



Becoming A Stepfamily: Patterns of Development in Remarried Families (Gestalt Institute of Cleveland Book S)

Patricia L. Papernow

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What determines whether stepfamilies remain together? What helps stepfamilies overcome the difficulties of remarriage and become mutually supportive family units? How can mental health professionals better support this development? This book brings both clarity and depth to the unique and complex dynamics of remarried families. Patricia Papernow draws on interviews with over 100 stepfamily members, up-to-date research, a solid theoretical framework, and an empathic clinical sensibility to present an insightful model of stepfamily development, the Stepfamily Cycle. This detailed account of the stages of forming a lasting, cohesive group is richly illustrated by stepfamily members' own stories.

Becoming a Stepfamily describes the developmental challenges involved in building nourishing, reliable relationships between stepparents and stepchildren, in the newly married couple, and between different family groups who must learn to live together in a remarried family. Papernow discusses the factors that influence the pace and ease of development, and she provides four full length case studies illustrating the varied paths through the stepfamily cycle to the successful remarried life.

The author offers therapists, clergy, school personnel, and others involved with stepfamilies a range of effective interventions, including preventive, educational, and clinical approaches. She provides practical guidance for helping family members deal constructively with the differing attachments of children to their biological parents and stepparents, assisting stepparents as they cope with feeling excluded from the powerful biological parent-child bond, and guiding biological parents torn between their spouse's need for intimacy and privacy and their children's needs for support and attention.

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