

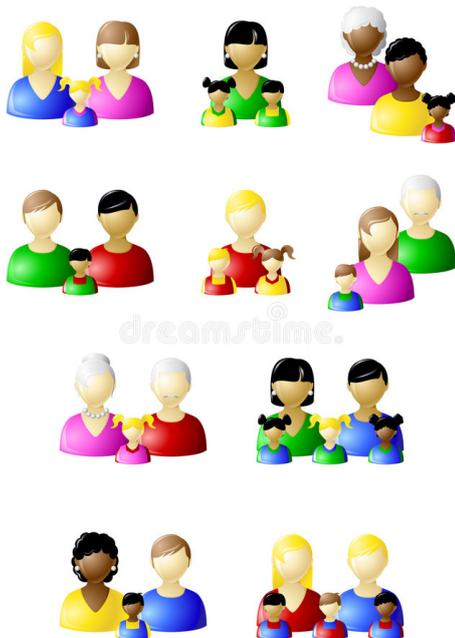


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THE 'NEW' NORMAL FOR FAMILIES, HOW TO THRIVE, SUPPORTS, AND MORE!

Thanks for your feedback on our newsletter last month – we're really glad you found it helpful. This month's newsletter is once again full : our feature article is about step, blended and non-traditional families – the myths, the facts, and how to thrive. There's also a list of supports, and two books you might find interesting.

And don't forget, our last article was about trauma – it's distressing legacy, but also the growth that can come from trauma. Click [here](#) to learn more, and to access all our previous articles.

If you're interested in our previous articles, please click [here](#)

If you've got a suggestion for an article, or there's something more you would like to hear about, please send us an email - click [here](#)

EXCITING
NEWS
COMING
SOON...

STEP, BLENDED, NONTRADITIONAL ... IT'S NOW THE 'NEW' NORMAL FOR FAMILIES!

By Amanda Pulford
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Did you know, about 40% of families in Australia with children are those in which parents have separated or divorced, or in which children live with a sole parent from the start, or with same-sex parents, or with parents in a subsequent long-term relationship (either or both of whom have children from previous relationships), or with grandparents? Step-families, blended-families, and non-traditional families are becoming much more the norm.

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Myths and Assumptions

However, there are lots of myths and assumptions about these families, such as :

- children of divorce and remarriage/re-partnering are forever damaged
- being part of a nontraditional family is unusual, embarrassing, or “not the norm”
- a nontraditional family can never measure up to a nuclear family
- nontraditional families negatively affect society
- stepmothers are wicked

And up until recently, there was a huge void of information about these families, and how they can thrive.

The Realities

Luckily, research now shows that, like with nuclear families, there are positives and negatives to being a step/blended/non-traditional family, and generally the positives outweigh the negatives.

Recent findings show that in nontraditional families :

- eighty percent of children are resilient and come out fine
- children learn how to be flexible
- children are more independent
- the biggest source of problems for children is leftover parental conflict from the first marriage
- after five years, these families are more stable than first-marriage families, because second marriages/relationships are happier than first
- all members experience positives, notably the opportunity to thrive under a happier relationship

What makes a successful step-family, blended-family, or non-traditional family?

I wish I (and my family) had this information sixteen years ago when we became a step-family. I definitely would have done things differently.

Firstly, it's imperative that the foundations are firm.

1. Ensure the relationship between the adults is solid. If there are any past hurts that need to be healed, ensure you're working on these.
2. Ensure you're in agreement with what happens financially.
3. Ensure you're in agreement with living arrangements.
4. Talk about your parenting values and agree on some basic household rules.

Once you've addressed these foundational elements, then consider the following :

- try to have minimal and realistic expectations about the forming of the new relationships – all relationships take time, patience, understanding, perseverance, and work
- as a non-biological parent – get to know your children – demonstrate acceptance, give them support, be a friend, support the parent's authority BUT don't take on a disciplinarian role too early, expect to be treated differently, and accept that your role will be undefined for a while (yet remember that you still have an important role to play)
- as a biological parent – don't withdraw, stay connected to your children in whatever ways you can, and support your partner (listen, understand, validate, problem solve)
- work toward a 'parenting partnership' with all the adults involved in the children's lives – co-parenting helps the children to thrive

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- never speak against the ex-partner in front of the children
- understand that how old the children are will make a big difference to how accepting they are of the new family (10-14 year olds may have the most difficult time adjusting : age 15 and older need less parenting and may have less investment : under age 10 are usually more accepting)
- ensure you're still investing in your relationship as a couple
- always ensure you've got supports – professional and personal
- do your research, join a group, reach out – know that you're not alone in how you feel
- know that if there isn't demonstrated amicability, acceptance, and respect by all adults in the relationships (and extended family), this will adversely affect your children and their relationships within each of the families
- know that if you're a step-mum, you've got the hardest job – research affirms this (make sure you've got great supports around you)

In Summary

While step, blended, and non-traditional families are more complex than first-marriage families, they are often stronger, richer, and ultimately provide an abundant source of supports (especially for the children).

So, bring your emotional stamina, humour and endurance ... and enjoy your new normal.



Supports

If you're part of a step, blended or non-traditional family, you might like to investigate the following supports.



Stepfamilies Australia

Strengthening Stepfamilies

Stepfamilies Australia

www.stepfamily.org.au

As one of Australia's fastest growing family types, Stepfamilies Australia are proud to support and strengthen stepfamilies with a range of resources, educational tools and training for both family members and service providers.

Family Relationships Advice Line

1800 050 321



National Stepfamily

Resource Center

National Stepfamily Resource Centre

www.stepfamilies.info

The National Stepfamily Resource Center's primary objective is serving as a source of information, linking research and best practices to help couples and children in stepfamilies.



raisingchildren.net.au

the Australian parenting website

Raising Children

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Raising Children Network is the complete resource for Australian parents, taking you from pregnancy to newborns to teenagers. They offer evidence-based content you can trust on hundreds of topics about raising children and looking after yourself as a parent.

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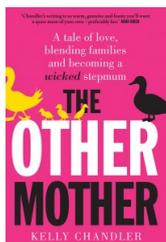
More ...

I've recently read the following two books on step, blended and non-traditional parenting. Some great information, and they certainly provided validation for my experience as a step-parent.



Take Heart by Chloe Shorten

Chloe tells of her own quest to create a new normal. Honest, sincere and warm hearted, this is a story of the modern household and explores the idea of who qualifies as 'a family' in the twenty-first century.



The Other Mother by Kelly Chandler

Kelly tells how her whole life changed when she became a stepdaughter, how it changed again when she became a stepmum, and how blended families rock her world.

As always, if you would like some help, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195,

admin@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)

Something you may not know about Awaken Psychology is that we work with Corporate's too. Each year, we partner with Leadership Solutions Global to run a 3 Day Mindful Leader Program.

The Mindful Leader Program is a public program designed for senior leaders to enhance their performance and well-being using mindful and self-awareness techniques. The three-day program provides techniques for investigating and developing attention, intention, perspective taking and new ways of being.

Do you know anyone who might be interested? Click [here](#) to find out more.



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