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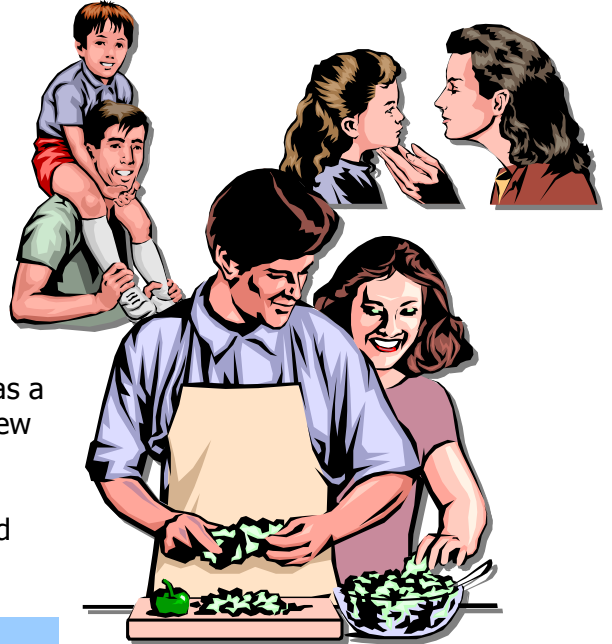
BLENDED FAMILIES

NIMCO, INC.

2000

Grade Levels: 8-13+

20 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Art Linkletter hosts this exploration of blended families as a counselor offers suggestions that help build a healthy new family unit. Chris, Sara, Linda, and John share their experiences as a blended family. Honest, frank communication between stepfamily members before and after a remarriage is critical for success.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Behavioral Studies

- Standard: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior
 - Benchmark: Understands that different families and classrooms have different rules and patterns of behavior, but there are some behaviors that are not accepted in most families or schools
- Standard: Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function
 - Benchmark: Knows that people belong to some groups because they are born into them and to some groups because they join them
- Standard: Understands that interactions among learning, inheritance, and physical development affect human behavior
 - Benchmark: Knows that people can learn from each other in many ways (e.g., telling and listening, showing and watching, imitating)
 - Benchmark: Understands roles as learned behavior patterns in group situations (e.g., student, family member, team member)
 - Benchmark: Understands that as roles vary depending on expectations and changing conditions (e.g., worker, parent, volunteer, student), behavior, attitudes, and goals change
- Standard: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions
 - Benchmark: Knows that disagreements are common, even between family members or friends

- Benchmark: Understands that some ways of dealing with disagreements work better than others, and that people who are not involved in an argument may be helpful in solving it
- Benchmark: Knows that communicating different points of view in a dispute can often help people to find a satisfactory compromise

Subject Area: Working With Others

- Standard: Contributes to the overall effort of a group
 - Benchmark: Identifies and deals with causes of conflict in a group
 - Benchmark: Engages in active listening
- Standard: Uses conflict-resolution techniques
 - Benchmark: Resolves conflicts of interest

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To depict the realities of a blended family.
2. To assist prospective blended families in anticipating and communicating potential areas of conflict.
3. To provide hope for blended families that conflict resolution and harmony are possible.
4. To examine the perspectives of the parents and children in blended families.

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. acquaintance | 13. resentful |
| 2. broken vows | 14. seasons of our lives |
| 3. father figure | 15. sibling rivalry |
| 4. financial | 16. stepchildren: stepdaughter, stepson |
| 5. flush of romance | 17. stepcouples |
| 6. friction | 18. stepfather |
| 7. function | 19. stepmother |
| 8. the honeymoon's over | 20. subsequently |
| 9. integrated | 21. territory |
| 10. jealous | 22. therapy |
| 11. malleable | 23. unique |
| 12. overcome any obstacle | 24. visitation |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Define a *blended family*.
 - a. What events lead to a blended family?
 - b. What are typical members of a blended family? Consider the following.
 - i. Stepmom
 - ii. Biological mom
 - iii. Stepdad
 - iv. Biological dad
 - v. Stepsiblings

- vi. Natural siblings
 - vii. Half-siblings
 - c. Who benefits from a blended family?
 - d. How does a blended family compare with other families?
2. Take a survey to determine how common blended families are in this classroom or local community.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss the members of this blended family.
 - a. What lead John to this blended family?
 - b. How was Linda's path to the blended family different?
 - c. In what ways were Sara and Chris's pre-blended family experiences similar and different?
 - d. How does Jimmy fit into the blended family?
2. Discuss the opening section of the video.
 - a. What were John and Linda's responses to Sara's running away?
 - b. At what point did the blended family seem to be a complete giant mess?
 - c. Why did John not want to talk with Linda about Chris' problems? What did John mean when he said that he wasn't sure if he'd be stepping over the line?
 - d. In what ways did John's assumptions hurt him and the blended family?
 - e. How did John, Linda, Sara and Chris all contribute to the problems in their blended family?
 - f. What roles did adolescence and sibling rivalry play in the problems in their blended family?
 - g. What do the terms "lost love" and "broken vows" mean? How are they often a factor in the beginnings of all blended families?
 - h. Why do adults marry more than one time if the first time ended negatively?
 - i. What do blended families say about the human spirit?
 - j. What role do children play in a blended family?
 - k. How is a blended family born?
 - l. How do each of the following affect a blended family: outside real mothers and fathers, visitation rights, financial matters and that what once was will never be again.
 - m. How is a new, different blended family often scary, resented and confused?
 - n. What should two adults considering a blended family talk about before they get married? What should be discussed with the children?
 - o. What role could a stepfather or stepmother play in a stepchild's life? How can a stepparent be like or unlike a parent, a friend or an acquaintance?
3. Discuss the "Beginning Again" section of the video.
 - a. How was meeting Linda beginning again for John? How was meeting John beginning again for Linda?
 - b. How much time is needed to date to prepare for the new blended family?
 - c. How did John and Linda tell the children about the marriage?
 - d. How did the house where John and Linda began their marriage influence their blended family?
 - e. In what ways did things not turn out as John and Linda expected?
 - f. How realistic is the Brady Bunch version of blended families?

- g. What were some things that Chris resented about John?
 - h. Why did Sara become distant?
 - i. How did counseling benefit this blended family?
 - j. Why did Sara feel that someone might be taking her place?
 - k. How is adolescence difficult for any family? How was it especially difficult for this blended family?
 - l. How did Chris feel about John as a father figure?
 - m. How did marriage change John's relationship with Chris? Sara's relationship with John?
 - n. Why is it up to the adults to create the feeling that "we can all love each other and we can all be there for each other"?
4. Discuss the "Predictability" section of the video
 - a. Why did Linda and John have mixed feelings about her being pregnant with Jimmy? What are the differences between John and Linda's story leading up to that pregnancy?
 - b. How did the pregnancy bring the problems in their blended family to a head?
 - c. How did John, Chris and Sara feel left out after Jimmy was born?
 - d. Why did Sara run away? How did each family member respond? How did this benefit the family?
 - e. How did each family member respond to Jimmy's birth?
 - f. Could Linda and John have anticipated the problems that would occur in their blended family?
 - g. Why do children in blended families need consistency and predictability?
 - h. What is the value of communication in a blended family?
 - i. What issues brought the family into counseling?
 5. Discuss the "Counseling" section of the video.
 - a. How did the family learn to live together?
 - b. What did Sara find difficult about counseling? How did counseling help her? What did she learn in counseling?
 - c. How did Sara and Chris' impressions of counseling differ?
 - d. What was the first counseling session like? What feeling did all of the family members share?
 - e. What was the value of the counselor telling them to "put yourself in somebody else's shoes"?
 - f. Why did the counselor tell the family that there are two kinds of people in the world?
 - g. How did the counselor tell each family member to earn the right to say something to another family member?
 - h. Why was there resentment between Chris and Sara?
 - i. How did John's attitude about counseling change? How did counseling change John's attitude about problems in the blended family?
 6. Discuss the "Healing" section of the video.
 - a. What is the value of laughing at yourself?
 - b. How did self-awareness figure into the family's healing?
 - c. Why is it important to believe that one doesn't have to be perfect?
 - d. How has Jimmy been a part of the family's healing and bonding for each family member?
 - e. How did Chris' attitude towards Jimmy change?
 - f. Why will life for John, Linda, Chris and Sara never be the same as it was before?
 - g. What is John's advice to couples entering a blended family? How realistic is his advice?
 7. Discuss the closing song in the video.

Applications and Activities

1. Imagine being one of the members of this blended family. Write a letter expressing thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams. Consider the following letters.
 - a. Sara to her biological mother
 - b. Sara to her Dad's girlfriend
 - c. Sara, at age 10, to her new stepmother
 - d. Sara, at age 20, to her stepmother
 - e. Sara, as an adult, to her Dad after her mother's death, after her Dad remarries
 - f. Chris to his Mom about his parents' divorce
 - g. Chris to his Mom after her remarriage
 - h. Chris to his stepfather
 - i. Chris to his stepsister, Sara, after she ran away
 - j. Chris to his half-brother, Jimmy
 - k. Linda to her new husband
2. Evaluate the following quotes from the video. Consider if the quotes ring true by giving personal examples. Determine how well they relate to the topic of blended families.
 - a. "If to be warmed, then I must freeze and quake in frigid purgatorial fires of which the flame is the rose ..." T.S. Eliot
 - b. "Even after lost love and broken vows, the human spirit seeks renewal." Art Linkletter
 - c. "In the flush of romance, the new partner honestly feels they can overcome any obstacle and live happily ever after. So it has been and so it shall always be." Art Linkletter
 - d. With patience and understanding, a fragile and split blended family can warm up and make a whole family that has found the rose of acceptance and harmony.
 - e. You can decide the role of stepparent any way you want to, as a stepfamily...as long as the two people agree on it, then you're not going to have problems.
 - f. In broken-up—a broken family—or divorced families...the children end up feeling real powerless because they didn't have any power to keep their mom and dad together.
 - g. It can never be, not should it be, completely harmonious, for in a healthy family, each person will seek his own growth from inside and outside the family system.
 - h. The more you know yourself, the more you're in control of your life...and then you can make your life happen the way that you want it to happen.
 - i. Learning to live in a blended family and making it work is an opportunity for growth and healing.
 - j. We can either pretend that always everything is just fine or that always everything is just horrible but...the reality lies somewhere in between.
 - k. Broken families can become healthy blended families and be put back together again with time, patience, truth, help and love.
3. Consider blended family issues not addressed in the video.
 - a. Two adults marrying for the second time and both have adult children that will not live in the home.
 - b. Two adults marrying for the second time and only one has children who will live in their joint home.
 - c. A woman with a teenage son marrying a man who is younger than her and only 5 years older than her teenager.
 - d. A couple remarrying and both have children who live part-time with their other parent. Both parents have joint custody.

- e. Two adults marrying. She has full custody of her 3 children. He has visitation with his 2 children.
- f. A woman who has 2 children marries a man who doesn't have any children of his own.
4. Contrast the Brady Bunch with actual blended families. Consider the family from the video and local blended families.
5. Investigate teenage runaways.
 - a. What could have happened when Sara ran away?
 - b. What are the statistics on teenage runaways?
 - c. What is the difference between a missing person, an abducted child and a runaway?
 - d. What organizations and local law enforcement agencies help to locate runaways?
6. Research literary depictions of stepfamilies. Consider the infamous wicked stepmothers in fairy tales (*Cinderella*, *Hansel and Gretel*) and modern depictions of stepfamilies in movies and books.
 - a. What are the common stereotypes of stepfamilies?
 - b. How do these stereotypes influence actual stepfamilies?

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Do Children Also Divorce? #2374
- The Water Ghost #9472
- When Mom and Dad Divorce #3321
- Win-Win #3683



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **KIDS HEALTH: DEALING WITH FEELINGS**

<http://www.KidsHealth.org/kid/feeling/>

This fully searchable site is a comprehensive site dealing with health of young people, covering topics from physical to emotional health. Includes articles, games and online discussion groups.

- **KID'S TURN**

<http://www.kidsturn.org/>

This site is run by a nonprofit organization to help kids and parents through divorce. Includes artwork and letters from kids and some cool puzzles to try.