

**Pine View High
Blended Families Parenting Class
Session 4**

Agenda

Review and Discussion:

1. **Blended Family Stages**
 - a. **Fantasy**
 - b. **Confusion**
 - c. **Crazy Time**
 - d. **Stability**
 - e. **Commitment**

2. **Blended Family Stage Tasks- what needs to happen to move through**

3. **Family Meetings – vital in Blended Families**

4. **Basic characteristics of becoming more effective:**
 - a. Ability to empathize
 - b. Not be defensive
 - c. Avoids being judgmental
 - d. Shows acceptance
 - e. Open to change/new information
 - f. Strong sense of personal identity
 - g. Believes in children's abilities/encourages them

5. **Blended Family Struggles**
 - a. Need to be noticed
 1. Parents seek recognition from stepchildren
 2. Stepparents want recognition from their stepchildren's absent parent
 3. A stepparent needs a spouse's emotional support
 - b. Competition, the creator of conflict
 - c. Responsibility, personal and legal
 - d. Instant love?
 - e. Struggling with sexuality
 1. Children live with newlyweds
 2. Boundaries are blurred
 - f. Discipline dilemma
 1. When the stepparent is the only one home

2. When a child's misbehavior is directed only toward the stepparent

The Stepchildren's Internal Conflicts

Most children in blended families struggle with three basic emotions and have difficulty with the consequences of feeling and/or expressing these emotions. Parents might become more effective by understanding how children experience these common consequences of going through a divorce and then living in a blended family. Think of the ways that children might experience the following:

- a. anger
- b. guilt
- c. fear

Guidelines for the healing process

1. Be aware of all the changes in which the children did not have control/be sensitive to their feelings
2. Ease into the newness of the blended family/uncertainty is normal
3. Be patient & answer questions honestly
4. Accept grief & loss as part of life/encourage children to face the reality of these losses, work toward not pity
5. Encourage children's relationship with the biological parent, **NEVER undermine that relationship**
6. Show encouragement, touch, hug and hold your children
7. Confront misbehavior and take corrective action/do not make excuses

II. Coping with a New Stepparent

- a. Names... what do you call each other
- b. Roles
 1. Recognize the importance of the other biological parent and respect the child's need to love that parent
 2. **NEVER SPEAK NEGATIVELY OF THE OTHER PARENT IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN**
 3. Acknowledge the bond between your new mate and their children/avoid monopolizing your spouses time
 4. Plan alone time/date nights with your stepchildren

- 5. Family life isn't always happy/conflict is ok (look at HOW)
- 6. Don't expect instant love/allow time for development
- 7. Reject fairy tale myths and unrealistic media portrayals of blended families. FORGIVE YOURSELF FOR BEING IMPERFECT!!!

III. Coping with differences

- a. Differences at home
- b. Differences between homes
- c. Non-custodial parent
- d. Love vs. stuff
- e. Schools
- f. Stepsiblings
 - 1. Rivalry (competition vs. cooperation)
 - 2. Birth order reshuffled

IV. Blended family meetings

- a. Set time and be consistent (day, time, place) 60 minutes
- b. Agenda, (20 minutes=moan/groan, 20 minutes=scheduling, goals, 20 minutes=**encouragement**)
- c. Conflict resolution process
 - 1. Identify the issue
 - 2. Brainstorm possible solutions
 - 3. Evaluate the solutions and choose one
 - 4. Try out the solution
 - 5. Evaluate in the next meeting

Session 4 Study Questions

- 1. As children struggle to find their place in a blended family, what are some of the feelings that they cope with?

- 2. How can you help children to trust again?

3. What the major dilemmas stepchildren face? How can you best help them?

4. What is the biggest problem that your children/stepchildren face with their nonresidential parent? What is your part in it?

5. How can you influence schools to be a positive force in the lives of your children and stepchildren.

6. What causes stepchildren to compete with each other?

7. What techniques would be beneficial to create a feeling of belonging for children in your blended family?

8. Why are family meetings so essential to the effective functioning of a blended family?

9. Why might some parents be resistant to having meetings?