

## 20 Things to Know about Stepfamilies

- #1 – Relationship openness, trust, connection, and realistic expectations are in the process of healing after loss by death or divorce. Rushing it will slow the process and create resentment.
- #2 – Belonging and being attached to a secure adult is a challenge for the adults as well as the kids.
- #3 – Stepfamily Systems have “insiders” as well as “outsiders” that are to be respected. For inclusion to happen cycles of stability and setbacks are normal the first 2 to 4 years.
- #4 – The strongest bond for the Stepfamily is a unified couple.

“If you ain’t got the marriage – You ain’t got nothin’”

- #5 – Each person at the beginning of the “blend” is on physiological “high alert.” Learn how to calmly bring peace and help one another feel safe and understood. By stabilizing and acknowledging emotions, it builds trust slowly – and it’s good for your health.
- #6 – Successful Stepfamilies keep hostility to a low roar which allows everyone to have a respectful voice.
- #7 – To be who you are and enhance a new family identity, safety is an important stepfamily value.
- #8 – Old traditions and family events are honored from your past so we can build new ones together.
- #9 – The new couple remains in the process of sharing their views and history of their children with one another. This is a respectful way of providing perspective to the new step-parent.
- #10 - Stepfamilies don’t blend – there will be some who “buy-in” and others that will remain aloof. People never forget what their family was and that is OK – On average it takes 5 to 7 years to blend.
- #11 – Each member will ask themselves and the new family system:
  - Will I belong? Will I be safe? Will I be treated fairly? Will I be allowed to see my other parent? Who are all these new strange people and can I trust them?
  - It’s normal for the first 2 years to be turbulent!
- #12 – There is more stress on stepfamilies due to:
  - Difficulty adjusting to a new place and rules.
  - Very few shared meanings or values.
  - Conflict and power struggles due to the loyalty to “my first family” which feels like disconnection.

#13 – Stepfamilies are weird because:

- Children can sabotage a marriage and family system, “You’re not my Dad or Mom” – you’re an outsider!
- Parents can upset another’s authority position. Triangulation happens with kids stuck in the middle.

#14 – Parent and child loyalties can be spilt, ambiguous and complex. Sometimes they can be hostile or non-accepting.

#15 – Empathy between parent and bio-kids can reduce after remarriage happens. Parents don’t perceive the shift of empathy as soon as the kids do.

#16 – To expect the new stepparent to have immediate bonds, high tolerance and the same level of love is unrealistic. Remember blending successfully can’t be rushed.

#17 – A former spouse respectfully dead or alive will hold influence on the new family.  
NO- It’s not fair!

#18 – Everyone enters the “blend” as wounded adults or kids who need space for healthy grief and healing.

#19 – Internal and external unresolved emotional wounds hamper communication and the ability to make decisions and problem solving as a team (the new couple parenting team).

#20 – Children can become “pawns” in co-parent battles which harm their safety and cause them to become passive/aggressive or flat out rebellious.

There is good news about stepfamilies. As they learn how to be flexible, safety grows which brings stability from a past of brokenness. A solid healthy remarriage can turn the tide for the kids to have healthy marriages and redeem the family’s legacy. With a supportive community and encouragement, your stepfamily can bloom!



Gil and Brenda Stuart  
RestoredAndRemarried.com  
360-904-2117