

Keep Talking to Your Kids After Divorce



By Rosalind

Sedacca, CCT for [Hope After Divorce](#)

It can be tough – but necessary!

As a divorced parent, you can never pay too much attention to your communication skills with your children. It keeps the doors open for a healthier, more positive relationship with them. It makes you more sensitive to issues of concern early on, so you can nip them in the bud. It also encourages your children to talk about what they are feeling, questions they have, and situations that are creating conflict for them.

Related Link: [Solo Parenting: Reconsidering Your Ex](#)

Don't sit down and say, "Let's talk." Instead, find a comfortable time and place where conversation can flow

naturally and easily. Then, bring up related subjects in a casual way. Watching television or movies at home can often be a catalyst for valuable conversation. Driving in the car together is another great time for discussion, questions, and sharing feelings.

Consider Bruce Willis and Demi Moore. Despite being divorced for over a decade, they're often seen at red carpet events with their three daughters, Rumer, Scout, and Tallulah. By maintaining a friendly connection with each other, these exes ensure that they both have a positive relationship with their kids and that their family unit stays intact.

Here are some tips that can help you ease into more productive communication with your kids.

- Asking *why* can be intimidating and close off your conversation. Instead ask *what happened* questions, which keep the dialogue open. Then, move into talking about *feelings* which provide insights into what's *really* going on with your child. Validate their right to their feelings, even if you're uncomfortable hearing about them. When they feel safe in expressing their emotions, you'll get real clues as to how your divorce is affecting them – and whether there are changes taking place worthy of your special attention.

- Be patient. Don't react or respond until you get the full message. Sometimes, it takes some meandering for your child to reach the crucial point of what they want to say. Don't coax – or shut them off too soon!

- Remember that preaching, moralizing, or “parenting” comments can put up barriers to clear communication. Listening is your most valuable skill and tool. Paraphrase back what you're hearing to make sure you're getting it right. “So you were annoyed at dad for forgetting to call you last night” is far different from saying “I don't blame you for being angry at dad. He's so undependable.”

– Watch your judgments and put-downs, even with upsetting information. Don't belittle your children, call them names, or insult their behaviors. Talk *to* them – not *at* them. The difference is felt as respect. Be careful never to put down or disrespect your child's other parent in your conversations...as tempting as that may be at times. Keep your kids out of the divorce drama as much as possible. That's when real emotional damage is done.

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– Acknowledge your children for coming to you or sharing with you. Praise their braveness. If you were at fault, apologize honestly and discuss how you can make changes for the future. Sometimes, post-divorce parent-child communication can be a very slow process as you rebuild trust and a sense of security.

– Show that you accept and love them – even when their behaviors are not acceptable. Help them come up with some acceptable solutions they can understand and feel good about. Support and positive role modeling go a long way toward influencing your children in the right direction.

Put yourself in your child's place, and you will likely make wiser decisions when it comes to talking about sensitive areas in their life. Afraid to talk about touchy subjects? Get some help from a counselor. Good parents know it's essential to talk to your children and be there for them when they need you – especially when they're reluctant to start the conversation. Don't let them down!

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

✖ *Rosalind Sedacca, CCT is a Divorce and Parenting Coach and author of the ebook, [How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love!](#) Acclaimed by divorce professionals, the book*

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Cupid's Weekly Round-Up: Tips for Having a Fun Family Holiday



By [Whitney](#)

[Johnson](#)

The holidays are meant to be spent with the ones you love most: your family. Whether you're a newlywed spending your first Christmas with your husband's family or new parents trying to survive those sleepless nights, it's important that you soak up this time together. With this thought in mind, CupidsPulse.com has pulled together these great articles from our partners, filled with the tips you need to have a fun-filled holiday with your family:

Related Link: [Drew Lachey Talks About Spending Time with His Family](#)

1. Bond as a family: It's no secret that your kids won't be little forever, so why not enjoy this time before it's gone? Take a look at these gift ideas to bring your family even closer. (GalTime.com)

2. Show your bestie you care: Many women find a BFF in their sister or mother, but even if you're not related to your best friend by blood, you probably still view her as family. These 37 friendship quotes will remind you how special your bestie is. (YourTango.com)

3. Celebrate your loved ones: Making people feel loved and special is important all year long, not just during the holidays. Here are four ways to show your family and friends just how much you care. (GalTime.com)

4. Embrace your inner kid: Take a cue from Alyson Hannigan and her husband of ten years Alexis Denisof and be a kid at heart. We promise you'll enjoy the holidays even more through the eyes of a child! (CelebrityBabyScoop.com)

Related Link: [Make Your Holiday the Best One Yet](#)

5. Tell your partner you love her: With the needs of your little ones filling you and your wife's days (and often your nights), it's easy for you to feel like you're missing out on time as a couple. Use these 15 tips to make sure your actions

show your sweetheart just how much you love her.
(YourTango.com)

Cupid wants to know: How will you bond with your family during the holidays?

Surviving Holidays as a Stepparent



By Michele

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

It doesn't have to be difficult.

A stepparent who has different holiday traditions from the rest of the family, especially a stepparent with no child of their own, can feel left out of the celebration. All family

traditions matter, and it's vital for everyone to be considered when planning holidays.

Actress Megan Fox is stepmom to hubby Brian Austin Green's son, Kassius. Word has it that she is a stepmother to the fullest extent. She has happily looked after Kassius since he was three years old. Fox is a good example of a stepparent who most definitely includes her stepchild in all holiday celebrations as well as every aspect of their family's life. It should be this way for all children in blended families.

As a stepparent, here are a few things you should consider when planning holidays:

Related Link: [Reinventing Home for the Holidays](#)

Who is going to spend the holiday where? Holiday plans can be predetermined by custody or shared parental agreements. If you have the flexibility of options, discuss them with the children and keep their desires in mind. Some families split up the holidays each year: "I'll take Halloween and you take Thanksgiving." Or some try to do both: "I'll take Christmas Eve" (Mom) and "I'll take Christmas Day" (Dad). Several people celebrate twice, once with each parent.

Where will the gifts be opened? Parents who purchase presents for their children like to see their reactions when the child is opening the gift. How would you feel if you didn't get to see their surprise? Make sure you think of all parties involved when making plans.

Watch out for trouble on the stepsibling front when the kids have other plans. Stepchildren can feel left out if there are "whole" kids in the picture. Try to keep the presents even and have the major festivities take place when all the children are present.

Don't expect holidays to be as you had in the past. Be aware

the loss of the old ways of doing things is a disappointment for the kids *and* for you. Discuss how holidays were for each of you and have each person define which rituals are most important to them. This can be hard to hear, but it's important. Incorporate a few of these old rituals into your new holiday.

Create new holidays. If all the holidays seem to be taken up with stress and other people's claims ("But Thanksgiving is mine!"), you can always select another day (Cinco de Mayo, Arbor Day, Stepparents Day) to become an annual blow-out holiday. Acknowledge you are starting from scratch. There is a new excitement about having the opportunity to create holidays as you would like them to be. Aim for creating your own holiday spirit (with additions) and welcoming kids into it.

If you won't have the children for the holiday, create an alternate festivity for yourselves. Don't stay home and mope. Don't force false cheer. Make new memories. Get creative. Plan ahead and don't let yourself feel lonely or disappointed.

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Here are a few more simple tips to keep in mind as well:

- The first few years, try to lower your expectations.
- Don't assume holidays will be calm and peaceful if daily life is full of conflict. There is no holiday from mixed feelings, and you cannot force fun, laughter, and family spirit.
- The winter holidays are traditionally a time of family togetherness. You and your partner can have private time too, but always take the children and stepchildren into consideration.
- Take into account the religions of those involved. It's

important to keep family traditions alive with certain cultures.

- Be flexible and encourage flexibility.
- If things are tense, do not force get-togethers or minimize the amount of time spent together.

No matter the holiday, remember to celebrate. You are a real family!

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

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Get Ready to Celebrate the Holidays with ‘A Madea Christmas’





By April

Littleton

A small town gets ready for their annual Christmas Carnival as Madea (played by Tyler Perry) gets persuaded by an old friend to help surprise her daughter with a visit over the holidays. Past relationships are put to the test and new secrets are revealed, while Madea celebrates Christmas her way.

Should you see it:

Obviously, you'll be seeing *A Madea Christmas* if you're a Tyler Perry fan. If you're not familiar with any of his plays or movies, you might know some of the actors/actresses who will appear on the big screen with him (Chad Michael Murray, Tika Sumpter and Eric Lively). You could also go see the film simply because you're in the Christmas spirit.

Who to take:

Bring a family member along or a couple of friends. You'll probably end up crying and laughing through the entire movie, so bring someone who can sympathize with both emotions.

Related: [Family is Everything in 'Homefront'](#)

What are some ways to bring a family together for the

holidays?

Cupid's Advice:

You might not be feeling any of the Christmas cheer just yet, especially if you can't seem to get all of your family on the same page. Are you having trouble getting all of your loved ones involved in the festivities? Cupid has some tips:

1. Family project: With the holidays vastly approaching, this would be a great time to bring all your loved ones together for a Christmas-related project. Have all of your family members decide on a Christmas tree and decorate it together, or think about doing some secret Santa shopping as a group. Little activities like this will bring all of you closer and help you figure out ways to work as a team.

2. Family dinner: Pick one day out of the week where every member of your family can be free to meet up for dinner. Keep communication open during the meal. Share your feelings and listen when your loved ones want to discuss any important issues or just normal, everyday topics.

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3. Just relax: Trying to plan a big family get together can be very stressed, especially if your loved ones haven't been in the same room with each other for a long time. Instead of giving yourself anxiety, sit back and let things fall into place. When your family arrives for the holidays, watch television together, have a dance-off competition in your living room or eat ice cream and stay up all night catching up with each other. Christmas isn't about how much money and time you spend getting everything ready – it's about family and being thankful for what you have.

What are some other ways to bring a family together for the holidays? Comment below.

Cupid's Weekly Round-Up: Parenting and Marriage After a Second Baby



By Kerri Sheehan

Being a new parent can be difficult, but adding a second or even third child to the family adds a new dynamic to the already-established way of doing things. Most couples don't realize that expanding a household can lead to sibling rivalry, loss of patience, and, for many, marital turbulence. CupidsPulse.com has gathered some of the best tips and advice from our partners to help you out when it comes to that cute little addition:

1. Siblings: If your son or daughter is accustomed to being an only child, there could be a slight shift in personality when baby number two comes along. Make sure to prepare your other children for their new brother or sister so that they will feel just as happy and eager as you do when the baby comes home. (GalTime.com)

Related Link: [Kristin Cavallari Confirms Second Pregnancy with Jay Cutler](#)

2. Parenting Style: It's important to remember that every child is different. What worked for your oldest son Johnny may not work for little Ava. Be flexible. *Rules of Engagement* star Megyn Price recently dished that her daughter Grace is so unique that she has to be spontaneous when parenting. (CelebrityBabyScoop.com)

3. Work Together: Nobody said it was easy raising children, but when two parents share or take turns getting up in the middle of the night, driving the kids to school, making dinner, and cleaning the house, it can be much easier to handle. Find out if the division of labor in your house is equal. (GalTime.com)

4. Just Because: It can be easy to forget about your partner once you add children into the mix. What better way to make your man feel important than getting him an unexpected present? Here are ten gift ideas for even the pickiest of guys. (YourTango.com)

Related Link: [Kanye West Displays His Love for Kim Kardashian](#)

5. Say How You Feel: In the midst of providing your children with the care and protection that they need, it's easy to forget to say those three little words that brought you together in the first place. Here are 20 inspirational ways to say "I love you." (YourTango.com)

What are your best parenting tips? Share below.

When Are You Ready To Be a Dad?



By [David Wygant](#)

One of my subscribers sent me a fantastic question the other day: When are you ready to be a dad? I'm a dad. I never thought I would be one. And now, not only am I a father, but I love it. For me, there's no greater feeling in the world. There's nothing better than walking across the street holding my daughter's little hand. There's nothing better than sitting on my sofa while she climbs and crawls all over me – except when she bounces on my stomach after a big meal!

Related Link: [Brad Pitt Says Fatherhood Has Made Him a Better Man](#)

My daughter's still very young; she's only three years old. But the love she gives me is a love I've never experienced in my life. It's so fulfilling. And you know what? I wasn't ready to be a dad. It's like the old saying says: "You're never ready to be a father...until the kids arrive." Even then, you might not be ready, as the changes in your life are so sudden and drastic.

Remember that your wife becomes a mother; it's a completely new experience for her too. She has a little human being entirely dependent on her 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You're no longer going to feel like her number one priority, but she's going to need you more than ever.

You need to understand it's only a temporary feeling of displacement. Once you start bonding with your child, you'll start to feel a lot more involved again. Don't worry if it takes a bit of time to get to know your little one. Some guys don't feel like they bond with their kids until they hit two-years-old – it's easier to connect with their children when they're walking and talking. There's nothing wrong with that.

You need to ask yourself a different question: Is being a father something I want to do? The changes are so major that you have to *really* want it. The sleeping in on the weekends is over. The late nights over at your friend's house are done. Coming in after work and just putting on the television is no more! When you're a dad, you have to be on when you get home. You must spend time loving and connecting with your child. You need to be the role model your dad may or may not have been for you. You have to open your mind and open your heart.

Related Link: [Celeb Dads Who Are Doing It Right](#)

You have to step outside your comfort zone and live for someone else. Is that something you can do? Is that something you desire from life? If the answers to these questions are yes, then don't worry about being ready and don't think you

need to know everything. There's no guidebook. We all learned on the fly!

If you truly want to embrace the good and bad experiences that fatherhood brings, then you're as ready as you'll ever be.

Nothing will prepare you for it, and it won't be anything like you imagine. But honestly, it's the most beautiful, rewarding, and humbling experience any man can have.

For more information on David Wygant, click [here](#).

How to Cooperatively Co-Parent After Separation or Divorce



By Rosalind Sedacca, CCT for [Hope After Divorce](#)

Since they're parents of a two-year-old son, Orlando Bloom and Miranda Kerr's separation is more than just celebrity news. They have become role models for how to handle divorce. At the Child-Centered Divorce Network, we watch celebrity divorces carefully, honoring them when they do things right – and admonishing them if they're doing things wrong.

So far, we're hearing the right messages that every couple facing separation or divorce should heed. I value what Bloom said recently on a TV interview: "We love each other. We're a family. We're going to be in each other's lives for the rest of our lives." That, in essence, is the reality divorcing parents face. Why not approach it cooperatively for the well-being of your children? Bloom added, "For the sake of our son and everything else, we're going to support one another and love each other as parents to Flynn. Life sometimes doesn't work out exactly as we plan or hope for. But fortunately, we're both adults, and we love and care about each other. And we, most of all, love our son."

Related Link: [Can You Really Be Friends With Your Ex?](#)

I love this response and am delighted to share it with others. No doubt, life for parents after divorce can be enormously complex and challenging for several reasons.

- Both parents are bringing the raw emotions resulting from the divorce into a new stage in their lives.
- Mom and Dad are also bringing previous baggage from the marriage – ongoing conflicts, major disputes, differing styles of communication, unresolved issues, and continual frustrations – into the mix as they negotiate a co-parenting plan.
- Both parents are vying for the respect and love of the

children – and are easily tempted to slant their parenting decisions in the direction that wins them popularity with the kids.

- Anger and resentment resulting from the divorce settlement can impact and influence levels of cooperation in the years to come.

- Parents may disagree about major issues ahead that weren't part of the parenting dynamic in the past, including visits and sleepovers with friends, scheduling after-school activities, handling curfews, new behavior problems, consequences for smoking, drinking and drug use, dating parameters, using the car, and scheduling vacation time.

- Parents may not share values and visions for the children as they grow and may also not agree on the plan of action required to honor those values.

When these types of differences appear, parents might find themselves struggling to find ways of coping. Agreement on how to co-parent effectively in the present and the future is not a one-time discussion. It takes on-going communication, both verbal and written, as well as regular meetings via phone or in person. And it takes a commitment to make co-parenting work – because you both want it to.

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The consequences, when it doesn't work, can be considerable. Your children are very likely to exploit any lack of parental agreement or unity, pitting Mom and Dad against one another while they eagerly take advantage of the situation. This is a danger sign that can result in major family turmoil fueled by behavior problems that neither parent can handle.

When Mom and Dad are on the same page, so to speak, they can parent as a team regardless of how far apart they live. These parents agree about behavioral rules, consequences, schedules,

and shared intentions regarding their children. They discuss areas of disagreement and find solutions they can both live with – or agree to disagree and not make those differences an area of contention.

Keep in mind that when you're more open and receptive to your co-parent, you are more likely to get what you really want in the end. Good listening skills, flexibility, and the commitment to do what's best on behalf of your children are part of a smart co-parenting mindset. Remember that co-parenting will be a life-long process for the two of you. Why not do it in a way that will garner your children's respect and appreciation? It looks like Bloom and Kerr recognize the importance of that. I hope other co-parents do as well.

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

Rosalind Sedacca, CCT is a Divorce and Parenting Coach and author of the ebook, How Do I Tell the Kids about the Divorce? A Create-a-Storybook Guide to Preparing Your Children – with Love! Acclaimed by divorce professionals, the book provides fill-in-the-blank templates that guide parents in creating a family storybook with personal photographs as an ideal way to break the news. Rosalind is a contributing expert at HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com. For her free ebook on Post-Divorce Parenting: Success Strategies for Getting It Right!, her free ezine, articles, coaching services, and other valuable resources, visit Rosalind's personal website, www.childcentereddivorce.com/ or follow her on www.facebook.com/ChildCenteredDivorce/ and [Twitter @RosalindSedacca](https://twitter.com/RosalindSedacca).

'Things Never Said' is a Journey of Self Discovery



By April

Littleton

Directed by Charles Murray, *Things Never Said* is about an aspiring poet who is still haunted by a past miscarriage and a dangerous marriage. Daphne, Kal's best friend is also dealing with romantic issues. Her boyfriend, Steve regularly takes advantage of Daphne's kindness. Kal is soon surprised when she begins to develop feelings for Curtis, a man who has a damaged past and an estranged daughter. Together, Kal starts to find her voice and her self worth.

Should you see it:

If you're interested in dramas, think about checking this movie out when it opens in theaters. Fans of the hit television show, *Shameless* will see a familiar face. Shanola

Hampton plays one of the lead roles. Michael Beach, Tamala Jones and Omari Hardwick will also appear on the big screen.

Who to take:

If you get bored on a Saturday night and you haven't seen your girls in awhile, think about going on a dinner and movie date with a group of them. This film definitely isn't the best for a first date because of its intense, emotional content, but if you've been in a relationship for quite awhile, go ahead and take your honey to see this movie. The two of you might learn a thing or two.

Related: [Making Sure You Do What's Best for the Kids](#)

How do you support a partner whose had a miscarriage?

After losing a child, it might be difficult to know how to help someone who is in so much pain. How do you show your support, but still allow your partner (and yourself) some space to grieve? Cupid has some advice:

1. Offer an ear: Every couple is different, but if your significant other is the type who likes to talk about the situation at hand (whether it be good or bad), then take the time to listen. If they want to talk about the loss of their baby, then let them. Let your partner know you're there for them, but don't force any sudden conversations. Let your companion come to you first and then take the lead from there.

2. Give them space: When your honey is ready to spend some time alone, don't push the issue. Instead, pick up some of the slack around the house. Cook all of the meals, do the laundry and clean up any messes you see laying around. This would also be a good time for you to grieve properly. Go over to a loved one's house. If you don't feel like talking, fine, but just being around someone who cares about what you're going through will make you feel better.

Related: [What Does Unconditional Love Look Like?](#)

3. Say goodbye: When you and your boo are ready, commemorate your baby's memory. Hold a memorial service or funeral. If preparing for this becomes too difficult, start a journal or write a letter to let out all of your feelings. Acknowledging your loss and providing yourself with some closure will help you come to terms with what happened.

Have you been through a miscarriage? How did you support your partner? Share your experience below.

Handling the “Kids” Question On a Date



By Sheila Blagg

for GalTime.com

The kids-or-no-kids debate is an issue for many couples. But, bring a child into a new dating relationship and the issue becomes even more complex. As people move from one relationship into the dating realm, they often wonder, "Does he want kids?," Will she still want to date me?"

When both parties are on the same page in regard to the kids question (either in favor of kids or not), the new relationship experiences fewer bumps. But if one wants kids and the other doesn't, the debate may result in a huge rift that not many couples survive.

When to talk about kids

It is my opinion that the do-you-want-(more)-children question should be tackled within the first couple of dates. Why continue to date someone who doesn't have the same goals and desires as you do? Sure, there are some cases where, along the way, someone changes his or her mind, and everyone lives happily ever after, but there are more cases that end in heartbreak and anger.

Related: [Relationship Advice: Can You Have a Friendly Meeting with Your Ex?](#)

Are you willing to take that chance? Does it make sense to invest so much time in a relationship that may never work?

Most people know whether or not they want children by the time they reach adulthood. Personally, I have five children, and three of them already know that they definitely want to have kids of their own. One of my kids is a no go, and one is still on the fence (which is fine since he's only 14!). My point is that, even though my kids are still relatively young, they already have a picture of what they want their family lives to look like.

I can change his/her mind

I've heard so many stories of heartbreak resulting from one person trying to change a potential partner's mind about having or not having children. The bottom line is, if someone you're dating does not want children (and vice versa), don't try to talk him/her into it. It's important to respect the vision of what that individual has in mind for his/her future.

Stop trying to change the other person and accept that you may need to change how you deal with the situation.

When I began dating after my divorce, I decided that I wanted to date only men who wanted children. I felt that the desire for kids was one common ground on which we could relate to one another.

But, one of my very best friends approached the kid debate in a completely different way. She decided that she had no interest in dating a man with kids. She didn't feel that she was cut out to manage someone else's kids and the ex-wife that would inevitably come as part of the package.

Related: [Relationship Advice: Why We Are Insecure About Relationships](#)

Know what you want

What it boils down to is that you must first decide what your goals are for the future. Do you want (more) kids? Do you want to date someone who already has kids? Know your limits, set boundaries and stick to them. It has been my experience – and the research will back me up – that it's never a good idea to try to “change his/her mind” on something as important as having a family.

Although there are always exceptions to every rule, dating someone who is like-minded – especially when it comes to children – makes for a less complicated relationship.

Solo Parenting: Reconsidering Your Ex



By Cynthia

MacGregor for [Hope After Divorce](#)

You've been divorced a while—maybe six months, maybe more than two years—and nobody better has shown up to tempt you. What's more, parenting as a solo act has proven to be a heavy burden. And on top of that, the kids haven't given up pestering you about getting their dad to move “back home.” You'd think by now they'd be used to the new order of things, but no, they're relentless about wanting Daddy to return. And you're tired of hearing them “singing the same old song.”

The last time he came to pick them up, you looked him over and started remembering all of his good points—and forgetting all

of the bad ones. You remembered how funny he could be, how good he was with the kids, how kind he was to your mother... and you saw how happy the kids were to see him.

Related Link: [The EX Word](#)

You remembered the night before, when you'd gotten home from work exhausted and still had to make dinner, supervise homework, get on the kids' cases about room-cleaning, nag Jeffrey about walking the dog and Jennifer about changing the cat's litter box. You had to hassle them about bedtime, and once they were finally tucked in, you had to wash up the dinner dishes and start the first of two loads of laundry. By the time you fell into bed, you were too exhausted to fall asleep and had done *nothing* for pleasure or relaxation all evening.

Oh, how different it would be, you think, if you had a spouse, a partner, a man in your life to help shoulder the burden. (And what a heavy burden it seems at the moment to be.) What about your ex? He had his faults, but he was a good father. There's no taking that away from him, whatever else there is to say...

Stop right there! "Whatever else there is to say?" What else is there to say? Plenty, I'll bet, if you think back and give the marriage an honest appraisal! Why did you call it quits in the first place? Not on a whim, I'm sure. You had your reasons, and they were most likely valid ones. Remember?

Now, fast-forward in your mind. Imagine you've gotten back together with the man. Imagine how overjoyed the kids are. Imagine how relieved you are—at first—to have help with the kids and in general. Then remember all his faults or flaws, all the reasons you gave up on the marriage in the first place. What has changed? Probably nothing. Now picture yourself asking him to leave—again. Finally, picture the kids' reaction when Daddy leaves for the *second* time. Not a happy

picture, is it?

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So, is remarrying your ex the answer to your problems? In all probability, no. Is remarrying your ex going to make your kids happy? In the short term, sure, but in the long term, when he leaves again, definitely not! And thinking that “this time, things will be different” is almost certainly a fantasy.

Reconsidering your ex? Better think twice—not just for your own sake but for the kids’ sake too.



Cynthia MacGregor is a multi-published author. She has over 100 books to her credit. They include “After Your Divorce,” “Divorce Helpbook for Kids,” “Divorce Helpbook for Teens,” “Solo Parenting,” “‘Step’ This Way,” and others. Forthcoming books include “The One-Parent Family,” “Why Are Mommy and Daddy Getting Divorced,” and “Daddy Doesn’t Live Here Anymore.” She hosted and produced the TV show “Solo Parenting,” which was broadcast in

South Florida over WHDT. Cynthia writes for HopeAfterDivorce.org, FamilyShare.com and LAFamily.com. Contact Cynthia at Cynthia@cynthiamacgregor.com, and visit her website.

Should You Date Your Brother/Sister’s Best Friend?



By April

Littleton

So you've discovered you have a crush on your brother or sister's best friend. Every time that person enters the room, your heart starts to beat just a little faster. What if your crush is reciprocating your feelings? Dating a family member's best friend can turn into a complicated situation. Sure, the two of you could really hit it off, but there's also the possibility of a horrible breakup. In a situation like this, you can't just think of yourself because one way or the other, your sibling will be involved in this romantic rendezvous. Here's some advice:

Consider your sibling's feelings

Before you make the final decision to give romance a try with your brother/sister's best friend, you need to think about how your sibling will react. You could be creating an awkward situation between the two friends by changing the relationship dynamic between the two of you. If your family member isn't

supportive of the two of you potentially becoming a couple, he/she might become resentful toward you and your new boo – which could ruin all three relationships.

Related: [Who Gets Custody of the Friends?](#)

Think about the possibility of a breakup

It may be too early to think about the end of a relationship, but in this case, it's a necessity. If you and your new love end up calling it quits, your sibling will be put in the middle. He/she will be torn between staying loyal to his/her best friend and remaining a supportive family member. The friendship between the two buddies might diminish if your ex ends up talking badly about you. Who wants to hear someone talk trash about a relative? If the two of them do manage to remain friends, you'll have to deal with the fact that you'll still have to see your ex on a daily basis.

Three's a crowd

Dating your sibling's best friend won't just complicate things between the two of them, but also the relationship between you and your brother/sister. Think about it. The best friend turned boyfriend can't be there for the both of you at the same time. Sooner or later, you're not going to want to share his time with anyone else. Your [boo](#) might want to spend some time playing video games with his best friend all day or he might want to have a cuddle session with you. Eventually, this tradeoff will grow tiresome and you will find yourself at odds with your sibling.

Related: [Can People Really Fall In Love Too Fast?](#)

There's no right or wrong way to handle a situation like this. Just keep in mind that whatever decision you make, your sibling will always be involved in the equation. If you can find a way to follow your heart and keep all three relationships intact, then you should give the budding romance

a shot. Ultimately, it's up to the three of you to find some common ground and see what works best for everyone.

Do you think it's a good idea to date a sibling's best friend? Comment below.

Relationship Advice: Making Sure You Do What's Best for the Kids



By Jane Greer,

PhD for GalTime.com

Denise Richards, ex-wife of Charlie Sheen and the mother of two of his children, now has temporary custody of Sheen's sons with his *other* ex-wife Brooke Mueller. Brooke and Charlie have

both struggled publically with substance abuse for many years. Though Brooke is not making comments at this time, US Weekly confirmed that the removal of the children from her home was due to an “‘unsafe environment’ caused by “[her] ongoing alleged drug use.” The children, four-year-old twin boys Bob and Max, have moved in with Denise and are living with their sisters, Denise’s children with Charlie, Sam and Lola, and Denise’s adopted daughter, Eloise. Denise, who has not remarried since her divorce from Sheen in 2005, is now a single mom to all five kids under the age of 12. She has cared for the twins before, saying the boys are “family” and she would, “do anything for them.” It has been reported that Charlie is supportive of the idea.

Taking the children in is an impressive choice on Denise’s part; with all the turmoil and strife that she and Charlie clearly shared in their marriage and then in their divorce, her ability to do this is a terrific example of putting the children first. His acceptance of it is equally positive. It isn’t easy to put all those negative feelings to the side so the children involved can be properly and well taken care of. Bad marriages that then lead into bad divorces are often a tough place to be for the kids who are a product of that relationship because so often they are used as pawns or even weapons in the fight. But Denise isn’t letting that happen. She is managing to maintain the family unit and step up to the plate, keeping the priorities where they should be. It is commendable because it is such a difficult road to travel.

When moving toward or out of a divorce, people tend to be in reactive mode and aren’t always able to think things through as Denise seems to be doing. Instead of just getting angry, she was able to respond to the situation and handle it. While it is easy to get caught up in competitive and rivalrous feelings toward the new wife, in this case Charlie’s third ex-wife Brooke, Denise didn’t let that get in the way. Being able to move beyond that is an act of maturity.

For anyone in this situation, those feelings that follow the aftermath of a divorce are real and often quite overpowering. But you don't have to let them interfere with doing the right thing on behalf of the children. Denise is adult enough to know when it's time to put her differences aside for the sake of the children involved. Kudos to her.

10 Ways to Make a Good First Impression on Your Mate's Parents



By Nic Baird

What's the worst that can happen when you meet your partner's parents? Projectile vomit over dessert. But, really, what are the chances of that? Obviously be yourself, because anything

else is too hard for something so stressful. If it makes it easier you can be reserved at first, and let your hair down as you size up the situation. Here are the standard rules to follow when meeting the parents for the first time:

1. Presentation: It could be that your partner's family is a commune of hippies and they don't care if you wear a ball gown or a burlap sack, but it's not a good idea to go into your first encounter with this assumption. Dress smart, but don't overdress. It has to show that you put effort into your appearance without any flash or sex appeal. Pretend you're dressing for a job interview at the library.

2. Grace: Most parents want to like you, and will try their best to establish good relations for the sake of their child. In some cases you might be prodded or even goaded. If this happens then the only correct response is to remain untouched. Don't fight back, and keep smiling. You will demonstrate your power by your lack of aggression and offence.

3. Enthusiasm: If it feels like a chore, that's reasonable. If the pressure of the date is pure torture, that's not unreasonable. As soon as you ring the doorbell, your gut might urge you to just hide in the bushes and slink away unseen. Resist. You must be ecstatic to have been granted an audience with these most respected figures. Or at least it should seem that way.

4. Confidence: Parents who smell a reasonable amount of fear on your person will not be upset. This could even delight them as a form of respect, or give you an endearing quality. An attempt at a confident presentation is all they ask. If they want you to try the mechanical bull in the basement and you don't have a heart condition, then there's only one choice.

5. Engage: Ask questions and be part of the conversation. Show an interest in topics they bring up, and try to bring new material to the discussion. Look them in the eye, talk at a

reasonable volume, and, once again, smile.

6. Restraint: Especially for the first meeting, show restraint in your affection towards your partner. Groping and French kissing will disgust even the most liberal of parents. There's some leeway once you've established your presence, but the restraint you show in front of them demonstrates the respect they crave, and in most cases, the respect they deserve.

Related: [5 Ways to Reconcile Arguments With In-Laws](#)

7. Foresight: Even if you're uncomfortable looking to the future, this is a favourite topic of parents. What are your dreams and aspirations? What skills are you developing? How will you be a valuable addition to my child's life? You're not going to answer these questions outright, but it will be in the subtext when you describe your plans. Talk about yourself. Don't talk about the apartment you hope to inhabit with their progeny.

8. Maturity: These people are older than you. They should be older than you, but if not this applies regardless. Keep your jokes and comments at a level above theirs. This isn't your grandma, but it's somewhere in between her and the school playground. Be mindful not to go too far.

9. Commitment: While it might seem like a good idea to describe yourself as hopelessly in love with your new soul mate, parents don't respond to this as well as you might think. Nobody is good enough for their child until they prove themselves. If this is your first encounter, you should demonstrate that you're serious about the relationship without planning the wedding day.

10. Etiquette: This is a skill that must be developed. It's more than being polite and thoughtful, though those are the essentials. Things to compliment: the house, the meal, the music, and anything of personal significance. Manners involve

clearing the plates without offering, and sitting back down when they urge you to stop. You're a guest and you have to pay tribute to their hospitality.

What are some other tips for meeting your partner's parents? Share your ideas below.

Why It's OK to Have Kids Later In Life



By Ken Myers

It wasn't that long ago that women were expected to have kids in their 20's, and any woman that ventured into motherhood after she turned 30 was seriously testing her fertility waters, not to mention was destined to be an old mom who wouldn't be able to keep up with her young children. However

as women continue to gain a stronger foothold in the corporate world and are experiencing a shift in personal goals, they are also invoking a serious delay in when they decide to have kids; many are opting to have their children well into their 40's.

Actress Uma Thurman is a prime example of this trend. Thurman, who is 42, just recently welcomed her third child into the world, and while many fans have rallied behind her in support, an equal amount have pronounced disgust at her decision to have kids so late in life, holding fast to the notion that women need to be young moms to be good moms.

So why are women waiting longer to have kids these days? Here are five reasons that many women have decided it's OK to wait to have kids until in your 30's or even 40's:

1. Their career comes first: It's taken a long time for women to gain equality in the workplace, and many women are reluctant to give that newfound career equivalence up to have kids. Instead they are opting to further their career first and have kids second, whereas not too long ago it was the other way around.

Related Link: [Keira Knightley Talks Balancing Love and Her Career](#)

2. Time spent with their spouse is more important: Many women are opting to spend more quality time with their spouses before trading in alone time for time spent with kids. This is usually done in an effort to experience as much of life as possible with their significant other while they're still young, instead of waiting until the kids are out of the house to do so.

Related Link: [Prince William and Kate Squeeze In Alone Time In Canada](#)

3. Their education is taking the front seat: With more education options available and many people choosing to further their education by pursuing their masters and doctorate degrees, the decision to have kids early is being put on the backburner.

4. Achieving financial security is a priority: Most parents will tell you that you'll never be fully ready to have kids; however, despite this, many couples are putting a higher value on ensuring they have a more guaranteed financial security net in place before they decide to try having kids.

5. Personal maturity: These days many women are recognizing that they simply don't feel ready to have children at such a young age, and are waiting to have kids until they've developed more as an adult.

Whether you decide to have kids in your 20's or your 40's makes no difference, no matter what anyone else may say. Sure, some women may have more trouble getting pregnant right away the longer they wait to have kids, but your age has no bearing on your ability to be a good mother.

Ken Myers the editor in chief is a frequent contributor of www.gonannies.com. Ken helps acquiring knowledge on the duties & responsibilities of nannies to society.

Does Your Womb Have A Vacancy?



By David Wygant

Do you love talking about the potential of having children in the near future? Is your number-one goal to meet somebody, just so you can have children? Quite simply, are you dating because your womb has a vacancy? Well then, you're dating *100% wrong*. Let me tell you something: women that think like this are women that will be raising kids *alone*.

How do I know that? Because I've been through it. Here are some things to think about:

Related Link: [Megan Fox Explains Why She's Waiting to Have Children](#)

All relationships need nurturing: Men, women, we all need to nurture one another. In order to have a great relationship with a solid foundation, the flow should usually look something like this: Man meets woman. Woman meets man. Woman respects man. Man respects woman. Man fulfills woman's needs. Woman fulfills man's needs. These are the basic principles of a relationship. We've learned it since the beginning of time.

When we first came into this world, our mom nurtured us. Our dads made sure all our needs were being met. Unfortunately, as we get older, we run into relationships where our needs are not being met, and that's the problem. There are too many women running around with a biological clock ticking, wanting and desiring a family. So they start marrying men, and once the child comes, they are doing nothing to nurture their relationship because a *child* was the number one desire in the first place.

Are you one of those women?: Are you one of those women whose number one desire is to have children, because your biological clock is ticking, your womb has vacancy and all you think about is meeting a man to have a kid? Life doesn't work that way. You can't—even if you're now in your 30s—*rush* a relationship for the sake of having children. What happens is simple: you won't be laying a solid foundation, and you will get exactly what you wanted—a kid—but you will be with a man that you don't spend any time nurturing and honoring. There are so many men running around in this world that have not been nurtured, not been honored and not received the love that they needed because they met a woman who had a womb vacancy.

Related Link: [Best Celebrity Moms \(Who Also Make Great Wives\)](#)

It's time that you got honest with yourself: What part of a relationship do you really desire? Do you want a *relationship* or do you want a *kid*? If you want a *family*, then you have to put your relationship first—you have to build roots. A family is rooted. It starts when two people love each other, honor one another and nurture one another. Too many times—in all my years of coaching—have I seen women bamboozle men. The woman gives him great things, promises him the world and then all of a sudden the child comes and guess what happens: the man no longer gets attention, no longer gets nurtured and it becomes all about what the woman really wanted in the first place. She wanted that vacant womb to be fulfilled. She wanted to be a *mother*.

This is an open letter to every single woman out there: Make sure you realize that it's not *just* about having a baby. This is your wake-up call: be honest with yourself and who you are as a person. There are too many kids running around in this world that don't have a mom and a dad. Or maybe they have a mom and a dad but they don't have a mom and a dad that live together. Or they live together but they don't love each other. And one reason for this tragedy is that there are too many women out there that are selfish and on a biological clock. Don't tell me I don't understand a biological clock—I understand what human emotions are and I understand what priorities are, and I understand that if you've got this clock ticking you may not be making the best decisions. You may just be thinking about one thing: filling that vacancy. But if you really want to fill it right away, call Priceline. They're masters at filling vacant hotel rooms, maybe you can get them to fill your womb! Just don't think finding a man will solve that problem as easily.

*David Wygant is an internationally-renowned dating and relationship coach, author of the new book **Naked and speaker**. Through his boot camps, personal coaching and his at www.DavidWygant.com, his advice has transformed the dating lives and relationships of hundreds of thousands of people from every corner of the globe.*

The Independent Woman: Do We Need A Do-Over?



By SMF Marcus

Osborne for GalTime.com

If you've been a regular reader of StraightMaleFriend.com or if you've been following this column for the past year or so, you already know that one of my steadfast beliefs is individual independence.

In other words: "Be honestly you."

When it comes to love, dating and relationships, the very best advice anyone could ever offer is for you to be who you truly are. But what happens when being yourself is pushing your love one away?

That simply means that when it comes to love, dating and relationships, the very best advice anyone could ever offer is for you to be who you truly are, as opposed to what you believe people want/expect you to be. Sure you can (and many people do) fool the masses into buying into some image you've manufactured. Pretending to be "outdoorsy" when you're a couch potato. Acting as though you love foreign cinema when you

abhor the idea of reading anything more than the credits during your favorite motion pictures. Passing yourself off as less accomplished than the high-powered executive that you are in order to massage the ego of your latest date.

Related: [Don't Objectify Me... Just Tell Me I'm Hot!](#)

I've long supported women going out and exercising their power in their communities, in the workplace, in the home and in the marketplace. Why not? You've earned it. You've gone to school, fought for your education, worked your way up the corporate ladder and established yourself as a pillar of the community and yet... you're still unfulfilled. For all that you've achieved, there's still a glaring vacancy on your life's resume.

Unmarried and childless... and full of regret. Does that description fit you?

I've made no secret of my deep respect and admiration for the woman who get out there and chase their independence, but on more than one occasion recently, I've had heavy conversations with women who harbor some real regrets about their life choices.

We've gone from a culture that once pushed the idea that women needed to stay at home, raising kids, cooking dinners, and pampering their husbands in order to society to thrive. In essence, women were considered domestic servants with benefits. With the rise of the women's movement, we've reached a point in time where having women outside the household is not a luxury but in most cases, a requirement for the survival of families.

Related: [Has Feminism Ruined Relationships?](#)

Now, maybe this is a small group of professional women feeling the angst of being over 35 and unmarried and without kids, but it's an issue that deserves a conversation. My friend

lamented, "Marcus, I'm 40 years old. I'm not married. I don't have kids. And I WANTED all those things, but it may be too late now. Most of the decent guys are already married and even if I met someone TONIGHT, fell in love, got married, and had a baby (if I can still even HAVE a child) it'll still be another two years."

She went on to say that at a young age she decided that she would pursue a career and get settled professionally before settling down to start a family. But throughout the course of her life, career consumed her because that's what she was always advised as a young girl: marriage and family should come after you've established yourself.

Related: [The Truth About Single Men and Strong Women](#)

In hindsight, my friend was wishing that she had given more weight to that life goal. Her feeling was that if she had to do it all over again, she'd have put more stock in long-term relationships and perhaps gotten married and even had those kids. In her mind, even if the marriage hadn't worked out she'd still have had that experience and the children to show for it.

I found her reasoning interesting, but I found her belief that her pursuit of independence had actually been an obstacle to her long-term happiness... absolutely fascinating.

Where do you stand? After all your success, are you feeling like you'd go back and make different choices if you could?

Valentine's Day Advice: Romantic Home-Dates for Busy Parents



By Rebecca

Garland

Forced to stay home for Valentine's Day with the hubby? You're not alone, as many celebrity families prefer to stay close rather than head out on romantic dates while dealing with the hassles of a babysitter or, in the celebrity case, overtime pay for the nanny.

Can you imagine Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie turning up for a special with the paparazzi underfoot looking for clues about the latest celebrity plastic surgery? No – celebrity parents, especially in big families like the Jolie-Pitts, are looking for a bit more privacy when it comes to celebrating Valentine's Day. And you can enjoy romance at home, too.

Here's how:

Cook Together

Often parents focus on getting food on the table rather than the simple joys that baking can bring. Feed the children early, and pack them off to bed. Then, come back to the kitchen for an evening with entrees and wine just for the grown-ups. Cooking together can be intimate by preparing the meal together, setting the table for two and feeding each other bites in exactly the same way you would if you were paying \$100 per plate.

Related: [Celebrity Couples With The Biggest Age Differences](#)

Dinner and a Movie

If the idea of cleaning the kitchen twice is overwhelming, take the easy road and send out for take-out. While one of you puts the kids to bed, the other drives to the local steakhouse or seafood restaurant for some delicious food to go. Those waiting for a table might realize you have the right idea as you hurry home with your fine dining. Set the table in the living room, and enjoy the meal by candle light.

Then, with the leftovers put away, pop in your favorite romantic comedy and put your home theater to good use.

Related: [5 Ways to Reignite the Spark In Your Relationship](#)

Casual Romance

Valentine's Day deserves a bit of special treatment, but if setting tables and driving out for food doesn't put you in the mind for romance, why not keep it casual? Busy parents know that the most romantic thing you can do is simply spend time together without any obligations or interferences. Order a pizza with your favorite toppings – you don't need to make concessions for the kids this time – and kick back to watch an uninterrupted marathon of all of those shows the two of you

have recorded on the DVR.

Picture the two of you on the couch, your feet in his lap while both of you hold a container of delivered Chinese food or pizza for dinner. If you think the evening needs a bit more of a kick, throw your normal sweatpants over some silky lingerie, and use those commercial breaks wisely...

Rebecca Garland is a professional freelance writer working hard to populate the internet with meaningful, interesting content. With advanced degrees in information science and business, Rebecca enjoys a variety of topics including relationships and seduction. Learn more about Rebecca on her professional website, www.internetauthor.net.