

# Taking on the Role of Stepmother



By Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Relationships alone are difficult. When you add his kids, her kids, his ex, her ex, and both sets of in-laws, most people cannot handle the pressure. Stepfamilies require more effort and understanding because more people are involved, and this often includes young ones who didn't ask to be put into the situation to begin with.

Long ago, the term "stepmother" was used to describe the "new" parent who stepped in after the "real" parent's death. Today, the stepmom is less often a substitute than she is an added parent. We all know the story of *Cinderella*. Fortunately,

there was a happy ending, but it did bring to light the “wicked stepmother.” Most everything you read about stepparenting has to do with evil stepmothers, obnoxious children, responsibility with no control, resentful ex-partners, and lack of worth or appreciation.

**Related Link:** [How to Prevent Yourself from Rushing into a Relationship](#)

Being a parent triggers memories and emotions from one’s own childhood, whether conscious or unconscious. This may or may not bring fear to those thinking about raising another person’s child. Parents may raise children similar to their own upbringing – or the opposite. Parents may strive to give their children an entirely different upbringing.

Being a mom can be one of the most rewarding things we do in our lives. It can also be one of the most difficult undertakings, and parental responsibility is not something we can take lightly. Taking on the role of stepmother can perhaps be the most difficult undertaking of all.

As mothers, we are programmed to love and nurture children. We were raised with the understanding that it is our “job” to take care of them. So we would naturally expect a loving response in return – or should we? When Mother’s Day or your birthday comes around, this opens opportunities for feeling down about being a stepmother. But don’t give in! An attitude will get you nothing but grief. Moping around because no one remembers your birthday is not the answer. You have to tell people, “Hey, my birthday is on Friday, and I want us to go out to dinner together.” Tell your partner birthdays are important to you and strongly suggest your partner talk to the kids about acknowledging it.

**Related Link:** [How to Date when You’re a Single Parent](#)

Before special events or days that matter to you, take the initiative to:

- 1. Be clear about your plans.** Anticipate problems and discuss them with the children.
- 2. Tell them your expectations.** People are not mind readers. Talk with your partner.
- 3. Do not expect a major deal about Mother's Day.** The kids feel conflicted enough as it is. Acknowledging it is important, but celebrating it may be too painful. Yes, of course, it hurts to be ignored or snubbed. Try to understand the positive intent behind it. It is not meant to hurt you. It is about guilt and loyalty to the other biological parent.

The manner in which you approach the role of mother or stepmother and the attitude you put forth will differ from those around you. You must pay particular attention to your actions so as to not alienate yourself from your partner or the children. Getting into a stepfamily can be rewarding and will make for new adventures. As with every new adventure, hold on tight because there will be bumps along the way, but the ride will be spectacular!

*For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).*

*Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN, is a Registered Nurse, Life Skills Expert, Speaker and Award Winning Author. She is the owner of Open Pages Publishing, which includes her series of "The 4-1-1" books on Life Skills, Step Parenting, and Surviving Teenhood. Michele is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com.*