

By: ~~May 2008~~ Whitei, Science Editor

About Stepparents

Being or having one

We are all well familiar with the story of Snow White and Cinderella so that we have already formed an opinion about stepparents. For many, the word "mother" revokes the image of the natural mother and no other woman can come to replace her. How do things really stand when it comes to stepparents? Is the new mom or dad a chance or a "second-hand" choice for the little child? Today, the rate of divorce is soaring. Children, who brought so much happiness in the household at the onset of family life, may turn to be the cause of tension between husbands. 40% of the families with a stepparent fall apart because of divorce in the first 5 years. Maybe the new pair has no knowledge of the inner unrest of the children, or of their interior conflicts, caused by the loyalty to their natural parents and the feeling of jealousy caused by the presence of a stepfather or stepmother. Kids can imagine that their mom cares more for her current husband than she does for them. Moreover, the current partner can find the constant attachment of the kids for the ex-partner very hard to understand. A child can tell the difference between how their father is treating the mother, and how he is always acting around his kids. This, in turn, can cause bitter resentment in the heart of the mother, directed towards the father. Upon marriage, many stepparents are not prepared to face the difficulties of having stepchildren. They believe that by marrying their parent, they automatically become the kids' parent and they may not understand, or not want to understand, the attachment of the children to their natural parent. For instance, tensions may appear within the couple when it comes to disciplining the kids. Children need a loving disciplining, but sometimes they rebel even when their natural parent applies it; you can imagine it is even harder for them to accept it when it's coming from a stepparent. You must be familiar with the line we often hear in movies or even around us, "You are not my father/mother". Not surprisingly, hearing this can be extremely painful for a new parent who only means well. Still, cases of happy families with a stepparent are not that uncommon. The secret is sincere affection, because only it can eliminate all misunderstandings, while also uniting persons with different educational levels and personalities. It is a known fact that love can counteract the painful effects of a divorce or help a child overcome the death of a biological parent. Affection can also lead to a normal relation between the children and the parent who does not live with them. A correct mentality and realistic expectations are guaranteed to bring about only happiness. The important role the natural parent has must be accepted and understood by the stepparent, who may feel jealousy or even as if threatened by the former. The natural parent cannot ever be replaced. Even when they are dead or have abandoned their children, natural parents will continue to play an important role in their lives for as long as they live. As a rule, all talks between spouses must be confidential, sincere and calm, as children will always have the tendency to test the limits set by their parents. This should be doubly respected in families with a stepparent. Parents must agree in the case of various problems, so that their children can see they present a united front. But what happens when the stepparent reacts in an unjust or impatient way, as seen through the eyes of the natural parent? First of all, the issue must be solved in particular, not in front of the children, so as to not show disobedience and lack of support for the partner. Otherwise, the children could end up by saying and doing things that will hurt, thus prompting the stepparent to overreact. The relations in a family with a stepparent require time. A stepparent must be empathetic and lenient, play with the small children, and talk a lot with the older ones. They must spend as much time together as possible by inviting, for example, the children to help them with household chores, like preparing dinner or washing the car. Go shopping together. Small but affectionate gestures are meant to show the kids the love of a stepparent.