

Preparing For Remarriage

Rebuilding the future after death or divorce is not an easy task. Some choose to remain single, while others prefer to search for a new mate. One thing is usually common after a marriage ends—dating is more complicated the second time around. Those who decide to remarry (and more than 80% choose to do so), can improve the health of their future marital relationship by laying the groundwork for a firm foundation.

Marriage and family therapist Elizabeth Einstein, in her book *Stepfamily Living*, outlines some important remarriage preparation tips. Einstein says the most critical key for remarriage preparation is to resolve or mourn the loss of former relationships. Some experts say this can take anywhere from three to five years to complete the process from resolution to remarriage. The death of a mate, marital separation and divorce are sources of great stress, and the grieving processes for each are similar. Yet when divorce occurs, one must sort through emotional and economic issues with a former spouse while adjusting to a new style of parenthood.

If enough time is not taken after a divorce, new relationships run the risk of repeating the cycle. Statistics show more remarriages end within the first three to five years than do first marriages. However, preparing for remarriage can foster healthy relationships with realistic expectations of what stepfamily life will be.

The second step Einstein mentions is that of rebuilding one's individual life. This process can range from accepting responsibility to learning new skills and developing independence to live alone. This step would also include helping children deal with their feelings. In divorce situations, the former spouses function independently of one another, yet they share the responsibilities of raising the children. Cooperation with each other is essential to the health of the children, although many divorced cannot cooperate with a former spouse for various reasons. Emotional stress, money problems, and loneliness will likely occur, and it may be necessary to seek counsel to make starting over less traumatic. Developing a support network of family and friends can make things easier.

The strength and skills of adults can reflect the stability of a stepfamily, so establishing new relationships should come only after adults are emotionally ready. Einstein calls this process "relinking." After one has let go of the past, social activity often becomes a priority. This is a time to sharpen interpersonal skills and build self-confidence. It is also a time to remind children that another person may participate in your lives one day. Dating may result in a special relationship, and eventually, marriage plans may be discussed. Potential partners should discuss values, traditions, discipline, expectations, and other important issues before walking down the aisle again.

A good resolution of past experiences, along with a well-informed step in the right direction, can dramatically improve the chances that a stepfamily will survive and thrive. For people planning to remarry and those already involved in a blended family, there

are wonderful opportunities to help you understand and enhance the climate of your relationships.

See www.MarriageMississippi.com for a list of upcoming events and activities designed to strengthen your relationship.