



Marriage Matters

Before You Say “I Do” Again

Most people today want a marriage that will last a lifetime. Unfortunately, couples entering their first marriage have approximately a 40-50% chance of getting divorced. Remarriage carries an even greater risk—nearly a 60% divorce rate, with the greatest risk of divorce for remarried couples with stepchildren.

It doesn't have to be all doom and gloom though. Couples need to keep in mind that any marriage takes work. It's not just about love, but how partners communicate and handle conflicts and disagreements. Although problems will most certainly arise, it's important to remember that remarriages need the same effective and consistent nurturing as first marriages.

Characteristics of successful remarried families

- ♥ Successful remarried couples have mourned their losses. When couples remarry, they may have already dealt with many changes. Adults may grieve the loss of a previous marriage, the loss of a partner, the loss of a dream, or the loss involved by changes that happen because of death or divorce. When grief is resolved, there is less hostility with former partners, and children are more likely to be encouraged to build a strong relationship with a stepparent.
- ♥ Successful remarried couples have realistic expectations. When couples remarry, they may know more about what to expect from marriage. Many partners make a stronger commitment to this new marriage and work harder to make sure it works. They know it takes time and patience to build new relationships.
- ♥ Successful remarried couples have a strong couple bond. Couples realize that love alone is not enough. They nurture their relationship by taking care of their own needs for fun and relaxation as a couple.
- ♥ Successful remarried couples establish new family traditions. When two families come together, it's hard not to feel that one way of doing something is right and the other way is wrong. Successful remarried families compare notes about traditions, rituals, and routines and recognize that each person's preferences are just different, not better or worse. Family meetings are used for discussions and

problem solving. Starting new traditions or combining routines and old traditions from both households to meet everyone's needs can enrich the new family.

- ♥ Successful remarried couples deal positively with past relationships. Research has shown that most people do not have extremely positive feelings toward a former spouse. When couples work to reduce hostilities between former spouses, it may also enhance the marital quality of the remarriage.
- ♥ Successful remarried families accept the changes in their household composition. Getting used to stepchildren can take time. Remarried stepfamilies acknowledge that relationships with stepchildren are just forming and shouldn't be rushed or forced.
- ♥ Successful remarried couples are flexible. They take time for themselves, but work around kids' needs as well as their own. They talk about their expectations and work together on discipline.

Remarriage doesn't guarantee “happily ever after.” Just like any marriage, a remarriage takes time, communication, and commitment. If children are involved, there are additional challenges, complications, and potential stresses that families must deal with. Couples in successful remarriages make sure they communicate well and show their love daily to each other, keeping their commitment fresh and strong.

ACTIVITY

If you are planning on getting remarried or you are already remarried, discuss the above characteristics of successful remarried couples with your partner. Does your relationship have these characteristics? If you lack in certain areas, think about how you can work together, and as a family, to gain or improve these characteristics. For more resources to help your remarriage and stepfamily thrive, visit the National Stepfamily Resource Center at www.stepfamilies.info.



This resource supports the following principles of healthy relationships:



Care for self



Choose



Know



Care



Share



Manage



Connect

For more resources, visit www.gafamilies.org and www.nermen.org.

