

Blended Families: Building and Bonding

There are many kinds of families today. Marriage and remarriage brings children and families together in many different structures.

Challenges are many: parents can feel torn between spouse, children and stepchildren. Tension and conflicts can exist in new families because of unresolved feelings about previous relationships, grief over divorce, etc. Frequently there are feelings of jealousy and concerns about fairness and family alliances. Children may “act out” their feelings with disrespectful treatment of all members in the “new” family.

Tips for healthy blending, building and bonding:

Establish a welcoming, open home atmosphere

Openness to friends and extended family members set tone of acceptance

Take your time

Allow relationships to form naturally around shared interests/activities

Set clear expectations for respectful treatment of all family members

Enforce rules consistently for everyone. Beware of showing favoritism toward own children

Support each other in shared parenting

Avoid criticism of former spouses. Promote developing extended family relationships

Parents should present a united front to children

Model problem solving, healthy expression of feelings and a plan to prevent ongoing patterns of problems

Learn to negotiate

Relationships are based on an **exchange of needs and wants**. Example: kids need rides, money, privileges from parents. Parents need respect, appreciation, completion of chores, etc.--- **Negotiate**