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“I’m engaged! Why aren’t my kids happy for me?”



Are you enjoying a love you never thought you’d feel again? It’s hard to be happy, though, if your children rain on your romance. Are they being selfish? Not necessarily. An in-depth study of “adult stepfamilies” revealed how disruptive it is when a parent gets involved with a new partner later in life.

The family tree changes! Even for adult children who are married with kids of their own, a deep—almost primal—sense

of self is challenged when a parent brings in a new member. It brings up existential issues.

- **Fear of abandonment.** A common response is “I always thought my mom/dad would be there for me, even if nobody else was. But now...?” A child may worry they are no longer a priority. While you know the special place your children will always have in your heart, they may be wondering if they still have that backstop.
- **Loyalty and favoritism.** In truth, it’s likely that drop-by visits, cherished family holiday traditions, or time with grandchildren will need some adjusting. Your kids weren’t asking for a change. Now they must redefine something as bedrock as “family.” Even though they may have had to choose between their spouse and family of origin on certain matters, they may doubt where they fit given your new commitments.
- **Finances.** Sad to say, concern about inheritance can put the kibosh on any joy your children might feel for your happiness. There’s some human nature in that. (Do stepsiblings get a share of the family home?) But your kids may also be worried about your financial security. What if it doesn’t work out? Does a person who was in your life for a short period of time get 50% of your nest egg? Where might that leave you?

Reassurance. As you all strive to maintain the bonds of the original family while also making room for new connections, roles and expectations must come to a new balance.

- Make it a point to spend time with your kids separate from your spouse.
- Ask about traditions that are important to them and try to preserve those.
- Perhaps mention your own emotional journey in coming to terms with the partners they chose. You might describe how you came to understand that their natural need for daily companionship changed their availability and level of engagement with you, but not their love for you.
- As for financial reassurance, your money is yours. With assets accumulated over many decades, however, it’s sound advice to get paperwork in place that ensures those assets are protected and later distributed as you would wish.

**Is your family raining on your romance? Give us a call.
We can help bring back the sunny days. 206-456-5155**



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