

# Preparing for Remarriage: 3 Relationship Strengthening Strategies

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"This all just seems so complicated!"

Navigating remarriage can be tricky and couples who want to tie the knot again are often confronted with obstacles that would rarely come up in a first marriage. You may even run into other issues like, who gets to keep their house, or which one of you would have to quit their job if the marriage would require a long distance move. You may have concerns about blending finances after a nasty divorce, or wonder what your role as a step-parent will look like. In truth, it can all be a little intimidating.

So if you are wondering about the secret to successfully moving forward in your remarriage, I have a few helpful tips for you.

### 1. Understand how your previous relationship could influence your current relationship and discuss it with your partner

Whether your experience in your previous marriage was negative (in the case of divorce), or mostly positive (often in cases of spousal death), you and your partner will

inevitably carry pieces of your old relationships into your new one. In cases where emotions ran high, and continual conflict was present, it is highly likely that you will be sensitive to certain triggers--someone raising their voice, the use of a particular phrase, or emotional distance after conflict. **Emotional reactivity**, the automatic responses associated with triggers, can have a large impact on your current relationship if it goes unchecked.

A participant in a study focused on understanding how previous relationships affect new ones gave this example of an emotionally reactive moment.

"We need to talk" . . . when my first wife told me that, there was hell to pay . . . so when Kay would say that . . . I went off the edge . . . I got psyched up, pumped up, ready for war. I put on the battle armor you know, load the pistol, ready to fight. It was just like ringing the bell for the dog you know, start drooling at the mouth. I mean immediately . . . it took me awhile to get past "we need to talk."

**Learning From the Past, Altering the Future: A Tentative Theory of the Effect of Past Relationships on Couples Who Remarry** - Andrew Brimhall, Karen Wampler & Thomas Kimball. [Family Process](#), p. 379

As you focus on developing trust in your new relationship, it is important to remember to see who your new spouse is and not to see them as the person your old spouse was. The kind of open communication will play a key role in navigating your pasts to better your future.

### 2. Explore your expectations



Marriage comes with a lot of expectations, about commitment, children, sex, finances, gender roles, and behavior. This is no different in remarriage and is often even more prevalent as you've already had experience in a previous marital relationship. However, these expectations are not always clear to your partner, and sometimes, not even clear to yourself. As you prepare for your next marriage and continue on in that marriage, understanding what your

expectations are and communicating them effectively will be a key component in assuring that you and your spouse are on the same page. Below are some examples of questions which can help you identify your personal expectations, as well as your [expectations](#) as a couple:

- **What does an ideal relationship look like to you?**
- **How do we want to parent? What role will the step-parent play?**
- **What does 'playing fair' in conflict look like to you?**
- **How will we manage our finances? Together or separate?**
- **How will we address household chores?**
- **What does 'showing love' look like to you?**
- **Who should provide for our family?**
- **Where do you want us to be in 1 year? 5? 10? 20?**

[Establishing](#) expectations can go a long way in preventing future conflict. It can also help you identify [expectations that may be unrealistic or unreasonable](#). Be considerate of your partner's needs, and don't be afraid to continuously communicate as those needs and expectations change.

### 3. Practice good communication



Lastly, it is always a good idea to practice just all around good communication skills. Whether you are talking to your spouse, a friend, a coworker, or even your boss. Good communication skills are versatile to any situation and can strengthen a marriage exponentially. Some examples of good communication skills may include:

- **Be clear.** Don't expect your partner to be a mind reader.
- **Be an active listener.** Make sure that you are really listening to what your spouse has to say instead of thinking about how you want to respond.
- **Be sincere.** Your partner cares about you, and you care about them. When the conversation becomes honest, open, and sincere you are on the right path to solving the issue together.

### Playing as a Team

At the end of the day, your relationship will be what you decide to make it. While remarriage can be hard and often difficult to navigate it is possible to tackle it together as a team. It may be easy to become distracted with children, work, moving, and life, but as you work together to strengthen your relationship it will have a powerful effect on your family. Start the conversation with your partner today, and begin working on the same team to establish the marriage you want.

### Additional Resources

- [10 Rules for a Successful Second Marriage](#)
- [8 Conversations to Have Before Marrying Again](#)
- [Open Communication in a Blended Family](#)
- [Blended Family and Step-Parenting Tips](#)
- [6 Tools for Healthy Communication in Marriage](#)
- [8 Keys to Success in a Second Marriage](#)
- [The 8 Communication Traits of Happy, Healthy Marriage](#)