



Blended Family

For all their joy, weddings are sometimes charged with potentially explosive situations. These may be the feelings of divorced parents, step-parents and children, either yours or your groom's.

If you can, observe one rule at all times: DON'T PUSH! Include the children in all appropriate prenuptial planning and festivities, but be sensitive to their reactions. No matter what the relationship is with the former wife or husband, be as amicable as possible in discussing any wedding plans involving the children.

Schedule a special visit with your officiant to meet the children. Many ceremonies include vows for children, emphasizing the formation of the new family and recognizing their place in it. Ask the children if they want to participate in such vows, and respect their decision and feelings.

Children may shun the speaking role, but be eager to be in the wedding party. It would be appropriate to consider them for ring bearer, acolyte, altar boy, usher, flower girl, bridesmaid, guest book or gift attendant.

If the children choose only to attend the wedding as guests, accept this decision gracefully. Make arrangements for special seating, perhaps just before your parents are seated.

Be sure to include the children in the receiving line, even if they did not participate in the actual ceremony. Introduce them in their old and new roles. For example, "This is John's son and my stepson, Michael."

Have formal pictures taken of the new parent and new stepchildren alone. Those photos may later be a treasured gift.

As important as it is that the children understand that the new parent is in a sense marrying them, too, it is also important that they respect the new relationship between the two adults. So, if you take a honeymoon trip right after the wedding, take it alone. Plan a special family trip later, but reserve the honeymoon just for you and the groom.

If the children will be living with you and your groom, include them in appropriate decisions about furnishing and decorating their new home. The china pattern you choose isn't their concern, but the color of the bedspread you buy for their room definitely is important to them.

Be prepared for some tears, especially if the children are small. Probably the most important thing you can do is to avoid making any assumptions...about anything. Be open and communicate with them. Including the children in the nuptial ceremony can enhance the wedding and lend a firm base to your new, blended family.