

Stepmom

Empowerment

Guide



Yaffa Rosner, LMFT

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Seven Steps to Soul Inspiring Action

It is my honor and privilege to share with you over three decades of personal, and professional experience filled with healing, growth, hope, and empowerment through mistakes, failures and successes. As a stepmom I have experienced first hand the emotional roller coaster of the push-pull with stepchildren, their father, bio-mom, and extended family. It also took me a while to understand how my own early life challenges contributed to me tolerating the chaos. Healing from those traumatic wounds enabled me to become more present, and connect with my soul calling.

Wishing, hoping and praying that my guide will provide you with some tools to empower yourself as a woman, a wife, and a stepmom.

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Step 1

Rediscover your core self to remind you of who you are beyond your role as a stepmom. It is a process worth experiencing. **Be curious** about what drove you to compromise you in the hope of being loved by them—your husband and his children—and approved of by their bio-mom, and their extended family.

Explore how to take care of yourself in the midst of the chaos, and how to balance your marriage, and your family.

Reconnect with your soul—the you deep down who is not tainted or compromised by your life circumstances.

Celebrate you as you embark on this journey of solidifying your authentic self. Schedule daily ‘me’ time so you can meditate, pray, journal, exercise, talk to a friend, or just rest.

No little girl daydreamed that when she grows up she will give up parts of herself so she can help raise another woman’s children. I am pretty sure you didn’t daydream about that as well. Yet, you find yourself doing just that.





Step 2

Explore ways to grieve past losses. Loss of your expectations of the ‘happily ever after’, former marriage, in-laws, old lifestyle, financial standing, friends, the single parent family unit, and compromised time with your children.

You may be wondering what grief has to do with your present marriage. Well, it has a lot to do with your present marriage’s level of success. This is how:

Whenever there is a loss—not only due to a death—we need to grieve it. Even if your previous relationship ended by your choice, because perhaps it was unhealthy, you still experienced a loss, as something that was there is no longer there.

The classic steps of the grieving process include shock, denial, anger, guilt acceptance, and working through. Grieving means going through these stages, and both acknowledging and allowing the hurt to exist with acceptance and curiosity.

Anger may be uncomfortable but is a stage that can’t be skipped. Acknowledging the anger is a crucial step in the grieving process. Not acting it out is a necessary choice. Dealing with anger needs to be done in an emotional and physical way. Emotionally, it helps to write an unedited letter (*without mailing it*) to your former spouse.





The physical end of releasing anger is through exaggerated arm movements, jumping jacks, and a brisk walk. Many people report that it is a very powerful, liberating, and safe tool in expressing and letting go of anger.

Anger that is unexpressed may turn into depression. It may also contribute to resentment and a feeling of victimhood. Anger also blocks you from being emotionally available to yourself and your current relationship. So, expressing the anger even if it is only in writing and exercise may be empowering.





Step 3

Balance your marriage and family. Nurture the couple's relationship while building a solid foundation with the family. Deepen the emotional intimacy with your spouse by developing and practicing effective communication skills. Strengthen your couple bond by spending consistent scheduled and spontaneous couple time together. Learn the principles of difficult conversations over topics such as finances; who pays for what and how much.

All too often, the couple in a stepfamily primarily functions as parents. It is of utmost importance to keep things in perspective and energize the couple's relationship. It started when a woman and a man met, fell in love, found out that they were like-minded and shared similar values, and then decided to deepen the relationship through commitment to a marriage. The relationship needs to be continually nurtured and attended to.

I hope you find the following tips simple, practical, and effective in helping you solidify your marriage:

- Find out if you are like-minded on issues of parenting and lifestyle before you get married; it is the time to learn where each of you stands. If you are already married, be brave and schedule this talk, as it may be crucial to your family success.





- Schedule 15–45 minutes of couple time, daily. Make sure that you minimize human and electronic interruptions. Share the highlights of your day, and any concerns you may have regarding your marriage, children, and anything else. This habit will help you nurture the connection between the two of you in a very meaningful way.
- A weekly date night does wonders for your relationship. It is an opportunity to relate to one another as adults. After all, isn't this the reason you chose to be together? Balancing parenting with couple time, as well as personal time, will make a significant difference in the overall quality of your life and your family experience.
- Letting go of past hurt may be a painful experience. It may very likely be the main reason that many people choose to avoid going through the very thing that will grant them the emotional liberation they so desire. Additionally, letting go of old emotional ties is essential to forming new meaningful relationships.

You and your spouse can empower yourselves to have a loving, successful and lasting marriage.





Step 4

Establish boundaries, and stick to them consistently. Internal and external boundaries promote a safe environment physically and emotionally. You will connect with your values, and beliefs as a backdrop to understanding what you value most for yourself, and your bio and stepchildren.

Having the courage to set and hold boundaries is crucial for connecting with the essence of who you are. It is being assertive about what you want with compassion, yet with firmness.

Boundaries will help you and the children feel emotionally safer, and will help all involved to know what to expect.





Step 5

Learn how to parent the children; ‘my, yours, and ours’.

The more on board you and your husband are on parenting style, the easier parenting will be.

During the first 18 months roughly it’s important that you each exclusively discipline your biological children. It is a time to develop a connection, a bond with your stepchildren. Only then you can slowly start parenting them.

Your mutual child has unique experiences having both of you as biological parents. The impact of siblings living in two homes on your “our” child is missed by parents. Most people seem to be under the illusion that because the child has both biological parents at home, she/he is fine.

The “our” child, in fact, may experience a great deal of anxiety whenever the step/ half siblings leave to visit with their other biological parent. The child fears, at times, that maybe one of his biological parents might also leave. Understanding why the half siblings have another parent in a different home is beyond their capacity to understand for quite a few years.





The child may also experience some feelings of rejection and abandonment by the half siblings every time they leave for a visit.

Confusion might also set in when the biological child realizes that his parents do not treat his half siblings equally. The parent who is the stepparent might be more reserved with the stepchildren, while their biological parent may be over protective of them.





Step 6

Co-parent with exes. Business meeting structure helps in removing emotions, which facilitates a more productive and result-oriented parenting. When hostilities are high, parallel parenting is the solution.

Co-parenting is fraught with obstacles. Inter-household involvement in parenting is ideal, but the world doesn't end without it. A good co-parenting plan involves a lot of planning, but it pays off by:

- Keeping ex-spouses involved in their children's lives in a positive way
- Reducing spousal insecurity by increasing transparency of interaction with exes
- Setting a good role model for your kids
- Making scheduling easier and eliminating unpleasant surprise demands





- Cutting down on kids' manipulation by making it harder to pit parents against one another, and by having other adults involved in a way that curbs parental overcompensation resulting from guilt

Evaluate what's in your power to change. Assume responsibility and stay accountable without playing the blame game. Don't let scheduling or ideological conflicts surprise you.





Step 7

Actionable steps for successful empowerment; transforming knowledge into a happier future:

- Reconnect with your intuition
- Be curious
- Listen to your soul whispers
- Write down your values and beliefs
- Explore your needs
- Commit to your healing
- Set and hold boundaries with yourself, your stepchildren, and your husband
- Evaluate your marriage
- Implement the recommendations in **Step 3**
- Celebrate you, your marriage, and your family

Thank you for taking your time to read this guide!

I welcome any comments, questions and suggestions.
You may email me at yaffa@remarriedwithchildren.org





Yaffa Rosner is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Los Alamitos, California, specializing in helping stepmoms find their soul calling amidst the challenges of stepmotherhood. She provides her clients with guidance for building healthy relationships, developing cohesiveness and a sense of belonging, and is a certified EMDR and Somatic Experiencing Practitioner (a naturalistic healing method for traumas such as, child abuse, car accidents, terrorist attacks, and divorce).

She has been interviewed many times for radio, television, and newspapers, and has written a magazine column and several publications on stepfamilies.

