

Discipline in the Blended Family

Frequently, people ask me if their disciplinary methods should be different in a blended family. Your kids have been through the separation of their parents...then a divorce...and now a new marriage that comes with a blended family. You wonder, shouldn't I just give my kids a break and loosen up on my discipline?

Top reasons for your discipline to remain the same:

- Your values haven't changed and you should continue to teach your children the difference between right and wrong
- Boundaries and guidelines show your children that you love them
- Providing discipline actually gives the consistency and security your kids need in a time when a lot of things are changing around them

How do we handle our kids?

You have remarried and you need to agree with your new spouse on what discipline is fair to both adults. It's important to respect the biological parent's history of parenting, but still come to a mutual understanding of how all children will be treated and disciplined in your home. It's time for the two of you to discuss boundaries and guidelines for your kids and for your home.

All kids treated equally

All kids should be treated fairly and equally. After you and your spouse create house rules such as:

- No eating in the living room
- No T.V. after 9pm on a school night
- Everyone helps clean up the kitchen after meals

These rules will apply to every child in your family. Consequences can be different, based on age differences and developmental stage, but consequences still need to be equal and fair.

Note: it also helps if the adults follow the same rules. It's hard to explain why Dad is eating in the living room, and no one else can!

Biological parent takes the lead

The biological parent should always take the lead, in front of the kids. The new stepparent should not be perceived as the "heavy"- the one who enforces the rules or creates the rules.

If your child disobeys a house rule, deal with the issue, with your spouse at your side. The children should always see you two as a united front- even if you don't

agree on everything- appear united to them, and work out the differences in private, later.

Be Consistent

If you make a rule, keep it, everyday. Don't change the rules on the days you are tired, or the days your spouse is out of the house or out of town.

No secret alliances with your biological kids

If you change the rules when your spouse is not there, this causes your children to not respect their stepparent, and believe that the bond between you and them is stronger than the bond between the parents. Your relationship with your spouse should take priority. Keeping your relationship strong with your spouse provides a stable and consistent environment for your children. This stability and consistency will create feelings of security for your children and move your blended family to a strong, successful united family.

Shirley Cress Dudley is a licensed professional counselor with a master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling, and a master's degree in Education. She has a passion for helping blended families grow strong and be successful. Visit our website for more help with your blended family issues.

<http://www.BlendedFamilyAdvice.com/>