In the United States alone it is estimated that 43% of marriages are for adults, 65% of those have children and 65-70% of those that have children will result in another divorce (Hetrick xiii). Stepfamilies have almost become a way of life these days and in doing so they have sparked interest in finding ways to promote the well-being of the family members, especially the children. Even though research has found evidence that children are worse off in a stepfamily unit than in a single-parent family (Sweeney) they have found that constant change within in the family structure...
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family (Sweeney), they have it and this settlement seems to be far worse, thus the concern for failed re-marriages (Sweeney). done to help these marriages stay together and how can those ne help the children’s well-being of self?

What research is finding is that most re-marriages are not concen considered as in depth as they should be. This means that even t has done some communication about the future they haven’t dis important topics that they need to hash out fully. When my husb marriage it was because the boys needed a family setting with a r the house, not once did we take into consideration that they may much of the financial responsibility would come to lie on my hus financial obligations that each new parent takes on for the their c children, how much time is expected by both parents to care the other parents children and how much of the household chores by each new parent are things to be considered. Lofas and her co that prenuptial agreements be formed with attorneys before a ma also state that if you are already married that you consider a post These consist of everything from financial support, housing arrar insurance policies, to stepparent involvement. Even though man types of agreements as preparation of the dissolution of marriage will actually release tension within the marriage so that time and placed on other important issues. Lofas likens the prenuptial agr contractor’s blue print of a house plan since it is needed to build would be foolish to build without one (214).

While wanting to provide a good home and family setting for a cl after a divorce the parents need to realize that a remarriage is extent maintain if there is only one set of children involved, increasing more sets of children that are incorporated into that family. Such at least one child then the new husband brings in at least one chi difficult, adding to the stress for the children is if the husband’s c occasion or if they are there on a daily basis. Yet another situation added stress to the children of the family is if the new sets of pare their own. Jeannette Lofas, Ph.D., C.S.W stated that:

The stepchildren may well view the baby as an intruder on their t stepfamily that is in trouble should not decide on having a baby the baby will provide the badly needed unifying factor. That rare

Finding that loss of placement within a family, such as if the mott been switched to being the second oldest now that the new husb part of the family, can cause a great deal of self doubt within the c difficult enough, but what if the youngest child is now no longer try to fit in with younger step siblings or deals with the fact that m baby with the new guy? These situations for children bring inner don’t know how to deal with (Sweeney). Research has shown tha stepfamily units are more likely to have difficulties in school, hav be more likely to have earlier sexual behaviors even be more apt births, and be more prone to suicide attempts (Garnefski & Dieks Bumpass).

The key for the parents is communication in new families such a children in the ways of using words and techniques to solve prob negative nonproductive ways (Kolak & Volling). Many childre d
communicate well and have watched their biological parent’s marriage go up in smoke, without little constructive communication (Busby, Holman & Walker). How can we as parents instill the correct way of dealing with problems and show our children ways of dealing with theirs?

House rules are essential for the new family structure as it helps to show a combined front for the children to see, to show that the marriage is intact and functional. Jeannette Lotus, in her book, Stepparenting: Everything you need to know to make it work, explained that to make sure that the chores are divided, everyone in the house has equal jobs to do via their age, a walk through every room (126). This should be done by the couple first then what they can be shown what the couple is talking about and why. Before the time of the family meeting the couple should have also discussed what the consequences would be and what the time frame is for the expected chore, curfews, playmates, times spent outside the house, pertinent items that the couple needs to have the children know. Having all this information already discussed and wrote down it will help the stepparent be able to be respected as an important member of the family when the other parent is away from the house. This unity shows the children that the biological parent and stepparent have agreed to terms that are needed to make the household function correctly and smoothly. Jeannette Lofas states “…unpopular even bitterly resented…” but as long as you are together as a couple in your beliefs for the family you will “…weather the storm” (51).

“Triangulation” is the single most destructive thing that can be done in a stepfamily situation that is the parent defending the biological child over the new spouse (Hetrick 88). As Dr. Kalter stated,

The stepfather, in his own mind, is the knight on the white horse who is going to rescue his new bride from the drudgery of single parenting and shape up her unruly kids who don’t help around the house and talk back to her. At the same time, she may feel he’s coming down too hard and inserts herself in the middle as the knight in shining armor. Now he feels double-crossed by her and they have marital tensions as well as parenting tensions (Nordheimer).

When an incident occurs the spouses need to work together in defusing it. Susan Hetrick reminds us that, “…hurting people tend to hurt other people…” and this can be the start of the crumbling of the marriage if it is not handled in an open and honest, non-hurtful way (88). White and Gilbreth have also stated that even with “…good intentions…” many stepfathers experience sufficient rebuffs from the children and sometimes from their spouse that they eventually withdraw. It may even take counseling to help out but if there is love to be saved it should be fought for (Hetrick 88).

Many researchers have found that the more involved the stepfather is with his stepchildren the better adjusted they are (Menning, Holtzman, & Kapinus) (White & Gilbreth) (Marsiglio). They need to feel connected and loved, to feel that they have someone that they can come to to discuss their daily life with. This being said research has found that teenagers don’t like to spend time with their biological parents so stepparents shouldn’t feel like they are not getting any time with them (Nordheimer). Research has found that a stepparent who guides the child warmly through a decision and is less likely to demand ultimate obedience will be trusted and even loved by the child (Nordheimer). “Calm purposefulness,” is how Jeannette Lofas explains that stepfathers need to be with stepchildren to consistently handle conflicts with grace.
Stepfathers need to be with stepchildren to consistently handle conflicts with grace and kindness (31).

This is where the communication of parents comes in; if they can together and act as a single unit they are more apt to work through troubles with their children. When families come together for the mixing and stirring their children, pets, furniture and personal spaces there are more often than not explosions about who’s is what and who needs to be where (Lofas 157). Remembering that love for others is not an instant awakening in someone’s heart and that you may never have love for your stepchildren or stepparents needs to be realized and dealt with (Lofas 51). Knowing that is something that will get you through the adjustment period that lies ahead, some people never find love for one another but at least find that they respect each other (51).

Research has estimated that it can take seven years for stepfamilies to adjust to each other, although they have also stated that it takes only four years for the marriage to dissolve (Lofas 229).

Some of the best ways to help relieve tension is using humor, in fact, Susan Hetrick stated in her writings that during a Thanksgiving holiday their blended family was beginning to boil over with what was going to be served for the dinner. Both sides of the family had different traditional dinners and weren’t budging when in walked her mother who stated that all was good that they would start a new tradition for dinner and that she was going to serve “Slug stew and some type of vegetable” (63). Needless to say there erupted a loud roar of laughter that allowed everyone to calm down and work things out. By using humor in your communications with family members, at least humor that is neither degrading nor mean, you know that there is a fun way of getting along and not everything in life has to be serious (Hetrick 64).

Other ways that have helped our family get over some humps in the relationship have been things that I have learned from counselors and read in books. There are so many out there and one that we have used so that my husband and I are able to work through things is called Fight Fair. This sounds easy but it takes patience to do correctly. Jeannette Lofas explains how the technique starts and that it is to be done without children present.

The two adults (to start with then it can be taught to the older children) allow the first to speak without interruption then when the speaker indicates that they are done at that time the listener responds with, “This is what I am hearing...”. The speaker then responds with a “Yes that is what you heard.” Or a “No, that is not what I said.” To which the listener then asks for them to restate another way to help clarify. This is done until an agreement with respect has been established.

One of the other techniques she talks about is referred to as Sending and Receiving, I find it a very interesting concept. With this one the couple communicates via a telephone system such as a cell phone or a public phone. When communication is needed instead of a conflict in front of the children one of the adults leaves the house, now this can be just to the car or to a park or even the mall, it just needs to be somewhere that the person who left can call the other person that is still in the house. The whole purpose of this is to be in an area that you can communicate in a respectful and calm manner. As Lofas has noted as long as you have a way that works for you, it is done respectfully, and not in front of the children you can communicate anyway you choose. Even if calling a Time Out is what is needed then - do it (Lofas, 107).
Again, if the marriage is worth it you will have to work at it. Once the communication is being worked on the couple needs to realize that there are no ex-parents there are only co-parents learning to work with constructive ways helps the children’s well-being. Having made you know that there are ex-spouses out there that make it extremely difficult to deal with. On these occasions families might have to get counseling to overcome this obstacle. I have dealt with an ex-spouse who is a lousy parent but he researchers say that this is very typical of how divorce children grow up in the United States. This can also be extremely maddening to a stepparent. Realize that they just need to find some type of niche in the life of someone when the child needs love (Marsiglio). No matter how illogical or absent, parent is the child will almost always defend if angry or feel like they are pushed into defense mode which can be extremely hurtful to the stepparent who is trying to overadjust for that parent (White & Gilbreth).

With all the failed marriages, along with the eruption of stepfamilies in the United States we do need to keep our eyes on our children. Single parents need someone with them to help them have a productive life of their own parents are feeling productive they are able to share that feeling with their children. Many things need to be thought about when considering a second marriage. It is possible to do if you have the knowledge and put in the hard work that it takes every day to get it done. Remembering that people have to heal after a divorce and that communication with your loved ones is a great start to the family healing processes that stepparenting. Just as Susan Hetrick explained if there is love to be fought for (89). And are not our children supposed to be our most loved possessions? Their well-being in life is what we should measure as successful in the eyes of any parent, biological, step, custodial or noncustodial.

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