

BLENDED FAMILY

Definition

It is a family that includes children from a previous marriage of the wife, husband or both parents.

- a) Husband with children marry a never married no child wife.
- b) Wife with children married to a never married no child husband.
- c) Divorced mum with children married to a divorced husband with children.
- d) Widow wife with children married to a widower husband with children.
- e) Divorced husband or wife with adult children marries widow or widower with adult children.

Blended families have their own unique challenges. There is no definite road map to success. a blended family according to research may take a period of between 5 to 7 years to stabilize.

Challenges for the children

- a) Children may feel compelled to compete for attention and dominance in the new household.
- b) Children may struggle with feelings for the new parents.
- c) Children may be reluctant to trust a step parent especially if he feels abandoned by a biological parent following divorce or separation.
- d) Children may feel the love for the step parent somehow betrays his / her biological parent.

- e) Children may find difficult sharing the step parents.
- f) Children may express their frustrations with emotional outburst.
- g) Children may suffer from parental inconsistency.
- h) Children may experience territorial issues sharing of space and items.
- i) Children may develop identity confusion.
- j) Sibling rivalry may exist with non biological siblings becoming bitter.
- k) Children may have adapting to new family values / conflict of values.

Need of children in a blended family

- a) They need acceptance from both parents.
- b) They need assurance of their safety.
- c) They need to be allowed to children and parents should not use them to nurse their pains.
- d) They need to develop trust with step parent (s).
- e) They need to be heard and emotionally connected with the step parent (s).
- f) They need to feel loved by the parents.
- g) The need to feel valued by the parents.
- h) The need appreciations and encouragement from the parents.

Role of parents in a blended family

- a) Building intimacy with the step children by creating quality time with children.
- b) Assure children of their love and acceptance.
- c) Setting boundaries for the blended family structure.
- d) Adjusting to the non biological children.
- e) Adjusting to parenthood and being welcomed by the partner's children.
- f) Adapting positive and balanced disciplinary approach toward children.
- g) Assuring children of their safety.
- h) Encouraging children to express their fears, feelings and concerns.
- i) Showing respect to the child's biological parent.
- j) Show honest interest in children education and life.
- k) Positively solve conflict rivalry in the family.
- l) Meet the basic needs of all children without favourism.

How parents in blended family should treat each other

- a) Treating each other with respect.
- b) Sharing responsibilities in raising their children without favourism.
- c) Supporting children in transition in the new family.
- d) Finding activities that unite the family not alienate step children and step parent.
- e) Building a strong bond as partners in the family.
- f) To equip themselves with realistic expectations.

Skills required for success of blended family

- a) Effective communication
- b) Assertiveness
- c) Listening skills
- d) Empathy
- e) Negotiation skills
- f) Conflict resolution
- g) Self management skills