



**Support for Stepdads**

*Help and Inspiration for Stepdads Worldwide*



**Do You Have What  
It Takes To Be a  
Stepdad?**

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# Do I Have What it Takes to Be a Stepdad?

Merriam Webster's dictionary defines a stepparent as, "someone your mother or father marries after the marriage to or relationship with your other parent has ended."

Being a stepdad is so much more than that.

Becoming a stepdad is one of the most challenging roles you're going to fill in your life. Some of the tests include:

- Embracing the responsibilities of parenting,
- Integrating well into the family dynamic and
- Figuring out your relationship with the biological dad.

It's not an easy task and it really helps to know what being a stepparent is about. Here are some things to consider about becoming a stepparent that will help you know where you stand, and what you need to work on.

## Joining the Family

"It takes a strong man to accept somebody else's children and step up to the plate another man left on the table..."

~ Ray Johnson

Popular culture perpetuates the evil stepparent stigma, which makes your job of blending into your new family that much more difficult. Children may have preconceived notions based on a Hollywood portrayal, rather than real life.

Your job will be even harder if the children have recently been through a divorce. Becoming a stepdad in this situation means stepping into a family after their family dynamic has already changed dramatically.

The best thing to do is to go slowly and feel out the situation. While your significant other may be ready to close that chapter of her life and welcome you into the family with

open arms, the kids may not. While some transitions are easy, some may be facing a long, bumpy road.

## **Building a Relationship with the Bio-dad**

Let's face facts. If the biological father is in their lives, he will also be in yours. Creating a relationship with him will help reduce loyalty conflicts and will make the addition of a stepdad that much easier for the children. It contributes to making an entirely safe place in the children's lives and makes sure they will be comfortable, and happy, no matter if they're with you or with him.

Once you know you will be joining the family as the stepdad, it's important to set some family guidelines. If you haven't already met him, now is the time. Plan to do so in a neutral, non-threatening location. You want both you and him to be comfortable, and neither of you should feel the slightest bit defensive. You don't necessarily have to talk about the kids right away. Going into the meeting with some knowledge of his interests may help spark a conversation.

After you have built a rapport, you, your wife and the bio-dad should all sit-down and discuss raising the children. He'll still be a part of their lives and will be doing part of the parenting.

If you really want to solidify your relationship with the bio-dad, make it clear to him that you are not planning on replacing him. And your intention is to respect his position as the father. If he sees that you respect him, there's a good chance he will return that same level of respect. For more tips on making it work with the bio-dad, [visit this page](#).

## **What Should You Be Called?**

This is a tricky topic for many new stepdad's. Should the children refer to you by your first name? Is that too informal? Or should they call you "dad?" If the bio-dad is in the picture, this could feel like overstepping some boundaries.

Start by talking to your significant other and ask her what she would like the kids to call you. If the children are old enough you can include them in the decision-making process. [This article](#) has some ideas of what you could be called. No matter what name you decide on, remember, the most important thing is how you act, not what you are called.

## **Bonding with the Children**

"Stepparenting is like working at a late-night convenience store - all of the responsibility and none of the authority."

~ Valerie J. Lewis Coleman

Building a healthy, lasting relationship with your stepchildren takes more than simply coming up with your new name. Children tend to feel most comfortable with a new parental figure when they feel secure in their new situation, so building a solid relationship is essential.

While some relationships will naturally blossom on their own, others will need a little push. But first things first: What if you feel you don't really like your stepchild or stepchildren?

While you may be riddled with feelings of guilt, this is a very common feeling, experienced by the majority of stepdads. Remember, just because you knew instantly you loved your spouse doesn't mean you will feel the same about her kids. Love is a conscious decision more than an automatic feeling. For more detailed information on what to do if you feel you don't immediately like or love your stepchildren, read [this page](#).

Now what if the children don't seem to like you? You will need to create some sort of bond to help that relationship grow. Some ideas to bond with your stepchildren are:

- Play with them. Younger children gravitate toward anyone who will play with them and keep them entertained.

- Get involved. Even if you aren't into it, take an interest in their interests. This may mean driving them to sports practices or sitting on the floor and having a tea party.
- Show them what you love. Sharing your own interests could introduce a new hobby for your stepchildren. Plus, the added time it takes to teach them something new will allow tons of bonding time.
- Take care of their needs. You could help them with their homework, drive them to school or be there for parent teacher nights. Or maybe cook them something special. Demonstrating love and empathy will allow your stepchildren to start to appreciate you.

Older children and teens tend to take to a new situation better when they feel valued. Open up to your new stepchild and make it clear you want to establish a relationship. Treat them with respect and they will soon see you aren't the enemy.

### **Being a Parent**

"Stepparenting its just like parenting but with none of the credit and all of the blame."

~ Anonymous

Parenting is extremely rewarding, but it does have its challenges. Parenting children that aren't your own may be even more difficult. Parenting your step-children may come easy you. For others, you may be faced with adversity and opposition.

If you don't already have children of your own, you'll now be required to nurture, lead by example and discipline. If approached with the right attitude, it can be done – and done well.

### **Let's Talk About Discipline**

Something to think about is discipline. If you've ever seen kids that seem to run wild, you know first-hand why discipline is important. Healthy instruction is actually good for children, and will help them navigate their relationships and challenges later in life. As someone who will be in a parental role, discipline may become a part of your job. For

newly married blended families we recommend the biological parent initially assume responsibility for discipline. Some things to think about and discuss with your significant other are:

- How will you and your wife and bio-dad agree on how and when discipline is administered?
- Will your wife be the primary disciplinarian or will you step into that sort of parental role right away?
- Will your wife help explain your disciplinary role when bio-dad is in the picture too?
- Can I count on my wife to support my position when I do discipline?
- Can we present a united front when disciplining?
- How does she currently discipline (time outs, spanking, removing privileges, etc.) the children and how will I?

This is definitely one of those topics you should also discuss with the bio-dad as well. Discipline works best when all parental figures are on the same page. For more information, visit [this post](#).

### **What Message Will You Send?**

"I talk and talk and talk, and I haven't taught people in 30 years what my stepfather taught by example in one week."

~ L. Cole

Since you will be stepping in as a parental figure, keep in mind you will, in some way or another, be influencing these children. Ask yourself, what positive influence do I want to have? How will I be able to guide these kids and their future? As a parental figure, you will become an influence on the way they act, think and live.

### **Getting Some Respect**

Another important aspect of parenting is respect. As an adult in their lives, you deserve some degree of respect. The tricky part may be ensuring you get that respect, especially from other children. You must come up with ways to nurture your relationship with them to make sure they do respect you, without having to demand respect from them. It may not be an easy feat, but it will be worth it. For more on your influential role and respect, visit [here](#) and [here](#).

### **Having the Right Attitude**

Like many things in life, having the right attitude and displaying appropriate behavior can make or break your new family situation. How you approach everything from becoming a stepparent, to being a husband, to getting along with the biological father can significantly determine how easy your own transition will be.

### **Patience is a Virtue**

"You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have for instance."

~ Franklin P. Jones

One of the best behaviors you can exhibit is patience, not only in how you raise the children but also in your attitude toward the relationship. For children who are not quite ready to welcome you into their lives, patience will serve you well. You may be facing tense, contentious or empty rooms until they stepchildren accept your presence in the lives.

The relationship with your stepchildren is something you simply cannot rush. Like any other relationship, you will need to nurture the relationship and help it to grow. This relationship is one that is far too important to rush into. It may take longer than you hope, but your patience will pay off in the long run. For ideas on how to develop your patience, visit [this page](#).

### **Keeping Your Anger in Check**



We all get angry at times. It's a fact of life. But how you control that anger says a lot about you as a person, and about how you will fare as a stepdad.

Even if you have been able to control your anger before, you will now be placed in a very new situation. You may find yourself showing parental anger toward your stepchildren at times, and these cases need to be dealt with. Here are some tips:

- If it's the attitude of the child or children that is angering you, insist on respect. Between you and your spouse, you will need to come up with a rule of respect in the home that will go both ways.
- Turn to humor. Laughter is often the best way to diffuse a negative situation. Use jokes to try to relieve any tension.
- Put yourself in their shoes. Whether the child is acting out because of the changes taking place, or simply because he's a teen, put yourself in their shoes. It may help you be more sympathetic.
- Take a deep breathe. When all else fails excuse yourself, take a few deep breaths and calm yourself down before returning.

For more ways of dealing with your anger, and whether you feelings are normal or not, visit [this page](#).

## In Summary

Becoming a stepdad can be rewarding and deeply satisfying, but it can also be challenging and overwhelming at times. From joining the family to becoming a parent and figuring out how to have the right attitude, there is a lot involved in becoming a stepdad. If you go in prepared and nurture this time of growth, you will surely reap the benefits. Here are some tips to remember that can help make the transition go as smoothly as possible:

- Respect goes both ways. We talked about getting respect from your stepchildren, but respect should go both ways. Both adults and children in this relationship deserve a certain level of respect, and it's important that all parties get it.

- Be aware of expectations. Whether you speak them or not, you may have certain expectations regarding your stepchildren, the bio dad or the family dynamic. But having expectations, and having them be let down, can set you up for disappointment and conflict. If things don't go as planned, ask yourself if your expectations are realistic.
- Remind yourself why you are here. If you begin to feel frustrated or overwhelmed, remind yourself why you are in position. You got here because you fell in love with a wonderful woman who happens to have children. By loving her, you have agreed to accept and love her children as well.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate. Like all relationships, communication is critical in building a lasting relationship with your stepchildren. With younger children, discuss rules and expectations with your spouse and also the biological father. With older children, opening a line of communication can really help you bond.

When you first become a stepparent, the most important thing to remember is to persevere regardless of hard times. When things get tough in your new situation, whether it be with your wife, the stepkids or the biological father, keep on going. The right attitude will get you through many hard times until the good ones show their face again.

New stepdads often face some obstacles on the way to blended family happiness. Consider the points we presented in this eBook to see where you stand on becoming a stepparent. If you need more information, please visit our site at [Support for Stepdads](http://SupportforStepdads.com) or email us at [info@supportforstepdads.com](mailto:info@supportforstepdads.com).

## About the Author and SupportforStepdads.com

Gerardo Campbell was married in 1995 to his “Pretty Lady” after a year-long courtship. He became a stepfather to her two children who were the ages of 10 and 14. Gerardo prepared for step fatherhood the best he knew how. He babysat the children, attended group counseling sessions, and reached out to the children’s biological dad to start becoming acquainted and in order to assure the father he was not looking to replace him.

Gerardo felt confident going into the marriage although he had never parented before. He’s had high hopes but soon discovered his expectations to be naïve. He experienced emotions very common to stepfathers. He was the invisible man, the odd man out. It took time for him and his wife to get on the same page regarding the care and discipline of the children. He sought respect that was not given automatically.

Despite the initial struggles, Gerardo found the experience of parenting stepchildren to be very rewarding. He is grateful to have had a role in his children’s lives. Gerardo strived to set a good example for them. He blew the wind under their wings and off they flew into adulthood, successful and independent. Gerardo, himself, gives thanks that he has been given the opportunity to become a part of the most powerful unit of individuals possible, a family.

Gerardo’s hobbies include weight-lifting, working out, and beer stein-collecting. He also loves to write and is a regular blogger.

Gerardo created SupportforStepdads.com to share his experiences and the lessons he learned from his many years as a stepdad. He feels it is important for stepdads to have a source for ongoing support and fellowship. His site is also full of tips and tools to help men who want to know how to prepare to become a stepdad. The website also offers valuable insight that can help make the transition into stepfatherhood a successful one.

If you have questions or comments about this book or his website, you can visit Gerardo at [www.supportforstepdads.com](http://www.supportforstepdads.com) or email him directly at [info@supportforstepdads.com](mailto:info@supportforstepdads.com).

