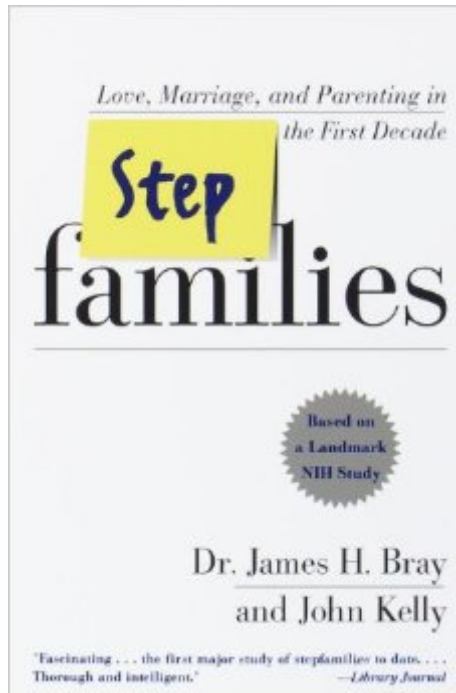


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# Stepfamilies: Love, Marriage, And Parenting In The First Decade



## Synopsis

Based on a landmark longitudinal study, the nation's leading expert on stepfamilies reveals his breakthrough findings and offers the first detailed guide to easing the conflicts of stepfamily life and healing the scars of divorce. There are more than twenty million stepfamilies in America. For most of them, the simple, daily issues that challenge every family are even more anxiety-provoking. After conducting a comprehensive nine-year-long study funded by the National Institutes of Health, Dr. James H. Bray has written an invaluable book that explains why over half of all stepfamilies fail and reveals the strategies that help the others succeed. A stepfamily is assaulted on all sides by difficult and often divisive questions. How much control should a stepparent have over a stepchild? How much authority should a nonresidential parent exert over a child? How should a difficult former spouse be handled? How does an "ours" baby change the emotional dynamic in a stepfamily? Why is there a lack of "honeymoon effect" during the first years of stepfamily life? The purpose of *Stepfamilies* is to answer all the important questions of stepfamily life--to fill in the knowledge gaps that undermine so many stepfamilies today and, crucially, to learn the effect of stepfamily life on children. Based on one of the largest and longest studies of stepfamily life ever conducted, *Stepfamilies* interweaves the stories of real families to illustrate such study findings as how: a stepfamily has its own natural life cycle a stepfamily takes several years to develop into a family unit a stepfamily is at greatest risk during the first two years a stepfamily ultimately coalesces into one of three forms a stepfamily must solve four basic tasks in order to succeed a stepfamily can help heal the scars of divorce Filled with emotional, gripping stories, Bray's findings pinpoint the three major transitions in stepfamily life and identify the riskiest issues that can throw a family into crisis. Bray is the first to identify the several distinct forms that stepfamilies take and to explore which types of stepfamilies are more vulnerable than others and why. He also describes the natural life cycle of stepfamilies and basic tasks all stepfamilies must undertake to succeed. With a wealth of insight into the positive effects of remarriage, Bray shows how a loving, well-functioning stepfamily can lessen the trauma of divorce and restore a child's and family's sense of security. Most stepparents remarry with the highest hopes and new resolutions for a better life. Never before have their unique needs been addressed in depth. Through insightful case studies and practical advice, *Stepfamilies* reveals how a strong, stable stepfamily is as capable as a nuclear family of nurturing healthy development, of imbuing values, of setting limits and boundaries, and of providing a structure in which rules for living a moral and productive life are transmitted, tested, rebelled against, and ultimately affirmed. Bray's positive message and fascinating findings--many of which defy intuition--will put stepfamilies on the

road to lifelong harmony.From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

I read this book -- and about 20 others -- along with going to 'professional family counselors' and our local pastor because I wanted to 'break the cycle' of disfunction and divorce in which I found myself and young son entangled. I was raised in a blended stepfamily since the age of two. My son was on his way to becoming a stepson at the age of six. I wanted for us to have a more successful family, and for my son to enjoy his childhood more than I (or my two full- and two half- siblings) did. Nearly all of my siblings, cousins, and parental figures are divorced or unhappily married; anyone can see my problem is 'where do I turn for good, useful, success-based advice!?!' During my quest, what I have found is that most 'clinical' books and 'family psychologists' are pleased and (unfortunately) overly-fascinated with judging and labelling what is wrong with people, but have absolutely no clue about real-life solutions people could use to independently solve problems and build strong families. Other books blame the problems strictly on a lack of morals and strong traditional religious foundation. I found Dr. Bray's book to be not only insightful, but also very comforting, helpful, hopeful, and inclusive. His insights about what makes various types of blended stepfamilies work well -- albiet, over time -- were the most appropriate and helpful comments I have encountered. He describes ways he observed folks successfully handle controlling and manipulative ex-spouses and children (of both genders); how the stepfamily changes as the children grow into adolescence; how to deal with such issues as sexuality and emotional intimacy; how successful extended/blended families of various types (step-mothers, step-fathers, step-grandparents, etc.

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