



**70 Terrific
Tried-And-True Tips
For New Stepparents**
Strong Steps To Make Your Stepfamily Stronger

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Stepchildren don't usually come with instruction manuals, and stepparenting can be even more daunting than raising your own biological child. Here are 70 tried-and-true tips to strengthen you in your quest to build a strong stepfamily.

1. Don't expect to be immediately loved and accepted by the kids.
2. Expect to be hated, talked down to, and mistreated but decide now that you don't have to reciprocate in kind.
3. Be willing to be available allow the children to come to you.
4. Give the children the freedom to guide their relationship with you into what they need it to be.
5. As hard as it may be, don't be judgmental.
6. Do expect to be hated by the other parent.
7. Realize that unresolved feelings—on everyone's part—may be impacting your new relationship.
8. Understand that jealousy and mistrust abound, but you don't have to add to these negative feelings.
9. Seek professional help if you and your mate are unable to co-parent with the biological parent.
10. Do attempt a working relationship with your step-kid's biological parent.
11. Ask for support from your spouse.
12. Make good communication skills—with your spouse, the children, and the biological parent—a priority, especially if the children are spending a significant amount of time in your home.
13. Support the children's need to assert that they have "real parents" even if you don't necessarily agree.

14. Put up a united front as adults.
15. Do not undermine the biological parents' authority unless they are a danger to you, the children, and your new stepfamily. Otherwise you will breed mistrust of all adults and teach the children how to manipulate the situation.
16. Never bash the biological parents, and don't let anyone else do so in your presence.
17. Remember that in young children, parents are a part of them. Talking negatively about parents can injure a child's fragile self-esteem.
18. Respect the children's biological parents even if you are at odds. They gave your stepchildren life and deserve your respect.
19. If you are modeling respect and are on the receiving end of disrespect, speak up and state how you would like to be treated respectfully.
20. Develop a cordial relationship with the stepchild's biological parent(s).
21. If a cordial relationship is impossible, let your spouse deal with the ex.
22. Repeat "Not my ex, not my problem!"
23. Do not become involved with child-support disputes.
24. Expect money to always be an issue. Your spouse may have a manageable child support payment now, BUT that can change!
25. Expect child support payments to increase as time passes and children get older.
26. Accept the fact that you and your biological children's current living situation has no impact on prior child support arrangements between your spouse, the ex, and the legal system.
27. Be glad we are all human. There are no Super Stepparents (no Super Man, no Super Parents).
28. Try to smile when you realize that angels and earthly beings will not sing your praises.

29. Give thanks in all circumstances even though stepparenting can be a really thankless job.
30. Don't expect Junior's mom to thank you when you've been up all night with him while he throws up on your nice bed linens. Just know that you have done the right thing.
31. Learn about or experiment with different levels of involvement with each child—from almost nothing to all-out "third parent."
32. Find the groove that works for your new family unit.
33. Expect the unexpected, custody and schedules always change.
34. Be prepared!
35. Don't push the children to call you "Mom" or "Dad." This can outrage their biological parent, alienate the child, and cause distance in your marriage.
36. Just tell yourself a name is a name, as long as it is not mocking or disrespectful.
37. Do expect to be overwhelmed, daily.
38. Know that stepparenting can at times be more than anyone can handle.
39. Set personal boundaries and stick to them! Without personal boundaries, you will probably find yourself as an abused member of your own household.
40. Stick to your boundaries and deal with situations as soon as they become a problem.
41. Remember that sometimes the path of least resistance is truly best.
42. Walk away when this is the best option.
43. Remind yourself, "Not my kids, not my problem!" You married their parent. Nurture your marriage, and let the parent do the parenting.
44. Follow your instincts and your spouse may follow your lead.

45. Don't expect immediate support from your spouse.
46. Count your blessings if your spouse is supportive from the beginning.
47. Try your best to be patient—we know how hard that is!
48. Remember that when your spouse defends the step kids to you, s/he wants you to love them as much as s/he loves them.
49. Keep in mind that how you treat a person's children is also a part of how you are treating the parent. If you criticize them, s/he will take that as a direct criticism.
50. Your spouse has no idea of what you are feeling (or why) unless you communicate.
51. Explain what makes you feel loved, hurt, etc. You may need to repeat yourself *a lot* before s/he starts to internalize it.
52. Allow time to show affection for your spouse.
53. Allow the stepkids to have one to one time with your spouse. Feelings of jealousy are very, very normal. When you are feeling jealous, it is best to remind yourself what an irrational feeling it is, and then feed your mind some truths to replace the jealous thoughts.
54. Know that your spouse loves you.
55. Remember that love when you don't feel it and you aren't experiencing it in action.
56. Focus on the positive.
57. Note how much happier you are when you focus on what is positive.
58. Realize you are not only happier, but you also have quite a lot of things to be happy about!
59. Don't let the situation or these people turn you into a bitter person.
60. Be honest.
61. Don't bottle up your feelings.

62. Find good support from friends.
63. Seek professional help.
64. Make your marriage first priority. The marriage will never work in the long run if the marriage doesn't come first! Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.
65. Make new traditions for your new family. Who says Christmas can only be celebrated on December 25? If you have summer visits, have Christmas in July.
66. Celebrate often.
67. Fill each other in on your family histories and traditions.
68. Keep the meaningful traditions and create new ones.
69. Make picture books, and share memories together.
70. When all else fails, fake it!

May all your strong steps be in the right direction!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ka Rae' Carey'. The signature is stylized with loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Stepfamily members rely upon Dr. KaRae' Carey to use her personal and professional expertise to guide them through their most difficult times and help them adjust quickly. As a solution-focused, results-oriented stepfamily counselor, Dr. KaRae' is your secret weapon to direct your blended family to take "strong steps" in the right direction.