

Blended Family

QUICK REFERENCE COUNSELING KEYS Excerpt

The Perfect Blend . . .

Do you feel that the mix of your family is basically a mess? If you mix flour, sugar, eggs, and oil together . . . it takes some work to get them to blend. But when the mixture is exposed to the heat of an oven for just the right amount of time, a chemical reaction occurs that bonds the separate ingredients into a delicious dessert. Likewise, when members of a blended family are subjected to the heat of new living conditions and differing personalities, it takes some work to come together as a connected family unit. Each individual needs to make every effort to promote peace and build one another up so that the family will be bonded in love and in unity.

*“Let us pursue what makes for peace
and for mutual upbuilding.”
(Romans 14:19)*

Q: “I have two children by another marriage, and my husband has three. We seem to constantly disagree on discipline issues. How can we overcome the serious differences that are dividing our family?”

It is common for each spouse to put his or her child's interests first. But when the children's interests are first, over that of the other spouse and his or her children, it becomes a recipe for dissension. Although blended families such as yours tend to be very difficult, there is hope. Both you and your husband must be willing to agree on appropriate behavior and discipline for all the children. Do absolutely nothing until you can apply the policy to which you both agree. Ultimately, you will begin to discipline by taking each other's feelings into account. As you learn to agree in other areas of conflict, you will begin learning how to act in the interests of all family members.¹

*“Let each of you look not only to his own
interests, but also to the interests of others.”
(Philippians 2:4)*

The Stepfamily Sabotage²

Although no two families are alike, all will have varying degrees of the following emotions:

Loss

- Children are grieving the loss of a parent.
- Spouses are grieving the loss of significant relationships.

Fear

- Children fear the unknown.
- Spouses fear a second failure.
- Stepparents fear rejection.

Anger

- Both children and stepparents may be angry over lack of acceptance.
- Both children and stepparents may be angry over unfulfilled expectations, dreams, and goals.

Guilt

- Children feel guilty about being responsible for the failure of the first marriage.
- Spouses feel guilty over the divorce and its effect on the children.
- Spouses feel guilty over not loving stepchildren.

*“Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.”*
(Isaiah 43:18)

The Shared Custody Shuffle

Many have found that a shared custody arrangement is not always in the best interests of a child. Children seem to have more difficulty being constantly on the move. But if you do share custody, it is important to remember to do the following when a child returns to your home:

- Stop what you are doing.
- Greet with a warm hug.
- Allow reentry time.
- Give focused attention.
- Ask non-threatening questions.
- Expect children to try to manipulate your feelings.
- Don't assume all they say is true.
- Distance yourself emotionally from any anger.

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Let us pursue what makes for peace
and for mutual upbuilding.”*
(Romans 14:19)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Colossians 3:12–15

Insights for the Instant Parent³

- **Remember** that you're not replacing a parent; you're offering a new relationship.
- **Reinforce** your commitment to the marriage for the benefit of the child.
- **Regard** your role as God's example of what a marriage is intended to be.
- **Rebuild** a gradual authority system to function by biblical guidelines.
- **Refuse** to judge or criticize the missing parent.
- **Resist** the temptation to withdraw emotionally if you are not immediately accepted.
- **Resolve** to pray for the child and for your marriage.
- **Relinquish** your right to be respected and loved—it may take a very long time.

“Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”
(Hebrews 12:1–2)

Blended Family Bonding⁴

Build a solid relationship with your spouse.
(Genesis 2:24)

Observe family traditions and holidays with flexibility. (Romans 12:10)

Nurture the children's nuclear family relationships.
(Exodus 20:12)

Determine to stand firm. (Proverbs 29:15, 17)

Initiate family structure. (Proverbs 3:12)

Negotiate mutual ground. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Grow in dependence on Christ. (Colossians 2:6–7)

*“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”
(Colossians 2:6–7)*

Related Topics . . .

- Adoption:
A Child Born in the Heart
- Conflict Resolution:
Solving People Problems
- Dysfunctional Family:
Making Peace with Your Past
- Marriage:
To Have and to Hold
- Parenting:
Steps for Successful Parenting

1. Tom Frydenger and Adrienne Frydenger, *The Blended Family* (Old Tappan, NJ: Chosen, 1984), 129–33.

2. Frydenger and Frydenger, *The Blended Family*, 14, 61, 64; Tom Frydenger and Adrienne Frydenger, *Resolving Conflict in the Blended Family* (Tarrytown, NY: Chosen, 1991), 30–32, 82, 89–90; Charles Cerling, *Remarriage: Opportunity to Grow* (Old Tappan, NJ: Power, 1988), 26.

3. For this section, see Angela Elwell Hunt, *Loving Someone Else's Child* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 28, 29, 147–48; Beth E. Brown, *When You're Mom No. 2: A Word of Hope for Stepmothers* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine, 1991), 184; Frydenger and Frydenger, *The Blended Family*, 151–53; Cerling, *Remarriage: Opportunity to Grow*, 88–89; Don Houck and LaDean Houck, *Remarried with Children: a Blended Couple's Journey to Harmony* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1991), 179.

4. For this section see Frydenger and Frydenger, *The Blended Family*, 176–78, 103; Cerling, *Remarriage: Opportunity to Grow*, 87, 91–92.

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