

Blended Families
Sunday, April 10, 2022

I. Blended Families

A. Unique Blended Family Issues

1. A blended family is a marriage where one or both spouses bring children with them from a previous marriage(s) or relationship. (*divorce/death/other*)
 - a. 50% of all families are blended families.
 - b. The divorce rate is higher among blended families because of the unique set of challenges it brings.
 - Trust Issues
 - Right Priorities
 - Ex-Spouse Issues
 - Parenting and Discipline

B. Trust Issues

1. Trust is the backbone of a marriage relationship. One of the most critical steps to growing a healthy blended family is establishing trust within the relationship – not just between husband and wife, but between children and their new siblings and stepparents.

Panel discuss:

- a. What are some of the trust issues you've experienced because of the breakup of your first marriage or relationship?
- b. In what ways did your children or stepchildren struggle with trust issues in your blended family relationships?
- c. What are some ways that couples can work to establish trust in a new step family?

C. Right Priorities

1. God first, spouse second, children third, and work fourth is the proper priority in life. In traditional families, there is marriage then children, but in blended families there are children then marriage. Priorities can get off to a bad start.

Panel discuss:

- a. What would you say is the most critical step to keeping right priorities in a new blended family?

- b. How can couples can keep their marriage as their highest human priority?

D. Ex-Spouse (Baby-Mama, Baby-Daddy) Issues

- 1. Most often in blended families there is a history of pain and disappointment. There are likely feelings of guilt, shame, or regret. There are ex-spouses in the picture, financial obligations already in place, and children caught up in the middle of it all.

Panel Discuss:

- a. Were there unresolved anger or resentment issues from your past that have affected you or your children?
- b. Have you found yourself struggling with lower trust and unrealistic higher expectations in your new marriage?
- c. Discuss some of the challenges with ex-spouses in your new marriage and family.

E. Parenting and Discipline

- 1. For blended families to work, parents have to learn to accept stepchildren as their own. And children must respect and obey both parents. A positive stepparent relationship is critical to the success of the family, and essential for a happy, harmonious household.

Panel Discuss:

- a. What would you say is the toughest hurdle you have to overcome in parenting a stepchild?
- b. Do you think it's possible for parents to love a stepchild as much as they do their biological children? Why or why not?
- c. In what ways have you set unrealistic expectations for yourself when trying to bond with your stepchildren?
- d. What are some concrete things you've done to ease yourself and your children into the process of blending as a family?
- e. What are some of the biggest mistakes you've made in learning to discipline a new stepchild?
- f. In what ways has your ex-spouse unwittingly (or knowingly) undermined your authority as a parent?
- g. What are some ways you have been able to alleviate sibling rivalry in our home?

- h. Have you had to deal with any serious crises among your children or stepchildren? Explain.
- i. What is the most important thing to remember when dealing with a child in crisis or rebellion?