

Relationship Rehab Show

FREE DOWNLOAD: Show #16, September 20, 2022

Stepfamilies Are Different!

Stepping TwoGether: Building a Strong Stepfamily at www.RelationshipRehabShow.com

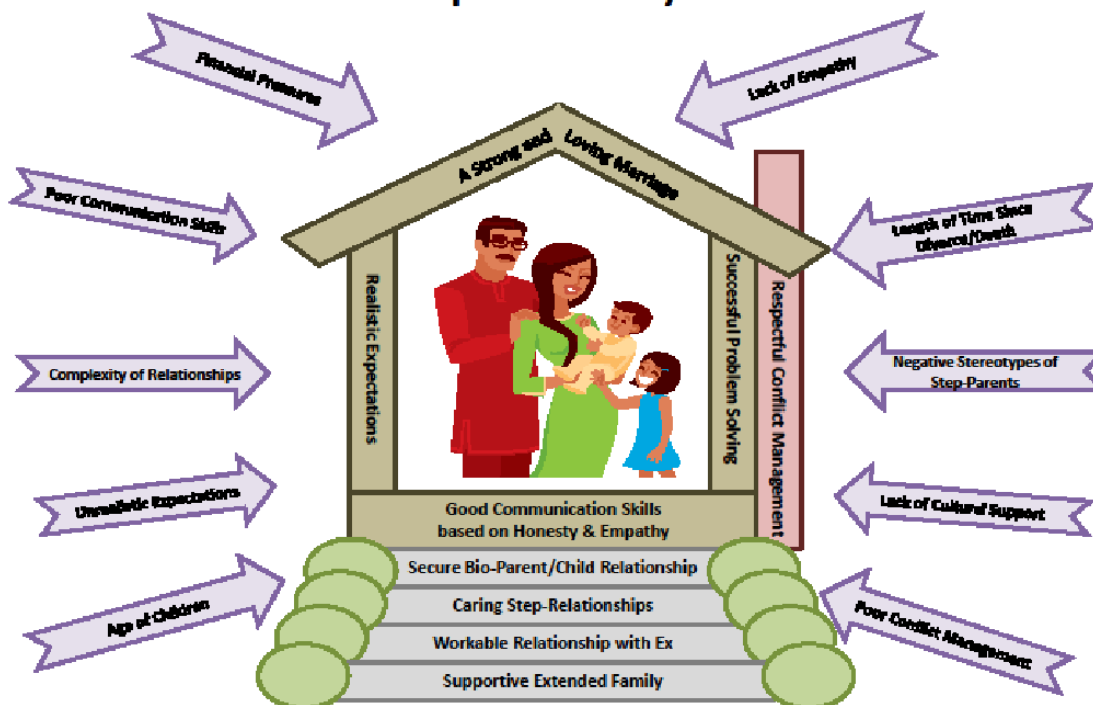
The most common mistake a couple makes when joining their respectful families into a stepfamily is assuming they can make it work the way “normal” (read nuclear or original first-marriage) families work.

The second mistake is to assume the children will quickly adjust and be happy because the parents are happy.

The third mistake is to assume because you’re excited about all this new love energy, that it will be easy for you and your new partner to work things out.

Nuclear or first marriages face four common sources of potential stress: Poor communication skills, Poor or non-existent conflict management and problem-solving skills, Unrealistic expectations, (we’ll be fine just because we love each other) and Lack of Empathy (the ability and the willingness to see another’s person’s point of view as valid.)

The Step-Family House



has those four potential stressors, plus six more!

5. Complexity of Relationships. Children have a new adult...a step-parent, with whom they are expected to “get along” plus, perhaps, step-siblings and assorted other extended family members.
6. The age of the children at the time the stepfamily is formed. Generally, the younger the children, the easier the adjustments, but even that isn’t always true.
7. Added financial pressures. Often couples come to this new union with debts incurred by the previous divorce or loss of a spouse due to death. The expectation is that there will be more income with two working parents, but sometimes there are conflicts about how the income is used, or continued child-support, alimony and legal bills to be paid.
8. The length of time since the death or divorce. Without intense therapy, it takes between 4-7 years to recover from the death or divorce from a spouse. Most people will remarry within two years, bringing unresolved issues with them.
9. Lack of Cultural Support: Sometimes one’s extended family does not welcome or include the new spouse or the spouse’s children. Favoritism from grandparents makes the adjustment of the children more difficult. Some schools are becoming more supportive by sending out notices to both parents, but many schools still leave the burden of a child’s school assignments and activities up to the child to communicate or the parent who gets the notices to communicate about them with the other biological parent.
10. The negative stereotypes of step-parents: I, (Nancy) was trying so hard to befriend my step-children that I neglected to realize my birth children needed my attention more than ever during this enormous transition. And because I introduced some parenting methods for Jim’s son that seemed logical to me, but unfamiliar to Jim, he began seeing me as the wicked, abusive step-mother,

The only antidote for all of this extra stress is for the two adults to learn the skills that will help them navigate through this jungle of new stresses that affect the entire family. A strong and loving marriage will eventually see the stepfamily through to stability, if not total integration.

Learn how to talk without fighting. Episode 15, Learn healthy, respectful anger management, Episode 13 (because no matter how much you love each other in the courtship, there will be issues that trigger anger!) Learn how to take a healthy time out, Episode 14. Adopt a realistic expectation that most stepfamilies take years to adjust and integrate. Nuclear couples take a honeymoon at the beginning of their marriage, but step-couples rarely feel like they’re getting the relief of a real honeymoon for several years down the road. One rule of thumb is that it takes roughly double the age of the child at the time of the stepfamily formation before that child will have fully accepted the stepfamily.

One recommended strategy that is often hard to implement is that the biological parent/s remain in charge of parenting his/her biological child. The step-parent is there to support the parenting decisions of the bio-parent *whether or not they agree with those parenting decisions*. I hope you’ll watch Episode 18, (September 27, 2022) the interview of Kip and Wendy who share how they implemented this parenting strategy with success.

Creating and sustaining a healthy, loving, stable marriage and stepfamily is incredibly hard work that will expose the most immature parts of yourself and give you multiple opportunities for amazing growth. Today I can tell you with total certainty that the work was worth it!

Best wishes,

Nancy Landrum