



Building Stepfamilies That Work[©]

Tips for Stepmothers

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1. The role of “mother” has already been taken. You will need to “carve out” a role for yourself as a stepmother. Be very clear with your partner about the expectations you both have regarding your role.
2. Be patient. Deep relationships take time to develop. You may never come to feel love towards your stepchildren, so simply work towards liking them. Looking for their good points, and being respectful of them, will go a long way to fostering a polite and considerate relationship—that might just grow into a loving relationship.
3. Assuming responsibility for your stepchild’s behaviour is likely to leave you feeling incredibly stressed, because you are most unlikely (at least for a considerable period of time) to have any real authority over them. Remind yourself that you aren’t responsible for their every misbehaviour, and strive to avoid “finger-pointing” and blaming. Instead, seek to understand why they have been misbehaving. Begin this search by making the assumption that if you were operating under the same circumstances they are, that you would probably be acting a lot like they have been.
4. Heed the golden rule for building a relationship with your stepchild: Find out what they like to do, and do it with them. Sharing enjoyable, one-on-one time with them will go a long way to developing a good relationship. Activities that only the two of you share are likely to turn into important ones for you both.
5. Ensure that you and your partner have established a set of house rules that you both can, and will support. Draw on the power of the relationship the biological parent has with the child by saying: “In this house we....”
6. Remember that unless you do things to “fill yourself up” you will have little or nothing to give to others in your stepfamily. “Carve out” some private time, and a private space where you can retreat to renew yourself, or find a quick escape when you need one.

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