may one day yield a lot of interest. Given the right support, kids should gradually adjust to the prospect of marriage and being part of a new family. It is your job to communicate openly, meet their needs for security, and give them plenty of time to make a successful transition. Supporting a Loved One Through Grief and Loss When a parent has died, the remarriage of the remaining parent may trigger unfinished grieving in children. Give them space and time to grieve. Bonding with your new blended family You will increase your chances of successfully bonding with your new stepchildren by thinking about what they need. Children want to feel: Children want to be able to count on parents and step-parents. Children of divorce have already felt the upset of having people they trust let them down, and may not be eager to give second chances to a new step-parent. Kids like to see and feel your affection, although it should be a gradual process. Kids often feel unimportant or invisible when it comes to decision making in the new blended family. Recognize their role in the family when you make decisions. Heard and emotionally connected. Creating an honest and open environment free of judgment will help kids feel heard and emotionally connected to a new step-parent. Show them that you can view the situation from their perspective. Children of all ages respond to praise and encouragement and like to feel appreciated. Let your stepchild set the pace Every child is different and will show you how slow or fast to go as you get to know them. Some kids may be more open and willing to engage. Shy, introverted children may require you to slow down and give them more time to warm up to you. Given enough time, patience, and

interest, most children will eventually give you a chance. Use routines and rituals to bond. Creating family routines and rituals can help you bond with your new stepchildren and unite the family as a whole. Plan to incorporate at least one new family ritual, such as Sunday visits to the beach, a weekly game night, or special ways to celebrate a family birthday. Establishing regular family meals, for example, offers a great chance for you to talk and bond with your children and stepchildren as well as encourage healthy eating habits. Helping children adjust. Kids of different ages and genders tend to adjust differently to a blended family. You will need to adjust your approach with different age levels and genders, but your goal of establishing a trusting relationship is the same. Young children under 10 may adjust more easily because they thrive on cohesive family relationships. They are more accepting of a new adult. Have more daily needs to be met. Adolescents aged 11-14 may have the most difficult time adjusting to a stepfamily. They need more time to bond before accepting a new person as a disciplinarian. They may not demonstrate their feelings openly, but may be even more sensitive than young children when it comes to needing love, support, discipline, and attention. Teenagers 15 or older may have less involvement in stepfamily life. They prefer to separate from the family as they form their own identities. They may not be open in their expression of affection or sensitivity, but still want to feel important, loved and secure.

**Gender Differences** – general tendencies: Both boys and girls in stepfamilies tend to prefer verbal affection, such as praises or compliments, rather than physical closeness, like hugs and kisses. Girls tend to be uncomfortable with physical displays of affection from their stepfather. Boys seem to accept a stepfather more quickly than girls.

**Blended family challenges** As you blend two families, differences in parenting, discipline, lifestyle, etc. Agreeing on consistent guidelines about rules, chores, discipline, and allowances will show the kids that you and your spouse intend to deal with issues in a similar and fair way. Other common challenges include: In blended families, there may be children with birthdays closer to one another than possible with natural siblings, or the new step-parent may be only a few years older than the eldest child. One step-parent may have never been a parent before, and therefore may have no experience of the different stages children go through. Changes in family relationships. If both parents remarry partners with existing families, it can mean children suddenly find themselves with different roles in two blended families. For example, one child may be the eldest in one stepfamily, but the youngest in the other. Blending families may also mean one child loses their uniqueness as the only boy or girl in the family.

**Difficulty in accepting a new parent.** If children have spent a long time in a one-parent family, or still nurture hopes of reconciling their parents, it may be difficult for them to accept a new person. Coping with demands of others. In blended families, planning family events can get complicated, especially when there are custody considerations to take into account. Children may grow frustrated that vacations, parties, or weekend trips now require complicated arrangements to include their new stepsiblings. Changes in family traditions. Most families have very different ideas about how annual events such as holidays, birthdays, and family vacations should be spent. Try to find some common ground or create new traditions for your blended family.

**Strengthening your blended family** Establishing trust is crucial to creating a strong, cohesive blended family. At first, children may feel uncertain about their new family and resist your efforts to get to know them. This is often simply apprehension about having to share their parent with a new spouse and stepsiblings. Try not to take their negative attitudes personally. Instead, build trust and strengthen your new blended family by:

- Creating clear boundaries
- Discuss the role each step-parent will play in raising their respective children, as well as changes in household rules.
- Establish the step-parent as more of a friend or counselor rather than a disciplinarian.
- Let the biological parent remain primarily responsible for discipline until the step-parent has developed solid bonds with the kids.
- Create a list of family rules. Discuss the rules with the children and post them in a prominent place.
- Understand what the rules and boundaries are for the kids in their other residence, and, if possible, be consistent.
- Keeping ALL parents involved

Children will adjust better to the blended family if they have access to both biological parents. It is important if all parents are involved and work toward a parenting partnership. Let the kids know that you and your ex-spouse will continue to love them and be there for them throughout their lives. Communicating often and openly. The way a blended family communicates says a lot about the level of trust between family members. When communication is clear, open, and frequent, there are fewer opportunities for misunderstanding and more possibilities for connection, whether it is between parent and child, step-parent and stepchild, or between

step-siblings. Uncertainty and worry about family issues comes from poor communication, so talk as much as possible.

### 9: The 10 Step Family Dragons

*Approximately 65% of remarriages include children from past marriages, which means the problems of a past family system sometimes cross over to a new one. While family conflict happens in all types of families, blended families have many unique issues that many people are unaware of until they start dealing with them.*

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