

The Functional Family

Step Parents and Blended Families

1) Manage your Expectations

- a) Being a stepparent is one of the most difficult roles any adult will ever assume. So much pain can be avoided if you can agree on some very basic definitions of that role.
- b) This is the Starting Point:
 - i) First, identify what you can agree on and narrow your differences.
 - ii) Secondly, consult the bible and seek some Godly counsel to help you resolve your differences.
 - iii) Third, write down your expectations and revisit them from time to time.

2) Be Patient.

- a) Biological families are created slowly. But in a blended family, two thirds of the family exists before the newcomer enters the house.
- b) Change is hard on most children. They have finally become used to being with one parent at a time and have a hard time welcoming another change.
- c) It can be difficult of a child of divorced or a deceased parent to automatically to love stepparent.
 - i) In fact, some times a child will be conflicted and often feel like they are betraying their bio parent.
 - ii) Be patient and pray for a complete healing. In time God has a way of helping step parents and step children make the bond.

Note to stepparents: rather than focusing on the conflicts in your home (and there will be conflicts), invest your energy in creating good times. There's been enough pain and confusion... become an agent of healing.

3) Don't Pressure Your Partner.

- a) Sometimes the biological parent pushes the new spouse onto a fast track. They expect the children to fall in love with the stepparent and expect the stepparent to become adoring of their biological children.

- b) On the other hand, the stepparent will sometimes put pressure on the biological parent to force his children to offer approval and affection immediately.

Note: Appreciate the power of the birth family.

- 4) Respect Your Spouse's Family Dynamics.

- 5) Do not allow the children to Divide you as a Couple.
 - a) Be sure to establish new parenting styles that are built on sound biblical foundations.
 - b) Don't sweat the small stuff... find a peaceful compromise. Choose your battles... if everything is a big deal you will wear one another out.
 - c) Make a united front before the children.
 - i) Work out your differences alone as a couple behind closed doors.

- 6) Make an Determined Commitment - WE WILL Make this Marriage Work.
 - a) Marrying a person who already has children is NOT an experiment.
 - b) When you chose your spouse you said "I do" to the calling of (step) parenthood.

Mark 10:9 "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Blending with the Children

- 1) Establish the Rules of the House.
 - a) Write them down and reinforce them during regular family meetings.

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
 - b) This is especially important if you are marrying into a family where the children are 10 yrs and older.

- 2) Let the Biological Parent take the Lead in Discipline.

It is vital that both parents are united in regards to discipline but it will save a lot of family trouble if the step parent yields the lead to the bio parent.

- 3) The Step Parent should become an Ally and Support of the Children.
 - a) Society has vilified the step parent roles in the eyes of children. The enemy will do his best to turn the children against a stepmother or father and thereby destroying the marriage.
 - b) Assuming the role of ally and supporter is the best way to shut the mouth of every accusing spirit trying to divide you from the child.
- 4) Have a Realistic Expectation about the Level of Closeness with the Step Children.
 - a) Relationships are built with shared experiences and the investment of time.
- 5) The Step Parent Should Support and Encourage the Child's Relationship with the Biological Parents.

Six Mistakes that Step-parents Must Avoid

1) Speaking without listening

When you listen to your step-kids you might just hear things they are not saying. They may still be angry with their parents for divorcing. They may be reacting in fear of rejection, or the fear of being alone. They may also be saying you are moving too fast: telling you they need more time to adjust.

2) Having to always be Right

Many stepparents tell me they feel like the marines – needing to come in and clean up the mess of this dysfunctional family. They have a tendency to treat their calling as a job. So they bark out orders and expect the little troops to salute.

There is more than one way to do most things. Move slowly when it comes to enacting change.

3) Staying Angry

Staying angry at your ex-spouse (or your spouse's ex) is a great way to blow up a blended family. These emotions are not good for you ---- and the kids can read your expressions. An unforgiving and angry stepparent brings confusion and insecurity into the home.

Resist arguing for arguing sake. The children should be your central concern.

4) Making Children the Messengers

This is like playing tug-of-war and making the kids the rope. Don't empower your kids to represent your feelings or give your ex-spouse instructions, you are only adding more stress to their difficulties. And by all means, do not have the kids ask your ex-spouse for money. If you have not received your child support that is an issue to be discussed by adults, not kids.

5) Another mistake is: Keeping a Record of Wrongs

1 Corinthians 13:4,5 "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps NOT RECORD OF WRONGS"

6) Forgetting to Laugh

Someone said, "a good laugh is like sunshine in a home".

Laughter reduces stress and turns off the fighting machine.

Blending a family can be the most difficult thing an adult and a child will ever have to accomplish. A little sense of humor in a home will open up the windows and let the Spirit of God come in.

The Bible says, *a merry heart is like a medicine!*