



Blended Families: Helping Yours, Mine, and Ours Become a Family

Presented by:

Ron L. Deal, M.MFT.

*Author, *The Smart Stepfamily: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family**

Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

Licensed Professional Counselor

Certified Family Life Educator

www.SuccessfulStepfamilies.com

Course Description: Stepfamilies are unique families with special obstacles and stressors. Providing care and encouragement requires a basic understanding of unique stepfamily dynamics as well as interventions that bring stability to the family over time. This lesson presents a rationale for stepfamily ministry, provides a conceptual overview of stepfamily development, and describes key stressors and interventions to help stepfamilies overcome them.

Course Objectives: At the end of this lesson you will:

1. Be able to describe the stepfamily "Wilderness Wanderings" (development).
 2. Understand common dynamics that are unique to stepfamilies.
 3. Learn the unique barriers to marital oneness in stepfamilies and be equipped with typical intervention strategies.
 4. Understand parent and stepparent roles.
 5. Be able to articulate a message of grace for stepfamilies.
 6. Learn key goals of pre-stepfamily counseling.
-

Introduction: The composition of American homes is changing. Stepfamilies currently comprise a large percentage of homes and will soon surpass all other family types as the most common in the US. Yet despite their prevalence, many counselors and churches are uninformed about their unique family dynamics. Stepfamily ministry and counseling prevents these unique pressures from holding people back from their Lord. Furthermore, effective intervention builds family stability, prevents re-divorce, and develops long-term successful stepfamily homes.

I. Introduction

A. The composition of American homes is changing.

B. Some basic statistics:

C. Our Message:

D. Our Method:

II. Mapping the Territory: General Realities You Need to Understand

A. Come to understand the stepfamily wilderness wanderings.

B. Understand how to “cook” a stepfamily.

C. Find out who is involved in the stepfamily system—and who is not involved.

III. Educating and Encouraging Stepfamilies: Basic Interventions

A. Normalize common dynamics that are unique to stepfamilies.

1. Insider/Outsider dynamics

2. Loyalty issues

3. Loss issues

B. Marriage counseling and educational interventions

1. Marriage is critical to stepfamily success. Common barriers include:

2. Loyalty to children over the new spouse: Parent-child allegiance

3. "Either/Or" dilemmas

4. The "ghost of marriage past"

C. Parent & Stepparent Roles

1. Evolving stepparent roles

2. Build unity by:

3. Reframe the stepparents role for children and teens.

D. Spiritual shame and guilt as a barrier to God and church

1. A past they can't change...

2. Spiritually "second-class"?

3. A message of grace

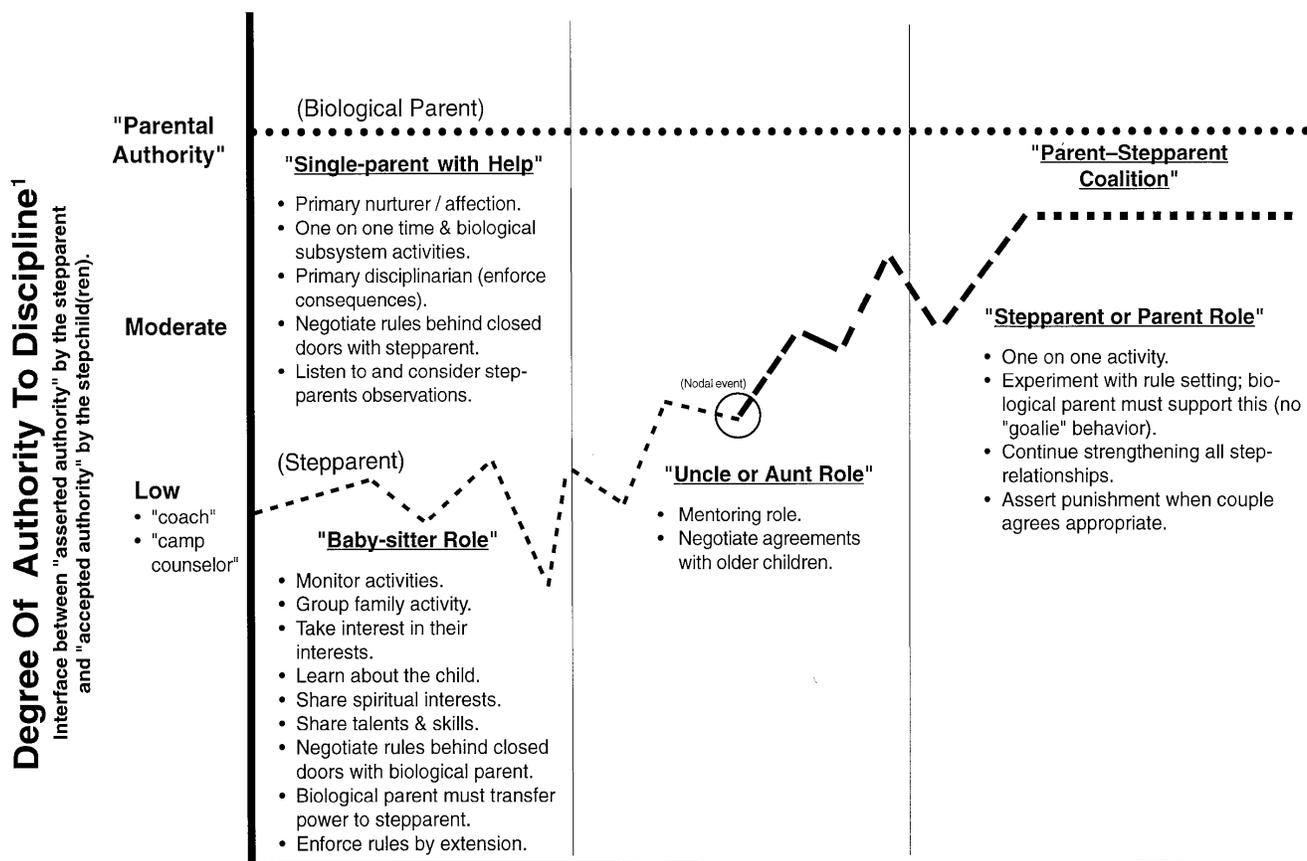
4. Communicate Christ-dependence

E. Pre-stepfamily counseling

1. Key Goals:
2. Typical pre-remarital attitudes
3. Practical, legal, and psychological shifts after marriage
4. A clear message to pre-remarital couples:

IV. Conclusion

A Prescription for Evolving Parent & Stepparent Roles



Length of time required to increase parental authority will vary according to age of child, previous family experiences, relationship with noncustodial parents, child's temperament/personality, parenting style variations, and child's overall stepfamily satisfaction level.

Time With Stepchildren

Bibliography / Reading & Resource List:

1. Successful Stepfamilies (www.SuccessfulStepfamilies.com) – Christian resources for church and home.
2. Deal, R.L. (2002). *The Smart Stepfamily: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House. Available at www.SuccessfulStepfamilies.com.
3. Deal, R.L. (2001). *Building A Successful Stepfamily: Audio Seminar*. Little Rock, AR: FamilyLife. Available at www.SuccessfulStepfamilies.com.
4. Adler-Baeder, F. (2002). *Smart Steps for Adults and Children in Stepfamilies* (intergenerational curriculum with videos and Power Point) and *Growing in Wisdom: A Christian-based Supplemental Guide for the Smart Steps Curriculum* (by Ron L. Deal). Published by Stepfamily Association of America. Available packaged together at www.SuccessfulStepfamilies.com.