

Remarriage – CD #1 Life Series

Marriage is only contract/license that you do not need formal training for – do something, know something before we can go and get that license

Remarriage is one of the most endangered species of relationships

Blended family – does it really blend? More similar to a chocolate and vanilla cake with distinct slivers of each – A family + B family does not equal a C family... rather

Stepfamily is a compromise of expectations

Overall Question: What are expectations of the family?

What was notion of family as they were growing up?

What was the picture of the family when they first married?

What their notion of the family was when they were single? How did fathers learn to mother, how did mothers learn to father?

What is the notion of the stepfamily? What did wife expect from husband? What did husband expect from wife?

Notions of the first/natural/biological family do not transfer to the stepfamily

Trauma of ending of first family goes into stepfamily

Trust

Commitment

Money

Cognitive/Emotional Toll Divorce (break-up of original family) has caused... impact it has on stepfamily

Have we mourned the ending of the original family? But we expect children to interact with new partner as if is THE family... whatever this is?

Three Rs – Rules, Roles, Responsibilities

Going into stepfamily with the feeling, “I have my family back again”

No shared history

Review a magazine... what do you like?

Need to move from yours and mine to OURS --- there is an alignment procedure: color of walls, furniture, pictures, how will kids rooms be set-up

Prepare for Conflicts:

Blood energy vs. Love energy – intact family there is no conflict

Dotting over child may not exist... what are expectations

Time/Energy/Money Grid – what is expected that goes into child that is not ours... this is the stuff from which the cruel stepmother is born...

Model of Business – Action Plan... what is desired outcome?? Expected Actions?
Chunk it down to small, bite-size pieces, Job descriptions, expectations, and timeliness of expectations

1 night a week couple time w/o conversation about children... courtship needs to continue into the stepfamily life (this happened prior to remarriage but it needs to continue)

More than half of stepmothers are working

How much can we expect from stepmother to help with children? Realize that man is often playing 'catch up'... he may want her by his side

Work before remarriage... father to learn about mothering – What book is this?
Expectation for stepmom to help little Johnny find missing sock – search or buy new just like bio mom would --- this can lead to an undercurrent of resentment and can lead to stepparent wanting to ostracize the stepchild from the family

Recognition Hunger – stepmom needs to be recognized for the work she does... recognize and validate actions (laundry, baking cookies) – this does not happen in natural family, but is needed in stepfamily

Stepkids/Stepmoms – where do I fit?

There is trauma and grief at time of the remarriage

Prepare for the fact that the notion that natural family will come back together ends when remarriage occurs... this is very impactful on children

Conflict of loyalties –

What name? Needs to be clarified within family... you only have 1 mom and 1 dad, we do not advocate calling anyone mom/dad, we DO advocate for clarity

Step is an ugly word but if we use it with a positive tone we can work to change this

Items that needs to be addressed...

6 weeks to a month prior tell child of remarriage plans

Recognize kids feelings, they do not though decide our lives

Remarriage Ceremony – there is no chapter and verse for this

Kids participate...

What are the rituals that each stepfamily members bring into the new family constellation?

Ritual for remarriage ceremony:

6 weeks to 2 months prior let children know

Share details...

You would be the flower girl, would that be okay with you?

See what the kids' notion of ceremony is like... take it into consideration with new partner... how can you fold some of their input in...

Good news and Bad news... Good – you get more.... Bad – you get less

Loss of position

Guilt around their own feelings

Validation of who we are in this new system

Prepare for it... Remarriage is a license we need to prepare for

How to Handle Prior Spouse – Disc #2

This topic is second only to the children as top concerns in step relationships

Partner does not come free into this relationship, the model of the intact family is no longer valid – this can be a hard pill to swallow – dead or alive they come with a prior spouse -- emotional, psychological, intellectual baggage

The Separation Triangle – at top mother/father, another line labeled wife/husband – the couple no longer talks 'of the couple' but interact as mother and father of these children – stepparents take on some parental roles but they must stay confined to stepmother/stepfather roles

For a child to grow up psychologically whole... we must find positive attributes about each biological parent

Death of a family/relationship has occurred

Break old habits in order to create new ones

New wives and stepmothers complaining about husband turning into 'butter' when ex calls... these two people had bonding for # years, they have ways of interacting with each other, suppressed guilt over break-ups

Patient and persistence in needed when dealing with ex

Boundaries are needed – what are the new job descriptions, who will do what?

What is the full assessment of divorce on children?

Acting out behaviors –

Major issue between former partner and new partner – financial/money --- very much overlooked – resentment and potential bitterness

What created the ugliness between the couple and how ugly is it? Goal in stepfamily is to not let this happen again...

What are the burdens on former spouse, what are burdens on new partner, bio-parent

If we can get to a level of acceptance of what the 'other' is experiencing, feeling, perceiving about their reality

Divorce vs. Death – mythical attributes can come when a parent has died... there is no reality to combat the myths that grows when a parent dies --- get a picture of deceased parent and make a ritual of it with child (placing in child's room)

A new home for a new family... not always possible

If a stepmom moves into former home tread gently and slowly... especially with a deceased spouse

Erratic behavior should be expected ALL AROUND when it comes to visitation

Go over the divorce and get everyone's perceptions/input once a year

Male prior spouse may feel need to place 'catch up' with kids – values are changing, urgency about seeing kids, fear that if they do something wrong the custodial parent may take children away

Men have fear of losing own children – psychological lose... they want come see me, they will not love me if I am not Disneyland dad

Work to start opening up communication again with non-custodial parent – may need to be encouraged by bio parent

As parents we have a role for the rest of our lives...

Children and Remarriage – Disc #3

Stepfamilies have its' own unique syndromes, dynamics, and issues

People transplants – every stepfamily has been impacted by death of previous family – this impacts each family member

Some hope that forming of stepfamily will produce healing

Stepfamily is much like an organ transplant – rejection of non-self (foreign) tissue – doctors prepare for this – this same phenomenon can occur psychologically in stepfamily

Conflict of Loyalties – “if I love/care about you, then I don't care about my bio parent” – stepparents constantly complain about feeling torn, where do the loyalties go? – How do you like your new dad?/mom?

Adults that would make aunts and uncles, now are subjected to these conflict of loyalties when they become 'step'

Opposition pull of sexuality and sexuality – intact families both parents typically root for the child, these are in opposition in a stepfamily; example of stepmom and 16-year old stepdaughter; when couple first comes together there is new and exciting sexual energy; child are curious as to what is going on between bio parent and new person; couple fears intrusion from stepchild on intimate relationship

Instant love – love me, love my child; desire for stepparent to become 'super' stepparent to please the spouse; important to go slowly... what are love expectations

Lifestyles – in stepfamilies there are no patterns of family, discipline (positive and negative consequences), what are the duties and responsibilities – these need to be sorted out – people in step often tell people their wrong for having a different ways of doing things, stepparent wants recognition; need guidelines on authority

Wicked Stepchild – other partners reaction to stepchild is assaulting and is threatening to break us apart; child has suffered a loss, often in this society this is handled by denial, when we deny child of this loss—the child tests --- they are looking for their place, often they do not know why they do these things, they are simply reacting to the bad feelings they have; looking for boundaries – will I still be loved if I act out – as stepparents we must know these things will happen

Heart – Structure = Love picture

The degree of patience one has in a stepfamily is important and needed

We are not in the therapy business, but the mergers and acquisitions business – we are very directive in what are the structures and how are they handled – the couple comes together for the child – “In this house, we...”

Premarital counseling – how are we going to operate, how are we as the male and female head of the households going to raise these children --- walk through house and make notes – This is presented to child(ren), children are allowed to give feedback and select jobs – Bio parent presents to bio children – Most discipline comes from bio parent

We are experiencing child work welfare – children are not making contributions to the household... most children are under-parented... children take 1/10 amount of work then adults because adults hang on to their ways

Clearly define what goes on in the household, then it's simply ‘In this household we...’ Couple works together and not against each other

3 strikes you're out... give children positive direction... give intention of getting it down, give children exact expectations; validate... we must teach children what they need to know to become good citizens

Bio dad often is reluctant to discipline... this is how we do it in this household, this is not discipline but guidance; each family has to make their own order

We often take away the child's privilege to contribute and be involved in household

Couple – Disc #4

What is the couple ‘in step’? The couple that comes out of the ending of another relationship. Many women are coming into stepfamilies, waiting to get married... Where is my riding off into the sunset.

Children – 1st loss is divorce, 2nd loss is when biological parent remarries

The couple in step goes into the battlefield at war against all other past relationships. We must learn from past mistakes or we are destined to repeat them, this explains why 2/3 of step relationships fail

The Couple is the structure that very often pulls against each other, instead of joining together

Love does not cure all... We must know that each brings baggage into new relationship... and this baggage is often hanging over (not just in the past)

At the Stepfamily Foundation we counsel people, just as the state department would counsel you if you were going to go to mainland China

What are each partners wishes, action plans, honoring each other's perceptions... A Reality / B Reality / create a new C Reality

We allow for these differences to co-exist

Home activities are structured – meal is structured into 16 steps, etiquette at mealtime, and bed times, What are the top activities to be structured?

Structure the Household – Disc #5

They are responsible for creating structure for their household... this is what we do in this household

A new home for a new family – Why??

There is a need for an alignment process – through the dialogue we start to become aligned and problem-solve, figure out each other's tastes... look through magazines and have disagreements then as opposed as in the home

In this structure we give jobs to everyone, you are (1) a contributor or (2) are contributed to

What jobs are to be done by the members of the household

People in step-relationships are often over-worked on the domestic front – couple must agree --- husband and wife to walk through the house and outside, and decide what the jobs are to be done and then begin to decide who should be doing what – compare lists and then make decisions... once agreed upon the couple presents the jobs and responsibilities to the children for their feedback... children get to express their opinion but they do not have veto power... children often welcome this structure as it clearly lets them know what is expected.

We want to create a win-win situation with the children, ask the children what the consequence should be for not getting a job done? List those

Time, Energy, Money – Disc #6

5.7% of 83.5 million consist of traditional households (bio dad works, bio mom stays at home with 2+ kids)

What are expectations of time, energy and money in a stepfamily? What is your time worth?

How are you quantifying time/energy? This is worked out in pre/post-nuptials

The reconstituted family – replace bio mom with another woman... (or dad with another man)... this does not work

Exercise: Each partner uses basic grid in book; do this separately, put % of waking time for time, energy, and money... (1) my notion of yours' and (2) my notion of mine; then compare, couples are amazed at how different their notions are

Household/Couple Time/Finances/Career time/Stepfamily/Stepchildren/Prior Spouse/Learning Growth... Used to be time & energy were female responsibilities and money was male responsibility --- How many categories are there? 4 pieces of paper --- grid out where T/E/M are allocated to get a true sense of 'equality' between partners

A lot of times, her money is going to running the 'here and now' household, while his money is supporting his prior spouse and his bio children

How Time/Energy/Money was delineated in first, intact family do not transfer to stepfamily

Move from an emotional place to a 'thinking' one

Here comes in the 'SUPER' Stepmom – stop just feeling it and grid it out to actually see what's going on... this moves us to being able to compromise

Pre-and Post-Nuptials are important; they are unromantic... they have held more marriages together than tore apart... how do you move them past that experience which was viewed as harsh, cold, unloving

When we come out of our unconscious state, our programmed chip with which we were born do not apply to today's socioeconomically landscape

Time & Energy are contributing to the stepfamily and marriage... need to recognize the value of these components

Time, Energy and Money grid takes some stress off of the marriage & stepfamily

We need to become realistic about our capabilities! Each partner needs to recognize the other

Think of yourselves as directors in your own movie... this script is your life... it's about the journey not the destination and it can improve if we take the time to notice what is happening... What if your spouse will not listen??

Discipline - Disc #8

Discipline has a bad name in this culture... it linked to 'bad' behaviors, you have done bad. In Webster's dictionary it is linked to teaching and being a discipline

Looking further in life, discipline is a positive attribute. It is something we must do to be successful... getting to work on time, etc.

Teach discipline so children may fit in the world. Deal with it as creative as we can; there are many styles of discipline.

Encourage single parents to discipline and being a parent as opposed to playing catch-up... children deserve to be taught the forms and norms of society. Often single parents start doing everything for the child, this elevates the child to an equal household member... not healthy

Discipline creates closeness and intimacy in a household.

Each stepparent write down notions of each family member growing up (what did woman do, man do, children do...). Parent is playing role of maid and butler... this is a break away of joint activities and works against creating closeness. How was conflict handled? How were meals handled? How was it in first family? As single person/parent? Expectations for stepfamily? Breakout into AM, PM activities. Once rules are written, the stepparent has this as a backing for upholding expectations. Positive and negatives consequences are needed for adult head of households to establish their authority. Adult should not have to say things more that 2x-3x. As soon as children take control, the parent becomes the one being disciplined. Write consequences with the child.

Age 10+ children should have an allowance. Do not reach into your pocket to hand money over to their child. Extra jobs for extra money.

Lateness means the lack of discipline. Those that have success in life are early/on time.

What do we do to make money? *versus* What do we do to create family?

What are we disciplining? We are disciplining manners. There is too much interrupting. Through discipline we are teaching manners.

What are manners at dinner? No one starts eating until everyone is served. What are we talking about? Things? Relationships? What is substance of these conversations? Who starts the dialogue?? Adult...

Are we saving all of our manners for the workplace? You need these skills at work and in the future.

Responsibility is part of discipline. This needs to start in the home where mistakes are forgivable. Give them the opportunity to learn in a loving, supportive environment. This is a gift you can give them.

Visitation - Disc #9

This is an issue largely under-rated ---- Many people will not take jobs that involve travel but we expect children to be hustled between two households

There are no rituals to these visitations. It is seldom planned. Children are seldom told what is to be expected.

Visitation can be an assault on the couple time for the stepparent.

All the way around, visitation can be tough! Pre and Post Visitation Syndrome – what goes on before and after visitation

Father may be playing catch up with his own kids... stepmom is appalled by kids' behavior, father does not see it or does not want to see it

Catch-up parenting – I am not going to mess up visitation with discipline, structure or telling the child what to do. Inconsistency is the greatest enemy of a child and sometime adults. No reprimands. New partner can feel slighted.

There is a need for predictability. When things are predictable they become safe.

We are weaving these relationships out of holed cloth... visitations must be thought out prior so there are no negative surprises and it is predictable. What is ritual, ceremony for start of visitation?

Visitation should have a loose structure, open to conversation. Children should feel as though they are a member of this household and not a guest. Ritual at start of visitation to have dialogue of what is to happening during visitation. Couple needs to decide how they want to spend their time during this time, and this is communicated during 'milk and cookies' ritual. This derived first from the couple.

MUSTS for Parents during visitation

10 Rules for Parent who is picking-up or dropping off

- BE ON TIME, drop off and return on time
- Be at least cordial with ex-spouse, there are no ex-parents – children should not start visitation with a knot in their stomach
- Clear your schedule
- Do integrate your child into the stepfamily
- Call if you have to cancel visitations, no last minute changes/negative surprises
- Don't demand to change schedule
- Do not pump your child for info on the other household/parent; assure them of confidentiality - don't make other parent wrong
- Don't flaunt your new partner in the other parent's face; do they need to go? Don't do something that will create friction
- Don't dump your child on the stepparent
- Child should have a consistent place for some things at the house

10 Rules for Custodial Parent who will be left during the visitation

- Have child ready on time
- Make experience for leaving for visitation pleasant
- Make interaction with ex cordial – this is for the sake of the child
- Let child know you will be busy (you will be fine), do not place your sadness on the child - Do not use children as a messenger... what happened to the messenger in Rome? They were killed...
- Call your ex sooner rather than later if visitation needs to change (we advocate not cancelling... visitation must be cast in cement)
- Dress your child appropriately and send with clean clothes
- Look out for your child's health
- Tell child they must abide by rules in other household... you are supporting your child in doing this – support other household, again you are supporting child
- Do not pump for information, or have them on the look-out for what's wrong in other home – if the child wants to tell you that's fine
- Sense of humor, keep spirits up for the child – they do need to spend time with the other part that made them

Coordination between the two parents: in this culture we condone parents not talking to each other – they must talk to each other about the child – in writing, thru lawyer, etc.

What to coordinate: Clothes – what's expected, Activities so child is prepared, Sleeping patterns, Health of child

Visitation should be predictable for both kids and couple

Stepmom was not born with 'Evil' on her passport, she was raised up to it: (1) lack of couple strength, (2) stepmother shows love towards stepchild and is rejected, (3) She needs to know stepfamily dynamics, (4) She must learn manners, expectations

Can we discipline ourselves to regulate that visitation?

Kids often tramp all over couple's space – privacy

Reaccuring theme is a NEED FOR STRUCTURE

Visitation does not need to assault a couple

For Step Kids Only – Disc #10

Adults do not realize the impact divorce/break-up of the intact family has on kids

1/3 of children in this society live in step

Acting out behaviors continue – you are confused by your feelings and act out... maybe you are testing the other person

"I'm acting this way because I feel bad, I miss my mom/dad." The more you talk about it the less you act out.

The Stepparent can be seen as an intruder

Structure is Love

10 Steps for Kids in Step

- Learn about step, read and ask
- What is my new role in this stepfamily? In mom's house? In dad's house?
- What are the rules in this house?
- Make sure each adult are clear on expectations. Couple should be clear on expected manners, discipline and consequences – they need to be posted
- Don't get caught in the crossfire; there are no ex-parents
- Use "I" Statements, 'When Sandy's here I feel I am alone...'
- I need to have a job, I want to make a contribution; ask adults what you want/expect from me – what if child does not feel like contributing to this household?
- Make the best of it
- Know all beginnings are hard, when in doubt find an adult to talk to

Kids have a lack of support – What can I do for you right now? – Wonderful way to control parents/adults. Kids learn 10x faster than adults

Have bio-parent/bio-kid time for conversation... nonjudgmental time to express feelings

How to deal with stepparent bossing you around?

Children need time to get used to stepparent... they did not choose them

Baby, Maybe – Disc #11

Women who give up their ability to have children may need to rethink this.

Many times men are strapped financially and have not been open with new partner about desire to have children in new relationship

Having a child is a joint decision – need to have this conversation prior to remarriage; can you financially handle this?

Application of time, energy and money needed

His mortality has already been established, hers has not... denying ourselves of this may be a mistake... think carefully about letting our clock run out... - Why the change?

Preparation needs to start early to introduce new baby to pre-existing children; convince the child they will be ok with the new baby

Main issues: jealousy, finances, what's my new position – he does not want mommy anymore, now he does not want me anymore – reconfirm birth order with child, you will not lose your place in my heart

Inappropriate behavior when older children are around, do not overindulge where older children feel they have lost their importance

Include the child in the process

This goes back to Couple Strength

This baby can pull the stepfamily together, kids and adults can both align around the baby – can pull stepfamily together or tear it apart

Biological Parent informs children of baby, sells them on this

----- Stepsiblings ----- carefully orchestrate geography in the home; parents need to rectify parenting styles – this is a chief complaint

Parenting styles are important

Competition between stepsiblings is frequent

Birth order can change; talk to the kids about their feelings... in stepfamily you are middle kid, but you are still my kid... spend bio-kid/bio-parent time together

In a stepfamily you have half a family; kids now have to share parent with other kids

Incest taboo must be kept in step – intimacy between stepchildren is a no-no

How do we create the happy family? Takes a good deal of work from the couple and cooperation from children; start team building in the household; recognize differences and create new rituals for doing things; this evolves over time; through adult guidance kids will learn to accommodate each other (you cannot demand love)

You talk about 'team work', couple strength; everything is dependant on couple strength

It is built brick by brick, sometimes very slowly... but a happy family is obtainable under realistic expectations and timetables

Tools to Build a New Family – Disc #12

The way we work at the Stepfamily Foundation – once we have isolated the scenarios that go on in step – we have identified 49 common complaints/scenarios

How do we work – we know something about traditional analysis, in step we are typically in a stressful situation so we need to move now; transactional analysis, behavioral analysis

We use the techniques of business management – mergers and acquisitions techniques: what are job descriptions and expectation of each family member

We look positively with people, we do not look for pathology – identify resources already present – we look wholly at the individual – what are their strengths? What are they able to do?

What is the stepfamily called?? – refer to Webster's dictionary

- The Reconstituted Family: to constitute or restore to a former condition; expectation that new partner will function like a mother or a father

- The Blended Family: a mix so that the separate constituents are no longer distinguishable; if it blends it is more like a chocolate and vanilla cake; the line of demarcation cannot be distinguished – do not agree with this; combine into an integrated whole – we work towards this; to produce a harmonious effect – we are working towards this
- The Step Family: action happening as a series of events; a measure occurring in a series – an evolving structure

49 identified classic syndromes/dynamics/issues

1. Trauma of Divorce or Death has formed the stepfamily
2. Expectation of healing thru remarriage
3. Old criteria do not work in step
4. Unrealistic Expectations
5. Unfulfilled expectation
6. Issue of the biological
7. Conflict of loyalties
8. Unclear Job Descriptions
9. Displacement of Feelings – wanting to reunite old family, scapegoating stepparent
10. Presumption of Love
11. Blaming Individuals
12. Job Description Syndrome
13. Where do I fit? What's my position?
14. A new home for a new family
15. Feeling like an outsider
16. Occurrence of double messages
17. Kids know otherwise
18. Adolescence is compounded in step
19. Good news – you get more / Bad news – you get less
20. Aloneness and denial of this
21. Blood energy vs. Biological energy
22. What's in a Name?
23. Validation as a person
24. Prior Spouse
25. Visitation
26. Custody
27. Money
28. Natural Rejection of Foreign Tissue (rejection of non-self tissue)
29. No Ex-Parents
30. Overindulgence
31. Couple Strength – I a must for the stepfamily to survive
32. Syndrome of becoming the cruel stepmother – she is not born but created through step situation
33. Wanting to come first
34. Emotional support from partner
35. The absent parent is better

36. Withdrawn stepfather
37. Head of the household
38. Discipline – huge issue that needs a great deal of work (at least 6 hours of work needed)
39. Intrusion all the way around
40. Wicked stepchild
41. Acting out
42. Position Loss
43. How do we handle between homes
44. Joint Custody
45. Father obtains primary custody
46. Stepmother with no children of her own, she has never parented before
47. Baby, maybe?
48. Sex and Step – incest taboo must be dealt with
49. Entertainment Center – parent without custody

Tools:

1. Get Notion of the Family – what are expectations? Growing up/First Marriage/Single Parent/Right Now/Remarriage – the goal is not to compare notes but to be amazed at differences – if we believe ‘step’ is bad their experience will most likely mirror this
2. Structure of the Family (what are 10 steps at meal time?) – psychological importance of structure
3. What are their wishes for this family – chunk down problems, work towards objections – what do they want and what are the barriers to getting what they want? The person who plans gets what they want.

How to be a Stepparent

We counsel; we do not do therapy.

Our system is about teaching, business management... 10-15 hours

We have a great respect for emotions, but our business model has us ask certain questions... roles, rules, expectations... how does the couple define time, energy, money

We concentrate on the methods that bring about the desired emotions

Divorce causes a child's sense of self and security to be broken; through divorce a child has lost one of their attachment person/caregiver... fear that other parent will be lost as well

The child needs an explanation that is square with reality; and he needs reassurance. The child does not need to know your fears; these burdens are too big for a child to bear -- children see the world through an ego-centric mindset; reassure (again and again) that they were not the reason for the divorce

The child needs reassurance and the truth; tell as much of the truth as necessary without dragging down the other parent

It's hard to know that someone else has laid claim prior to you (stepparent)

Expectations run high and so do disappointments

We are captured by the idea of 'instant love'; in the original marriage the merger is slow... not in a stepparent

Lack of belonging and knowing your place

Rules of the house are not valid judgments; "in this house we do it this way" ... rules need to be flexible

Super Stepparent or Withdrawal Stepparent

What are the testing behaviors of a child really saying?

Idealizations do not mirror themselves in a stepfamily

Stepparent can undermine a child by being highly critical

Biological parent may instinctually try to keep same level of dotting that was part of intact family – this can be irritating to a stepparent

2 Common Defense Mechanisms: Projection (places own thoughts/feelings onto someone else as it is too much for conscience mind) and Displacement (placing anger on someone else to another person) – anger needs to be properly aimed and discharged

Pitfalls of Visitation: Ritualize the visitation; make it as predicable as possible; child should know exact time and what is expected from them

What's the literal definition of "Discipline"; Discipline = Teaching

- (1) Define how you handled it in the past
- (2) Define how you handle in step situation
- (3) How you see it handled or not handled
- (4) Define how you handle in future

Procedures need to be set-up beforehand; stepparent can then say “in this house we do this...” the house rules are...”

Couple Strength – how strongly the male and female household work together

Rejection of non-self tissue – similar to what happens in organ transplants

Conflict of Loyalties is rampant in ‘step’ – when kid and spouse call at same time, I tell them I have two ears and one mind, in this house the eldest person comes first

Child can feel like an intrusion to the couple

Sex and Step – no room for childlike behavior, act as adults and a parent not as adolescents

The incest taboo must be upheld in step

Finances – money, money, and money: spending/saving/beliefs

- (1) 5 beliefs you have about money
- (2) 5 beliefs your parents had about money
- (3) 5 fears you have about money
- (4) 5 fears you have about your mate and your money
- (5) 5 choices you want to make about money
- (6) 5 choices you want your mate and you to make about money

Honor, do not degrade other’s opinions

A sense of humor is useful

Men in Step

Men are often suffering from grief over loss of family

“I only see them 4 days a month, I do not want to spend my time disciplining them”

Corporate executive during the week turns into the butler on the weekends when he has his children – What do we do with this person? Teach him about his lack of parenting and partnering.

It’s been shown that male children fair worse because there is a lack of dads parenting

Men think in pecking order, hierarchy – dads to teach boys how to respect elders

Parents job are to raise their children into adults that are set up to succeed in life

What the child wants is some boundaries... good fences make good neighbors;
Boundaries allows for predictability

"I don't want to be here" replies are cries out for "I want you here, you are mine"

We have moved away from patriarch and matriarch in our society

We need to build Couple Strength – If father sits off to the side while stepmom and teenage stepdaughter is arguing the message is "I do not care"

If a stepfamily fails the children see another 'death' and lose faith/trust in the future

How do we learn... by modeling, modeling, modeling – impacts both male and female children

We teach by Task – at the Stepfamily Foundation we assign/give tasks

Couple Strength – Honoring differences, each partner has a right to feel what they feel... must have a plan of action

Fathers need to have visitation rituals

The greatest gift you can give a child is SELF-ESTEEM – this is stripped when children are not given guidance, positive/negative consequences, and structure

Without a plan you become a slave to the acting out behavior

What is it to be a father? He leads, directs... Boundaries provides security

Men in Step – Don't Forget to Father, Don't Forget to Parent

Stepfamilies in the Bible – poor audio quality