

Building Love Together in Blended Families New from Gary Chapman and Ron L. Deal

Chicago, IL – Nearly every newly-married couple faces challenges as they navigate living together, learn to deal with extended family, and figure out how to make the finances work. But, for those marrying again after divorce or death of a spouse, marriage brings its own set of unique challenges, especially when there are others involved.

“Blended-family couples swim in a different ocean than first-marriage couples,” says Ron L. Deal, co-author with Gary Chapman of ***Building Love Together in Blended Families*** (Northfield Publishing/February 2020). “The stepfamily ocean has a cooler water temperature. Most everyone in a stepfamily has experienced a significant loss that is always just under the surface. There are a few more sharks, and the water is less clear.”

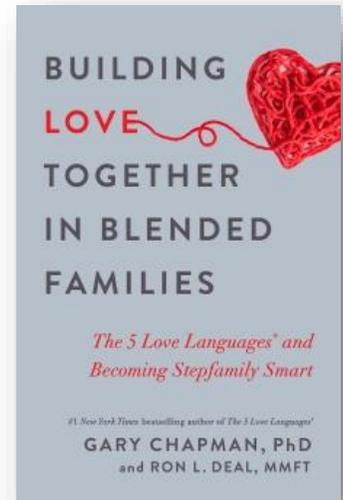
Deal, a leading expert on stepfamilies, founder, and president of Smart Stepfamilies™ and director of FamilyLife Blended® and Chapman, a leading expert on love and marriage and author of the bestselling *The 5 Love Languages®* series, have collectively spent decades training therapists, speaking at conferences, and educating blended family couples.

“Fundamentally, the journey of a blended family is the search for a shared identity,” says Chapman. “‘Who are we to one another?’ is the first question everyone is asking. On day one, blended families are not blended. They are a collection of insiders and outsiders in search of ‘familyness.’”

Half of all U.S. couples have a stepparent or stepchild connected to their relationship. In ***Building Love Together in Blended Families***, Chapman and Deal help them navigate the ocean of relationships involved in a blended family from building their own marriage to helping build sibling relationships and involving grandparents. Throughout, they weave in teaching on the five love languages and how to apply them to strengthen relationships. Through stories, research, and practical tips, they encourage families to help build love together in:

- **Marriage:** Learn how to communicate love to your spouse through the love languages and protect your marriage from any blended family stress going on around you.
- **Stepparenting:** Finding your place, defining your role, and establishing yourself as a trustworthy parent-figure are keys to building love in your home.
- **Sibling Relationships:** Create a climate that will help siblings of every age build love in your blended family and overcome common barriers like time together, lack of common interests, and even birth order changes.
- **Grandparenting:** Stepgrandparenting involves three generations of family members and each person involved has needs, desires, and a stake in all other relationships.
- **The Face of Rejection:** What’s behind rejection, how faithful love is the path through it, and how to work with it through the love languages.

“Not all blended families look the same,” says Chapman. “Some will find real connectedness; genuine love will flow between family members. Others will encounter roadblocks that will take them on a detour route. However, persistent expressions of love, in the right language, are the most effective way to get back on the road to becoming a truly blended family.”



Meet Gary Chapman and Ron Deal



Gary Chapman, Ph.D. is the bestselling author of *The 5 Love Languages®* series and director of Marriage and Family Life Consultants, Inc. Gary travels the world presenting seminars, and his radio program airs on more than 400 stations. For more information, visit his web site at: www.5lovelanguages.com



Ron L. Deal, M.MFT, is one of the most widely read experts on blended families in the country. He is founder of Smart Stepfamilies™, director of FamilyLife Blended® for Family Life®, the creator and author of numerous videos and books on stepfamily living (including the bestselling *The Smart Stepfamily*), and is the consulting editor for the Smart Stepfamily book series. Ron is a licensed marriage and family therapist, popular speaker, and host of the podcast *FamilyLife Blended*. He and his wife, Nan, have three sons and live in Little Rock, Arkansas. Find events and resources at

RonDeal.org.

25 Suggested Discussion Questions

1. I think sometimes when we hear the phrase “blended family” we think of the Brady Bunch. Is this how most families work?
2. What are some common family dilemmas that a “not-so-blended” family may be facing?
3. How does love get complicated in a blended family?
4. Should you speak your stepchild’s or any other blended family member’s love languages if they aren’t in a place of acceptance?
5. How does a blended family look different when the children are adults when the parents remarry?
6. How does a blended family best pursue a loving home when there are varying definitions of what love should look like and varying motivations to make it happen?
7. What about grandparents? If a grandparent remarries, how can we build relationships with our blended grandchildren?
8. What are the 7 blended family principles for loving well?
9. What role does grief play in blended families?
10. Why do you think the divorce rate is higher for blended family couples versus first marriages?
11. How do you handle children that reject your overtures for a relationship?
12. How do we get the past the guilt that is often prevalent in stepfamilies?
13. How can we apply the 5 love languages in a blended family?
14. What’s the difference between a language and a dialect?
15. What are some issues that are unique to stepfamilies?
16. Why is it wrong to assume “because I love their mom/dad the kids will warm up to me?”
17. What is one of the most overlooked and underestimated needs of any relationship?
18. What special circumstances does an intercultural blended family face?
19. Blended family relationships naturally create loyalty conflicts or love conflicts. How do you overcome this?
20. Can you explain the attachment triangles in blended families?
21. How can we help our children be free to love without guilt or anxiety?
22. How critical is a committed, loving marriage when it comes to stepfamily integration?
23. What are the 5 P’s of Stepparenting?
24. How important is *pace* when it comes to implementing the love languages with a stepchild?

Suggested Interview Topics for Building Love Together in Blended Families

Here are some suggestion topics you might consider for an interview with Gary and/or Ron:

7 Blended Family Principles for Loving Well

Blended-family couples swim in a different ocean than first-marriage couples. It often has a cooler water temperature and most everyone in a stepfamily has experienced a significant loss that it always just under the surface. How can a couple navigate this ocean well? In this interview, Gary and/or Ron share 7 blended family principles for loving well. They'll discuss how blended families are not born with a sense of "familyness," how patience is a virtue and how to love generously while waiting, how a committed and loving marriage is the first and last motivator of stepfamily integration, why grieving is important, and how to stay the course.

The 5 P's of Stepparenting

Stepparenting is hard. You have all the responsibilities of caring for a child, all of the obligations and expenses, but get far fewer rewards than biological parents—especially in the beginning when everyone is trying to figure out where to put you. In this interview, Gary and/or Ron explain what they've termed the "5 P's of Stepparenting": partner, pursue, pace, patience, and persistence and share how they work on a practical level. Plus, they'll discuss both stepparent and biological parent potential missteps, how to lead with love, and how to discover your child's love language.

Creating a Climate of Connection Between Stepsiblings

One estimate is that two-thirds of kids in stepfamilies have either a half- or stepsibling relationship. As a parent, how do you begin to blend siblings together? While you can't force relationships between stepsiblings, especially between adult children, you can help create a climate that encourages connection. In this interview, Gary and/or Ron share specific ways to create a climate of connection that includes strengthening your marriage, applying love language wisdom, seeking to build bridges, gathering around common ground, cheering for each other, and more.

Stepgrandparents: Bridging the Generations

Stepgrandparenting is more common in the US today than you might think. Nearly 40 percent of all families in the US include a step-grandparent and by 2030 it will be almost as common for grandparents to have a stepgrandchild as a biological grandparent. Stepgrandparenting involves three generations of family members, and each person involved has needs, desires, and a stake in all the other relationships. Where do we begin? In this interview, Gary and/or Ron discuss the role of step-grandparents, why engagement is important, how to help bridge the generations, what issues adults may have about their older parents remarrying, and how to strive for love and maturing relationships between the generations.

Love Language Challenges for Blended Families

Love between insiders (biological family members) is unmistakably defined and permanent, set in the concrete of DNA. However, love between new family members (outsiders) lacks clarity and history, is tentative, and often feels fragile, especially to the most highly motivated person. In the beginning, love shared by insiders competes with loving new outsiders. Trust and love set the stage for the 5 Love Languages® approach. Trust naturally accompanies clearly defined love between insiders. New, developing love in blended family relationships lacks the backbone of trust.