

10 Dos To Stepmothering

by Brandy Horkey

Stepmothering can be a trying part of life for any woman. We've put together the basics here to help guide all stepmothers through all of the trials they face. There are so many aspects of being a stepmom but if you follow these general rules, you'll see that the other stuff will fall right into place.

1. Be patient! Any mother needs this quality, but especially step mothers. Keep in mind that your step kids have all kinds of things going on in their minds as well as keeping up with their every day learning. Maybe you are new in their lives or they are feeling resentful of you from time to time. Just remember, be patient.
2. Talk to your stepchildren. Communication is the key to any parent child relationship and step parents are no different in this aspect. Ask them how their day at school was, how their friends are and if you have the stomach for it, how their other parent is fairing. This will build trust between you and the child and could be your most valuable tool in building a strong relationship between you and your stepchildren.
3. Know your role. Many times, married biological parents have difficulty in agreeing on discipline for their small ones. This can be an especially sensitive issue for a stepmother. You may have ideas on how his children should be reprimanded and he may think along other lines than you. Make a point of discussing this issue with your husband. There will come a time where you'll have to discipline the child in some form. It will be much better when that situation arises if you know your boundaries ahead of time.
4. Play with your stepchildren. Once again, this will build trust. You are also helping to build confidence for the child because an adult has taken an interest in them. Have fun with them. Play blocks in the floor, swing on the swing set or pick up a tennis racket. Whatever they love to do, show an interest and have a good time.
5. Invite them to play with you. Do you like to go for a long drive on the way home from work to clear your head? Are you the shop till you drop type or do you just prefer a dip in the pool? Whatever your favourite things to do to have fun are, invite your stepchildren along with you sometimes. This is not too different from number four, but asking the kids to play with you will show them that you care about their opinions.
6. Perform some of Dad's duties. Does your husband tend to do most of the upkeep on the children? Try changing a diaper or giving a bath. Run the after school route from school to practices. You'll be showing your step kids that you really care about their father because you are willing to take up the slack for his duties and that you don't mind going out of your way to help the family.
7. Honesty is the best policy! Always be honest with your family. We know that sometimes the truth needs to be stretched to protect little feelings but as a general rule, tell the truth. That doesn't mean that you need to be hurtful when speaking about the child's other parent, no matter how bad they might be. The truth will teach your step kids the value of honesty as they grow and come to believe in you in all things.

8. Show your love. If you loved their father enough to marry him then you must have saved room for his little ones. Your stepchildren do notice those quick kisses and tight hugs shared between you and your husband. Share your affections with the kids. A little hug will go a very long way.

9. Be respectful. Treat your step kids with the respect that you want shown to you and you'll see it come back to you. Many times, especially in the early stages of a blended family, children tend to say and do things that they normally would not say or do to an adult because they feel threatened or angry and resentful. Show your stepchild that you have respect for them and their feelings and you might be surprised to see that kind of respect returned to you.

10. Be patient. Did we already go over this? Let us recap then. There is an old adage that says, 'patience is a virtue'. Keep this in mind when your stepchildren test you along the way.

Sometimes, stepparenting can be difficult at best but it doesn't have to be. Do what works best for your family and follow these "Dos" for stepmothering.