

## Beginning Again....Dating and Remarriage

### Regarding Dating

First and foremost give yourself time to heal.

Part of that healing involves accepting responsibility for your part in the marriage not having been successful. One common mistake made by divorcees is buying into the idea that we were just married to the "wrong person". As a result, we convince ourselves that happiness lies in becoming involved with the "right" person and often prematurely move into a new relationship. Before seeking new relationships, get to know yourself again. This can be a great time to re-evaluate your life goals, as well as, what you may want in a future relationship.

Don't expose your children to people you are casually dating.

It is probably in your child's best interest not to be introduced to someone you are seeing until you feel the relationship has long-term potential. It is not unusual for children to form quick attachments to new people in their lives which could expose them to another significant loss.

Also, when you are casually dating someone, you can't be certain if they are a safe person for our children to be around or if he/she will be an appropriate role model for your children.

### Maintain parent / child boundaries

In other words, kids need to stay kids and parents need to remain the parents. Avoid using your children as your only social outlet or your relationship committee.

### Remarriage

Second marriages can be very rewarding. However, they can also be very stressful. According to statistics, second marriages are at greater risk for ending in divorce than first marriages. Therefore, before entering a new marriage make time to discuss possible obstacles and how you will handle them.

Issues you may want to consider:

What kind of expectations do you and your partner have of each other?

How do you view each others roles in your new family?

How will decisions regarding the family be made? Their children? Your children? discipline? money? holidays?

How will you support each other in your new marriage?

What will you both do to nurture your new relationship?

Step parenting pointers

Don't expect your step-children to instantly love you or even like you.

Be respectful of your stepchildren's feelings and avoid forcing the relationship. Children need time to get to know you before they can establish a meaningful bond.

Don't try to replace children's biological parents.

Even though it may be difficult at times, children need to have their relationships with their biological parents supported by you. Your job as a stepparent is not to be a replacement parent but to be an additional parenting figure. Children can never have too many positive loving adults in their lives.

Becoming a step parent is like jumping into ice cold water.

You never know just how cold it is until you're already in it.

Despite how you are treated by your step-child's other parent do not involve your step-children in the conflict.

Try to separate the other parent's actions from your relationship with your stepchildren. Remember children may sometimes be caught in loyalty conflicts. In the long run the less you involve them, the more they will feel respected.

Don't move into the role of disciplinarian too quickly.

Again take time to get to know your stepchildren and develop your relationship first. Ideally the biological parents should be the primary disciplinarians with stepparents filling a supportive role.

Get used to biting your tongue and taking lots of deep breathes.

Being a stepparent is not easy but it can definitely be worthwhile. The bond you create with your stepchildren can become a special lifelong relationship.