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# My New Partner and My Children

How to Help, When Your Children Hate Your New Partner

## How to Help, When Your Children Hate Your New Partner

After a separation, no one expects you or your ex to stay celibate forever. In fact, it is quite normal to start dating, and even find new partners to share a household with. However, your children may have a different take on things.

Some children of divorced and separated parents, might expect their parents to either make up and come back together, or stay single forever. For some time after the dissolution, they will likely maintain the fantasy that their parents may wake up one day and realize it's all been a misunderstanding, and get back together. You and your ex might have fueled that fantasy for a while, but then reality set in. Now that you have mourned your relationship, you may start to feel lonely and ready to love again.

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## What Your Children Need Help With

Don't feel guilty if you don't wish to spend the rest of your life alone. We, humans, live our lives in groups, as families. But how should you react when you're still alone and your ex has already found someone else? What if your children say they hate the new adult in their lives? What can you do to help them cope? How can you explain to them that both you and your ex need romantic partners in your lives?

## **How to Step in**

Your children may have difficulties accepting their stepparent, because they might feel that a having a relationship with that person, would be the equivalent of betraying their biological parent. Whether you are the one who has found a new partner, your ex, or perhaps both of you, the harmony in the family needs to be maintained, for the children's sake. Therefore, you will likely have to step in and help your children cope with the new circumstances

### **Find out If Your Children Have Legitimate Reasons to Dislike the Stepparent.**

What is it that they don't like? What does she/he do? How does that person talk to your children? There could be an objective, completely justified reason why your children don't like the stepparent. Perhaps he/she doesn't treat them well, or they've witnessed the poor treatment of your ex. However, it could also be that your children have no reasons to dislike the new partner, and just be picking on them. Talk to your children and ask them to give their stepparent a chance. If you find your children have plausible reasons not to like the stepparent, you may need to talk to your ex, or reconsider being with your new partner.

### **Explain to Your Children That Everyone Needs Love.**

Perhaps your children are being hostile towards the new adult in their life, because they can't understand why their parents would need to find new partners. The best policy here, would be to have frequent, honest and open conversations with your children, while still being age-appropriate. Explain to your kids that there are different kinds of love, and that no other person in your life could ever be their rival, when it comes to affection. Be honest with the children, and tell them how adults need to become couples with other adults, in order to feel happy. To reassure your kids, tell them that the love you have for your ex is now one of friendship, and while you won't become a couple again, you will always be their parents. Your children love you and want you to be happy, but often, they may simply struggle to understand the world of adults. Helping them understand will bring a lot more harmony and happiness into your lives.

### **Help Them Understand They Are Not Betraying Anybody.**

There's place in their hearts for you, your new partner, your ex, as well as their new partner. Let your children know you'll be happy if they can be friends and enjoy spending time with their stepparents. You know nobody will take your place in your children's heart, and that goes the other way around as well. Ask your ex to have the same conversation with the children, or better yet – do it together.

### **Normalize the Situation.**

If you say it's okay to have a boyfriend/girlfriend after a divorce, if you normalize the situation, it will help your children accept it. Try to let them know it's a normal thing and that you're not hurt, because your ex has made a new couple. Tell them: "It's dad and mom's right to be remarried, if they find someone they really love."

## **Don't Run a Smear Campaign Against their Stepparent.**

You may not like your ex's new partner, because you feel like you have been replaced, because you feel a bit jealous, you are still angry after the divorce, or something else. Whatever your reason may be, your first step should be to have an honest conversation with yourself and figure out whether it's legitimate or not. However, if your children sense you don't like their new stepparent, they'll feel divided and take your side, deciding they don't too like their stepparent.

## **Have a Cordial Relationship with Your Ex's Partner.**

This person will spend time with your children, and you can help them by giving her advice on the best way to handle your children. Remember, it's for the children's own sake and well-being to get along with their stepparent. And you will feel reassured that they are well taken care for.

## **Have Discussion with Your Ex and Their New Partner.**

Let them know what worries you, what kind of feelings your children expressed regarding the situations, and discuss strategies to alleviate any negativity regarding the circumstances. If you work as a team and combine your responses, your children will be the prime beneficiaries.

## **Don't Fuel Arguments.**

If you don't have a good relationship with your ex and their new partner, do your very best to avoid fuelling the arguments your children may have with their stepparent. There are always two sides to a story. You may find yourself as the referee in some of these arguments, but try to stay as neutral as possible, and preach patience and understanding to your children. This may be hard to do, but keep in mind that you are doing it for the kids.

## **Encourage the Relationship Between Your Kids and Your New Partner.**

If you are the one who has found a new love, do everything you can, and beyond, to help your children build a strong bond with that person. Share activities everybody enjoys, have dinners together, go on trips. It is perfectly normal for your children to be resistant at first, but don't let that discourage you. Also, remember your new partner's feelings – they might not be used to having children around and may start to feel overwhelmed. This could lead to conflict, unless you mitigate, empathize with your new partner, and encourage them to be patient.

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