

"I Love My Kids Differently" (And 5 More Truths About Blended Fams)

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WeHeartIt

The unpopular reality of being part of a blended family.

Later this year, I'm taking my three children to Israel for a week. It's a special trip following my son's bar mitzvah and my daughter's bat mitzvah to show them my view of Israel and help tie their Jewish identity to the Jewish state.

My husband and stepdaughter aren't going with us. And I'm totally fine with that and so are they, because in a blended family, you understand these things.

Apparently, the rest of the world doesn't.

My sister, mother, and aunt all asked with an inquiring edge to their voices, "How can you take just Asher, Eliana and Shaya to Israel and not Dan and Grace?"

I couldn't simply say, "It's a blended family thing." I explained it. I explained how you have this incredible bond between a just-divorced parent and biological children who aren't with you all

the time, so that when you finally do fall in [love](#) again, you start to create a new definition of family.

But that we-are-a-unit feeling never leaves. And I don't really want it to.

This and a few other things are important to understand about [blended families](#). We aren't like the traditional first marriage situations where it wouldn't be fair to take half the family on a major trip and leave the other half at home.

So, here's what I want the world to know about blended families.

1. You end up with four different families.

You and your kids, your kids and their other biological parent, the siblings as their own consistent unit, and you, your new [spouse](#), your kids and your stepkids.

Each family unit is valid and special, and there are times when each one will get some special alone-time attention.

2. I love when it's just me and my kids.

When my husband goes out of town, my children orchestrate a complicated schedule of who gets to sleep next to me which night. Even the teenagers.

When I was first divorced and my kids were 2, 4 and 6, they all wanted to sleep beside me in the big, king-sized bed, and a lot of nights, they did.

We reassured each other, yes, but we also snuggled and cuddled and laughed and watched old movies. We're supremely close because we had a lot of years of having one parent focused solely on kids.

3. My kids come first.

I knew if I were ever to remarry, it would have to be to someone who understood this bond between me and my kids. They are my everything.

I love my husband, and he will be the one I share life with when the kids are on their own. He's my life partner; they are my lifeblood. And they pre-date him — they aren't the product of our adult love.

4. I love my biological kids more than my stepkids.

It's every blended parent's dirty little secret: we love our biological kids more than our stepkids because they are part of us.

My children grew inside me and I nourished them at my breast. They reach for me when they're sick. Their facial expressions and posture mimic mine. We're *literally* part of each other.

5. But, we really love our stepkids.

Really. Blended families understand that the stepkids are newfound loves that we get to explore and grow with, especially when they're young at the time of the blending.

Our kids were 5, 6, 7 and 9 when we [married](#), and so they're growing up as real siblings in

every way. I say I have two daughters and two sons — I don't differentiate between step and biological.

Still, the relationships are different. And they should be. My stepdaughter has a mother and it's often not my place to make some of those big decisions on her behalf. My role is to talk to her dad (my husband) and let him take over.

6. Most families don't blend very well.

Ours does. We're incredibly lucky. My husband considers my kids to be his kids and vice versa, and there are times my kids prefer Dan over me or their biological dad. Many blended families blend as well as oil and water.

I often say things like, "No one wants to end up with a divorced family, but we make the best of our situation." I'm going to stop saying that, though, because I love our life.

Yes, it's complicated.

There are five adults negotiating the schedules and decisions over four children, and sometimes we sit in two rows at a dance recital or graduation with eight grandparents, five parents, and all the various siblings making nice and meaning it. (Although afterwards, we all go out for ice cream and my parents start talking with my husband's ex's parents and it's pretty cool.)

If I had stayed married to my first husband, I don't know that my children and I would be as close as we are. I don't know that I'd be as independent and strong as I am.

My children also wouldn't have such a tight looking-out-for-each-other bond as they do, since they're each other's consistency more than their father or I.

We have a great life that has, in many ways, been defined by early losses. The best thing about a blended family like mine may be that we make peace with our failures and strive even harder for success.