

## How to Remarry

Why is remarriage difficult? Because it follows divorce. People who have divorced have memories of how it was when it was good, when there was someone there most of the time. They know that life is better when burdens are shared. But you can't step in when you stepped out.

1. **Take time.** Time is your best friend. Use it. How much time? Months and years. You need to use more time than you think. Don't even think about remarriage after a divorce for 18 months to two years. Couples need to know each other individually and jointly, and there is no short cut to this kind of "knowing."
2. **Learn to live with complexity.** There are four people around now--and don't forget the kids. The influence of the former spouse is far from over with remarriage. It comes with the territory and goes on most of the rest of your life.
3. **Process anger; vent grief.** You can minimize anger by lessening the ghosts from the past. Unless you grieve the loss of the prior relationship and the end of the marriage, you are at risk of getting stuck in the previous relationship. What needs to be considered? The loss of an attachment figure, the loss of an intact family, a sense of failure, and a sense of grief. All of this requires lots of talk and lots of time. Beware of shortcuts.
4. **Undertaking the past.** Don't get remarried until you can give a coherent account of the first relationship. This includes what was good and problematic in the relationship, what you did to make it work, and what you did to prevent its working. If you don't understand this, it could—and probably will—happen again, over and over. Don't do it better; do it differently.
5. **Then there are the kids.** Nothing (yes, *nothing*) brings more stress to remarriage than the presence of children from a prior marriage. The children are in a state of post-divorce mourning over the loss of an intact family and a full-time connection to a parent. No matter which parent a child is with, someone is missing all the time. Between resentment of the step parent, financial needs, custody agreements, remarriage with step children illuminates the divergent needs and loyalties that are always present but often invisible in original families. With so much vulnerability, and the well being of so many at stake, prospective partners in a remarriage need help from others. Don't be afraid to listen to family and friends.