

Meeting the (Big) Challenges of “Blended Family” Relationships: What Works and What Doesn’t

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

The Numbers (After divorce comes, usually, at least one stepfamily, with huge impacts on both mediation and financial planning. 42% of Americans have a close step relationship.)

How Stepfamilies Are (Very) Different from First-time Families (Why there are quotes around “blended family.”)

The Map: Five Challenges and Three Levels of Help

STEPFAMILIES FACE 5 MAJOR CHALLENGES

How to recognize each challenge in the tangle of complexity and intensity that we often see.

How these challenges may play out across households.

Concrete, evidence-based guidance for what works and what does not work, and some “easy wrong turns” to avoid.

First Challenge: Children Struggle with Losses, Loyalty Binds, and Change

Understanding the Challenge

Meeting the Challenge of Supporting Unhappy, “Resistant” Children

Second Challenge: Insider/Outsider Positions in the Stepfamily Are Intense. And They Are Stuck.

Understanding the Challenge

Meeting the Challenges of Both Insider Parents and Outsider Stepparents

Third Challenge: Parenting Tasks Divide Parents and Stepparents

Understanding the Challenge

Meeting the Challenges of Parenting, Stepparenting, and Discipline in Stepfamilies

Fourth challenge: Couple Must Build a New Culture While Navigating (Lots of) Differences

Understanding the Challenge

Meeting the Challenge of Building a New Family Culture While Respecting Established Cultures

Fifth Challenge: Ex-spouses Are Part of the Family

Understanding the Challenge

Meeting the Challenges of Parenting Across (sometimes not so friendly) Households.

FROM SURVIVING to THRIVING

Early Struggling Stepfamily (What it looks like)

Healthy Mature Stepfamily (What it looks like – still very different from a first-time family)