

Preserving a Sense of Family Even in Times of Transition: Tips for Parenting in Single and Blended Family Situations



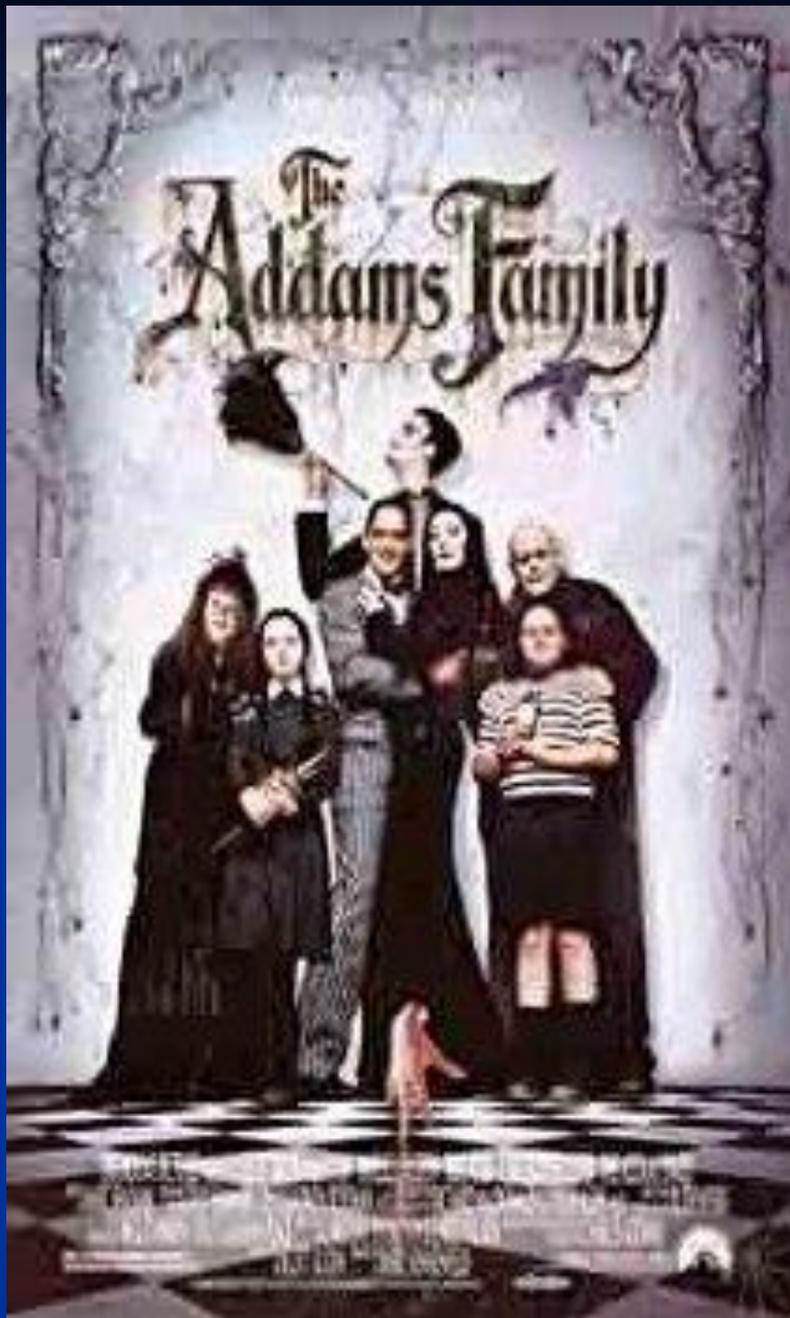
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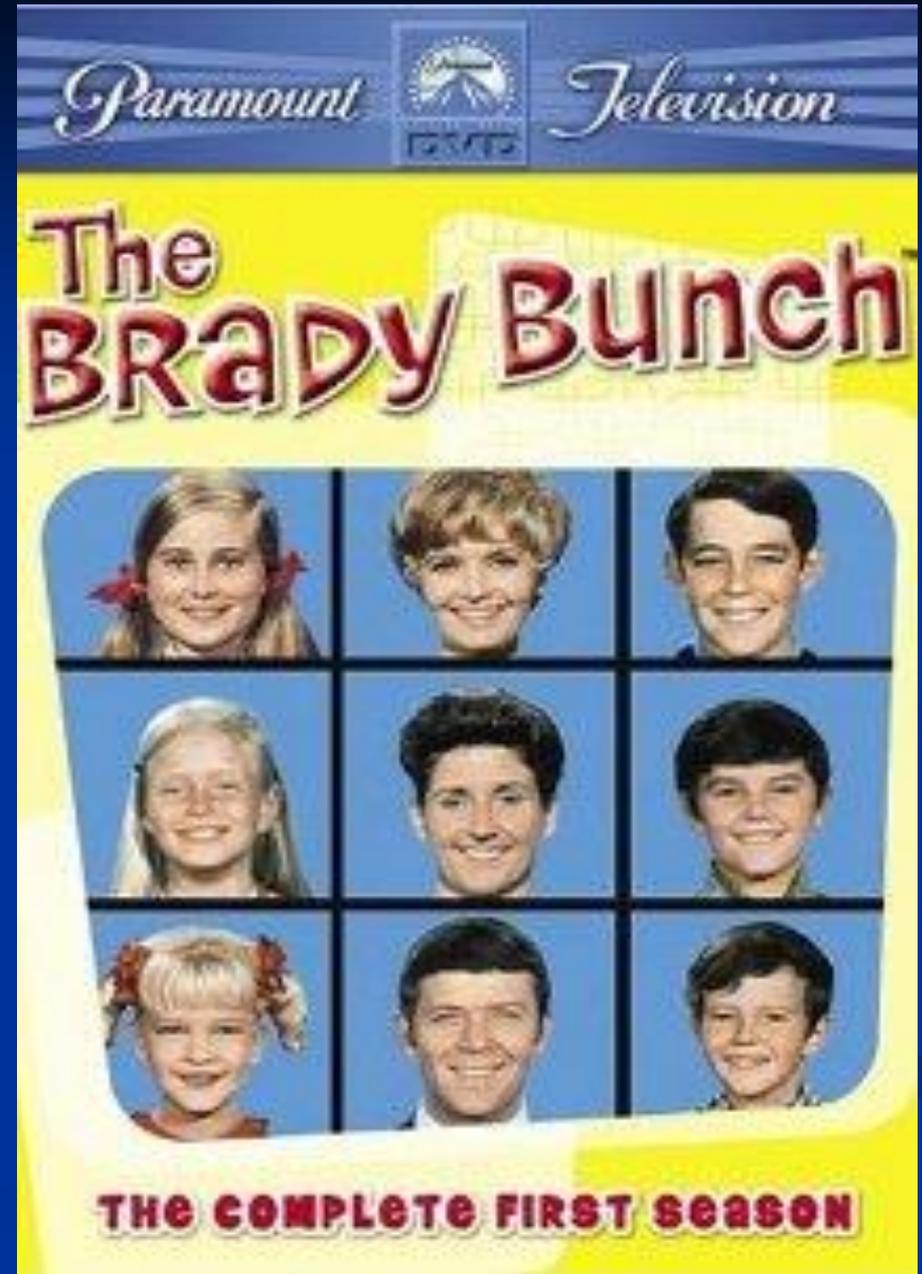
Fostering Family





Group of two or more people related by birth, marriage, adoption and residing together

Intimate
community of
persons sharing
life and love...



Types of Family Bonds

- Biological: natural bonds of members connected by flesh and blood
- Spiritual: interpersonal bonds of members connected by their willingness to share goods, joys and sorrows

A healthy family is one where:

- Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters...
 - show mutual love and respect
 - participate in the good of the whole
 - are understanding and forgiving of meanness and mistakes

Security

Love and
Affection

*Healthy
Family*

Defined
Expectations

Open
Communication

Elements of a Healthy Family

Love and Affection

- Establish Trust:
 - Plan outings, attend sporting events, activities
- Give praise and encouragement as appropriate
- Random Acts of Kindness:
 - show how much you care

Open Communication

- Listen attentively to one another
- View the situation from the other person's perspective
- Shared Decision Making
 - Make "Family" decision together, i.e. vacation destinations
 - Extra-curricular activities

Elements of a Healthy Family

Security

- Set routines
 - meal times
 - visitation with other family
- Give own space
 - Don't just move or change bedrooms without discussing it first
- Establish traditions
 - Blend the old and make new ones

Defined Expectations

- Set Realistic Roles for Members
 - Can't replace father/mothers
 - Don't expect close bonds to form immediately
- Set Boundaries and Limits
 - House rules should be maintained.
 - You will clean the dishes
 - You will not call step-parent names

Impact of Family Transition

Children Under 10

- Easy to accept new adults
- Seeking attention and affection
- Have daily needs which must be met
- Adjustment period is not long if the above conditions are met

Impact of Family Transition

Adolescents Age 10-14

- Need time to trust a new person as disciplinarian
- Have a hard time openly expressing their feelings
- Longer period of transition and adjustment needed
- They have the hardest adjustment typically to transitions in the family

Impact of Family Transition

Adolescents 15 and Older

- Start to separate from the family
- Form their own identity
- Want to feel important, loved and secure
- Not always open to affection...**BUT NEED IT!**

Single Parent Statistics

13.7 Million Single Parents in the United States

84% of Custodial Parents are Mothers

- 45% of those are divorced or separated
- 34% have never been married
- 2% are widowed
- 39% of custodial single mothers are 40+ years old
- 54% of custodial mothers are raising one child
- 46% are raising two or more
- 80% are gainfully employed

Single Parent Statistics (cont.)

16 % of Custodial Parents are Fathers

- 58% are divorced or separated
- 21% have never been married
- Fewer than 1% are widowed
- 90% are gainfully employed

Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Support:
2007 (Released by United States Census Bureau)

Blended Family Statistics

- The First Marriage Divorce Rate is 41-50%
- 75% of Divorced Persons Remarry
- 65% of Remarriages Involve Children from a Previous Marriage
- 1 of Every 3 Americans is in a Blended Family

Blended Family Statistics (cont.)

- More than Half of all Americans Were, Are or Will be a Part of a Blended Family
- In 2010 the Blended Family became the Predominant Family Form in the U.S.

Winning Step Families: 2011

Tips For Single Parenting and Effective Parenting After Divorce



Research Tells Us That The Children Who Do Best Have Parents Who.....

- Listen and nurture an independent, caring and understanding relationship with each child
- Support the relationship with the other parent
- Are both actively involved in discipline
- Continue to have high expectations
- Shield the children from disagreements

The Don'ts of Single Parenting



- Force them to choose
- Use children as messengers
- Put down, criticize the ex in front of the kids
- Play the “Blame Game”
- Make your child(ren) your friend, confidant, therapist, etc.
- Use children as “private investigators”

Don'ts (cont.)

- Share the economic and legal details unless age appropriate
- Overreact to changes
- Ask or expect children to keep secrets

The Do's of Single Parenting



- Make sure children feel loved, safe and secure in your home
- Model respectful communication with other parent
- Encourage regular and frequent contact with other parent (exceptions)
- Give other parent the benefit of the doubt

Do's (Cont.)

- Get help if needed
- Encourage interaction with extended family of the other parent
- Keep in mind the strengths that each of you bring to your child(ren)'s development
- Be patient
- Help with transitions to and from the “other house”

Do's (cont.)

- Educate self
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
 - Look & Listen
 - Interest
 - Expansion
 - Clarify
 - Summarize



Tips for Getting Along With the Ex

- Keep the best interests of the child(ren) first
- Don't overreact
- Commit to talking/communicating regularly
- Business like vs. emotional
- Ask for his/her opinion
- Apologize when appropriate
- Be respectful

Getting Along With the Ex (cont.)

- Don't sweat the small stuff
- Be willing to compromise
- Be sure to work together as much as possible, especially on:
 - Discipline
 - Education
 - Medical needs
 - Financial issues

Tips for Blended Family Parenting

- Be realistic
- Be patient
- Be careful with and limit expectations
- Work on couple relationship first
- Recognize that most blended families are different...less loyalty, more flexibility
- Keep in mind that there is an incredible amount of change involved

Blended Family Parenting Do's

- Start talking about the possibility of blending ASAP
- Establish new traditions
- Establish consistent discipline in both homes
- Create a list of house rules
- Let role of stepparent evolve naturally over time
- Let child(ren) know that stepparent is not a “replacement”

Blended Parenting Do's (cont.)

- Spend time alone with each child and stepchild
- Hold family meetings
- Let child(ren) know that you and your spouse will continue to love them and be there for them
- Know the signs when outside help is needed and be willing to get it
 - Prolonged anger, isolation, depression, favoritism/exclusion, etc.

Blended Family Parenting Don'ts

- Push relationship formation
- Expect child(ren) to call the stepparent mom or dad
- Allow the stepparent to be too much the disciplinarian too soon

Thank you for attending tonight!!!

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