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Your New Partner and Your Children

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Nobody expects you to stay single forever after the separation, whatever your age or gender may be. In fact, eventually your friends and family might encourage you to start dating again, to find someone to share your life with. Doing this will be the symbol of moving on with your life, past the separation.

However, for your children this can be difficult to handle. Quite often, children tend to maintain the fantasy that mommy and daddy will be magically reunited again, for some time after the divorce. Even if you had a really bad break up, with lots of conflict, your children will still wonder if you might get back together again. Although all children wish mom and dad could be together as a family, they rarely do so in cases of domestic violence.

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Prepare Yourself

So, if you start dating and come home to introduce your boyfriend to your kids, the reaction you'll receive might not be completely positive. Not all children react badly, especially if they don't remember you and your ex living together. Moreover, if you have had open and honest discussions with your children, they may be welcoming to your new partner. In most cases, however, you have some work ahead of you.

How can you introduce your new boyfriend/girlfriend to your children without causing a turmoil in your own house? Above all, do your best to be tolerant, understanding, and patient. The

tips provided below could also be helpful.

Choose Wisely

Not all the people you're going to date are worthy of being introduced to your kids. Make sure you know that person well enough and have a close relationship, so that you can trust him or her with meeting your children. For a child, it can be very confusing to meet several people. They may start to like some more than others and have trouble accepting it when you break up. To avoid breaking your kids' hearts (as well as your own), make sure it's a serious relationship and you're planning on taking it to the next level.

Have Honest Talks with Your Children

There's nothing a child/teenager hates more than feeling as if they're being fooled – tell your children you're dating someone, avoid lying to them. Even if they hate the idea and have an emotional reaction, they'll get used to it. Discuss your children's emotions and thoughts, regarding the circumstances, as well as your own. This way you'd be able to help them adjust to the new person more easily.

Don't Give in to Manipulation

Your children may be clear about not wanting you to date again. As important as it is to be considerate with your children, it is equally essential for you to move on and be happy, otherwise you won't even be able to be a good parent to them. Explain to your children that this is a normal part of an adult's life, and talk to them about their emotions, but don't give in to manipulation. Stand your ground, and always be available to talk to them – gradually, they will get used to the idea.

Respect Their Space

It may take a while for the idea that you're dating to sink in. It can be a very emotional time for you and your children. It is quite possible that you would argue more frequently, during this period. Give your children time and respect their space. Let them get used to the idea without forcing it on them.

Prepare Your Children and Your Partner

Tell your partner what you love most in your children and what your children may love in your new boyfriend/girlfriend. Encourage your new partner to ask questions about your children and to become acquainted with them, before actually meeting them. Start planting the idea that it would be a good thing for you to meet eventually, if they're up for it, of course. There's no use in pushing it. Encourage both your new partner and your children to engage in activities, which may be of mutual interest.

The First Meet

Set up the first meeting in a neutral location. It shouldn't be in your home, since your children may feel as if their intimacy has been breached and they can't escape the uncomfortable situation. A park, a public space, a restaurant is always a good place to start.

Don't Be Forceful

Your children may accept that you're dating, but not want to hang out with your new partner. They may even feel jealous and think that that person is taking their place in your heart. It's always a good idea to reassure them that that's not the case and explain that there are different kinds of love. They may also express guilt for betraying their other parent, by actually liking this new person in your life. It's important to understand their feelings and help them get through them.

In time, your children will see you're happy and may even find a way to be friends with your boyfriend/girlfriend. Give it time and be patient.

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