

Stepmothers face added stress in blended families

By VIRGINIA JUSTICE

Parenting can be a difficult task, but step-parenting can be even more demanding. As family dynamics and our culture has transformed, so to have the challenges of parenting.

The face of the American family has changed considerably over the past few decades. The U.S. Census indicates that half of all marriages end in divorce and 75 percent of those individuals remarry, resulting in the creation of 1,300 blended families daily in the United States.

Studies show that the divorce rate for blended families is higher than that of traditional families. This increased number is often attributed to financial difficulties, disagreements about parenting, stress, involvement of non-custo-

dial (biological) parent and other issues. The percentage of children residing with parents who are cohabitating (unmarried) is smaller, but rising, and the issues for cohabiting parents often mirror those who are married.

In many families, responsibility for child rearing continues to fall mainly on the women. Motherhood is fraught with anxiety and challenges that can become obstacles when the children are not yours biologically or have not been raised by you since infancy. For stepmothers, sometimes just knowing they are not alone in their journey can relieve the anxiety and reduce the intensity of the challenges.

With these issues in mind, Pendleton psychologists Stephanie Evans, Psy.D. and Connie Umphred,



Ph.D., are offering group sessions designed for stepmothers, stepmothers-to-be and women partnering with individuals who have children, including adult children.

"Stepmothering is a unique adventure," says Dr. Evans. "This group will explore the myths, pitfalls, and rewards of today's blended family. Together we will ac-

cess the growing body of resources on the subject and share wisdom and common experiences." Drs. Evans and Umphred hope to offer additional sessions in the future for stepfathers, and step-coupling families.

The first stepmother session is scheduled for the evening of Tuesday, Sept. 20, with a nominal cost for each session of \$10. Advance registration is required. To register or for additional information, contact Psychological Services of Pendleton at 541-278-2222 or visit their office located at 135 S.E. First Street in Pendleton.

Pendleton resident Virginia Justice is a former substitute teacher. She and her husband have two college-aged daughters.



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