

# Are the Children the Real Problem in Your Blended Family?

## Part 4: The Parents' Heart

We continue with our series of articles looking at the reasons that some children have trouble adjusting to the new home environment, and things parents/ stepparents can do - or should avoid, to help their children and stepchildren want to be a part of the new family.

Divorce is very ugly! It tears people apart --- including our children, and creates wounded people and strained lifestyles.

Divorce or death of a spouse most always fractures people's future --- their visions, dreams and plans. Your children's dreams have also been shattered!

After having experienced divorce or death of a spouse, a single parent may deal with the loss in a variety of ways:

1. Some have immediate need of another companion to eliminate loneliness, or to ease financial burdens. So they quickly seek out another relationship. Those people are most always not ready for another relationship, and neither are their children. These people have a lot of emotions still surfacing from the previous broken relationship. As these emotions surface in the new relationship, the new relationship suffers, and so do the children.
2. Some go through "extended" periods of grief and depression; they become a burden to all others around them. (Grief is a normal response to broken relationships, but extended periods of grief is detrimental to your health and to those in relationship with you.) When Moe's former wife first left him, he asked his 14-year-old daughter to stay with him for 2 weeks. Role reversal had taken place, and his daughter wound up taking care of him. His depression was a tremendous burden on her, and she could not wait for the two weeks to be over.
3. In other situations, the parent's heart is hurting too badly to be able to be a provider to the children. Because of this, there is lack of parental concern for what their children are going through or feeling. The children can become the adult in that environment, taking care of the parent, as well as their brothers and sisters.
4. Others hold onto unforgiveness, which turns into anger, bitterness and a passion for revenge. Hurting people will hurt people – usually those closest to them. Parents often take their frustration out on the children. "We often hurt the ones we love the most."
5. Some go into the party scene, regressing to their teenage years of immaturity and irresponsibility. When we led a Christian Singles group for 12 years, we saw some people who had experienced broken lives revert to the life they led before they married --- which resembled immature attitudes of care-free living, irresponsibility, and self-centeredness. Children of these single parents had little or no leadership.
6. Others isolate themselves from the world, having had their self-esteem destroyed by a former spouse. They avoid being around people.
7. Some live in strife toward former spouses. Children whose natural parents live in strife toward each other live with a hurting heart. The two people in their lives who they love the most cannot get along, and it creates a sensitive and difficult environment for the children. The result is that the children are, or feel, caught in the middle of the strife.

8. The children in a single parent home may become “adults” in the home, taking on what are normally parental responsibilities. Some single parents are pushed into a “survival” mode, having to work two jobs or long hours to pay the bills. The children are often left to raise each other.
9. Very often, the children become the single parent’s “friend” and confidant. The parent’s world revolves around their children. In this role, the parent tends to share their heavy hearts with their children. This is too much for the children to bear. They want to help fix their parent’s problems, but then suffer the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. Also, when single parents create deep friendship with their children and spend all their time with the children, the children will have a very difficult time when their parent remarries.

Their relationship to their parent, and the roles they filled in the home will change, and the children often experience feelings of rejection and insignificance. Once we heard a child say, “When you remarried I was angry, because I felt my love was not good enough for you!”

We are in no way “putting down” people who have been through divorce. We have been there! We know all-too-well the pain and struggle that divorced people and single parents experience.

Children who have lived in any of the above scenarios will be adversely impacted. Divorce causes many hard feelings and difficult situations on adults and children involved.

There are many stepfamily homes today that are still dealing with the varied results that divorce had on their children’s lives. You may be seeing some of them in your home today.

Just as different parents respond to brokenness differently, children affected by divorce and by dysfunctional parents will respond in different ways – possibly poor grades, bad attitudes, lack of respect, involvement with the wrong crowd, wanting no involvement with the new marriage and family they are now in, and wanting no involvement with those around them.

As single-parents remarry, they need to remain conscious of:

- The condition of their heart, and any burdens they are carrying,
- Their need for any healing from anger, bitterness, resentment, revenge, jealousy or selfishness,
- What their children have been through and any burdens they are carrying,
- The condition of their children’s heart, and their need for healing,
- Their children’s need for a family environment of unconditional love and acceptance.
- God’s plan for their life and their child’s life.

Jeremiah 29: 11 says, *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*

God, our creator, has thoughts about you and plans for you. He also has thoughts about your children and plans for them.

God’s thoughts toward us are always good --- He does not have evil thoughts toward you or your children.

He sees potential in you. He sees potential in your children!

He desires to make us whole, and restore our lives!

As we have said before, parents set the tone within the new family. Parents and stepparents will shape the future of the children in their family.

If you are still dealing with negative feelings from a former broken relationship, seek personal healing through counseling, or a divorce or grief recovery program at a local church. This is vital to the success of your new marriage and family.

Take time now to think about what you have been through and what your children have been through. Ask yourself and your children questions of current feelings, what triggers anger, who you or they do not like – and why, etc.

If your children are dealing with negative feelings and shattered dreams, get them help in the same manner.

The stepparent in the new home can have a great positive impact on their stepchildren. Please realize that regardless of their intention, stepparents influence the children around them through acceptance or rejection. There is no neutral position!

*Luke 18:15-17 reads, "People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have Him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to Him, and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'"*

We either call our children and stepchildren to us, or we send them away.  
We either embrace them with genuine love, or we reject them.  
We either become an agent of healing and security to them, or we hinder their future.

Children know the profound difference between true love and tolerance!!!

Embrace your children and stepchildren!  
Seek to make your life whole and secure!  
Seek to make your children's lives whole and secure!  
Help your children to overcome past hurts and the burdens on their hearts!

Be Blessed!

*Moe & Paige Becnel*

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