



Stepfamily Challenges

Film

Have you ever had a conversation with your spouse similar to the one Rose and Jay had?

Teaching

- 42% of adults in the United States have a step relationship (stepparent, a step or half sibling, or a stepchild).
- 13% of adults in the United States are stepparents.
- 40% of married couples with children in the United States are stepcouples.
- Approximately 33% of all weddings in the United States form stepfamilies.

As is evident from the statistics, stepfamilies, or as they are also known, blended families, are prevalent in our society. Perhaps one of the most important lessons for remarried couples with children to know is that a subsequent marriage is nothing like their first. The stepfamily structure introduces a wealth of complexities that require extensive patience and education into the functioning of a stepfamily.

While there are a number of strategies that can be implemented to aid relations in a stepfamily, perhaps the most important is honor. Honor between the spouses, the adults and children, and between the siblings acts as a lubricant that reduces friction in the relationship. As honor is shown through attitudes and behaviors; the relationships are supported while everyone learns how to navigate the new family structure.

Romans 12:10 commands believers to be devoted to one another in love, and to honor others above themselves. This verse is critical to stepfamilies due to the built-in complexities that come along with combining two families. Stepfamilies can be successful, but they require patience, love, and honor.

Call to Action/Homework

Consider how you can show honor to each person in your stepfamily.

Discussion

1. What is the most challenging part of living in a stepfamily?
2. How can you partner with your mate to form a strong foundation that supports your newly combined family?



The Successful Stepfamily, Part 1

Film

Rose blamed Jay for his inactivity with Andrew. Was this fair?

Teaching

Forming a new family from two previous families can be a challenge. Dr. Deborah Whitt suggests six factors that can help stepfamilies be successful, and the first three are presented below.

- 1. Co-parenting between the former spouses, and between the currently married couple in the stepfamily.** Although relations can be strained between former spouses, it is essential for the children's sake that the biological parents agree to be cordial, and partner with one another and the new spouse(s) so the transition is as smooth as possible for the children.
- 2. Balancing the marriage relationship with the parent-child relationship.** One of the common challenges cited by remarried couples is that their marriage takes a back seat to rearing the children. If the marriage relationship is not nurtured, the marriage can become strained, which puts the remarried couples into another troubled marriage situation.
- 3. Emotional healing of individuals in the stepfamily.** When stepfamilies are forming, it can be easy to forget that there are real people who are in a foreign situation who are unreasonably expected to know how to navigate the situation immediately. Each person in the family has emotions that have been injured in some way by a former spouse, current spouse, biological child, stepchild, in-law, or other family member. These emotional injuries are real, and should be addressed through counseling, therapy, or other assistance from a trained professional.

Discussion

1. Which of these factors stands out to you as the most important for your family in its current state?
2. How do you deal with your emotional injuries?

Call to Action/Homework

Take time to discuss these success factors, and formulate a plan to begin implementing them into your family.



The Successful Stepfamily, Part 2

Film

What did Jay communicate to Rose and Andrew when he shot Andrew with the gun at the end of the video?

Teaching

Forming a new family from two previous families can be a challenge. Dr. Deborah Whitt suggests six factors can help stepfamilies be successful, and the final three factors are presented below.

- 1. Appropriate communication between all members of the family.** It is necessary that all members of the family communicate in an appropriate manner. Although tensions may rise, it is important for family members to push themselves to talk. This can be challenging when working with teenagers (particularly boys) who tend to take remarriage and a new family harder than girls.
- 2. Spending time together as a family, and allowing time to develop as a family unit.** Researchers suggest that it takes a new stepfamily at least four years to get to a place where it is operating smoothly as a family. Of course, the more things a family can do together, the more opportunity it has to bond. Initially, spending time together should include doing activities that individual family members enjoy, then focus on activities that the family enjoys doing together.
- 3. Commitment to the stepfamily and stepfamily marriage.** Despite the challenges associated with stepfamilies, being committed to the family and marriage are important if the stepfamily is to be successful. One of the challenges of stepfamily life is the remarried couple not being satisfied in their marriage (this is usually related to how well the couple co-parents). Nevertheless, for the family to be successful, the remarried couple must be committed to one another, and the stepfamily-building process (see [Guide to Step-parenting & Blended Families](#)).

Call to Action/Homework

Take time to discuss these success factors, and formulate a plan to begin implementing them into your family.

Discussion



1. Which of these factors stands out to you as the most important for your family in its current state?
2. How well do you co-parent with your spouse?