

“Guide for Stepparents”

SO, YOU'RE A STEPPARENT!

That is not an easy job. Just being a parent in this day and age is hard enough. But to step in and help rear someone else's children is also difficult.

How much authority do you have?

How do you deal with the hurt, anger, jealousy, and other feelings which may exist in yourself-spouse-child?

How do you relate to the children's biological parents?

These are only some of the questions which frequently trouble stepparents. It is because these questions are so frequently asked, and you are so very important, that we have prepared this pamphlet.

Society has not made your job any easier. All of us have grown up with the fairy-tale image of the “wicked stepmother” who condemns Cinderella to life as a maid. Forms and procedures in school frequently consider only the biological parents and ignore the stepparents.

Stepparents and step-families are, however, a rapidly-growing group in our society. Estimates indicate that there may be as many as twenty-five million stepparents in the United States alone, including those who live in the same household with the children, as well as those who relate less often in “visitation” situations.

STEPPARENT, PARENT AND FRIEND

There are no ex-parents. Your stepchildren will always have two biological parents, whether one of those parents is deceased or divorced from your husband or wife. Regardless of how often or how seldom your stepchildren have contact with their other biological parent, they were first part of that biological family. They will continue to live with that influence.

Since a stepparent is always a relative newcomer to “blended” family, your role has to be newly defined over time. Stepparents usually have three major choices: they can be a “primary” parent, “other” parent, and friend.

“Primary” parent-“Primary” stepparents usually live in the same household with the children. Their relationship with the children is like that of a biological parent, with the same responsibilities and benefits. Children may call them “Mom” and “Dad”, and accept them as full parents. Such a relationship most often exists when the other biological parent has little or no contact with the children. This role is usually acquired over a period of some time, and is more common where the children are very young.