



Building Stepfamilies That Work[©]

A Letter to Your Spouse's "Ex"

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Purpose: If there is conflict or hard feelings between you and your partner's ex, it will be detected by the children, and it may leave you feeling that you are not moving forward in your relationship with your partner and stepchildren. Addressing these feelings and conflict may be necessary in order to move forward. In this regard, all that you can be responsible for are the changes you can make within yourself, and in ***your*** part of your relationships with your stepchildren, your partner, and your partner's ex.

Your Assignment: Part A

The first part of your assignment is to write a letter that you may, or may not send to your spouse's ex. The ultimate goal in writing the letter is to liberate yourself (and hopefully your spouse's ex) from the burden of hard feelings; and in so doing, foster improved relationships between you and your stepchildren, and you and your spouse.

In completing this exercise consider all of the following point that are applicable. Add any others that you feel are important or necessary.

Points to Consider:

- Whether we like it or not, our paths have become intertwined
- We don't really know much about one another
- No vehicle for clear communication exists for us (yet)
- No communication leads to misunderstandings and hard feelings
- Goal of the letter is hopefully to put some of them to rest

Towards this end, apologize for:

- any part you may have inadvertently had in causing them hurt, pain, frustration
- angry words spoken
- negative thoughts
- hurtful actions

Resolve to take the "high road"

- you have no wish to try to replace them as the kid(s) mother/father
- appreciate the significance of the biological bond between parent and child
- vow to be respectful of their status as the child(ren)'s bio parent
- resolve not to speak disrespectfully of them in front of the child(ren)
- and request the same of them
- resolve to do your best to be wise, compassionate and caring in your interactions with the child(ren)
- recognize that the changes and transitions have been difficult for the child(ren)
- will strive to keep the best interests of the child(ren) in mind

- and genuinely hope that all other adults involved will do the same.

Offer to:

- Be available to communicate

Provide assurances that you:

- Will welcome any form of communication they feel comfortable with (face-to-face, telephone, voice mail, fax, email)
- but prefer it's direct rather than via the child(ren)
- Will be respectful and cordial

Your Assignment: Part B

Now, decide what you are going to do with the letter. Some options are:

- Mail it
- Keep it
- Bury it
- Burn it
- Give it to someone to hold
- Bottle and cork it, then set it afloat
- Tie it to a helium balloon and let it go

Remember: If you consistently choose the “high road”, time is on your side.

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