

20. Read the family advice column.**Ask Dr. Neaman: Advice for Families**

Dear Dr. Neaman,

I just got engaged to a wonderful man. My fiancé, Jim, is widowed. He has two children from his first marriage. His son is eight and his daughter is five. I am divorced. I have one child—a three-year-old son—from my first marriage. I'm excited about my new family, but I'm a little worried, too. I know that relationships between stepparents and stepchildren can be difficult. What can I do to make sure my new blended family is happy together?

Eleanor D.

Mesa, Arizona

Hi, Eleanor,

First of all, congratulations on your engagement! There is one thing you should know—you are not alone. Blended families—in which at least one parent has a child from another relationship—are very common in the U.S. More than 65% of Americans belong to a blended family. In fact, there are 2,100 new blended families every day.

You are correct—starting a blended family can be difficult. Getting married is exciting for the parents. But children may feel unhappy about sharing their birth parent's love and attention. They may worry about their new family members. Will they have a good relationship with their new stepfather or stepmother? What will their new stepbrothers and stepsisters be like?

Moving to a new home and school is also stressful. With more people living together, children may have less personal space.

The good news is that many blended families learn to love each other. The bad news? Creating a happy family takes hard work and a lot of time.

Here are three important tips for new stepparents:

- Be realistic: Everything won't be perfect in the beginning. Expect that there will be some problems.
- Be patient: It may take years for a good relationship to develop. Give the children the time they need.
- Don't expect too much: Give your stepchildren your time, energy, and love, but don't expect anything in return for now.

Good luck!

Dr. Neaman

Now read the sentences. Check true or false.

1. Jim and his ex-wife are divorced.

true ☐ **false** ☐

2. Eleanor and Jim have a son.

true ☐ **false** ☐

3. In a blended family, at least one parent has a child from another relationship.

true ☐ **false** ☐

4. About 2,100 people in the U.S. live in blended families.

true ☐ **false** ☐

5. Children in a new blended family may feel worried about moving to a new home or school.

true ☐ **false** ☐

6. Eleanor may need a long time to develop a strong relationship with her stepchildren.

true ☐ **false** ☐