

A contemplating morning for this stepmum

Description

This morning I woke up a bit heavy. Sometimes I miss having a full house, I miss having my stepkids around. My partner and I are not living together full time anymore at the moment.

I am cocooning in bed a little longer. My thoughts go to comments I recently got about my stepmother status. That I am not supposed to call myself a stepmum since I was not married to their dad. That kinda stung and felt like taking something valuable away from me. But also it made me wonder, motivated to dive a little deeper into the concept of step. The semantics, the content, the difficulties, the feelings. I am sure a lot of people have experienced similar situations, around this subject.

My great stepkids have lived part time with me approx 4 years, we have been on holidays together, i have fed them, kissed them goodnight and loved them. They are the most important kids in my life next to my biological kids. They are brother and sister to my girls, one by blood and one by feeling I would say. Safe to say, for me that feels like, with lack of better words, step kids.

But what does the law say about this? What defines a step parent, in an age where marriage is not the standard for a relationship anymore. Itâ€™s a confusing time in relationships I find, the old way doesnâ€™t seem to be the way anymore, but what is the other wayâ€¦ Lets investigate. What does the world have to say about this.

Under the BC Family Law Act, youâ€™re a step-parent if: *you and the childrenâ€™s parent are or were married, or lived together in a marriage-like relationship for at least two years* (you might call it being in a common-law relationship), and. you lived with the childrenâ€™s parent and the children.

Definition of *stepmother* according to Merriam webster**:** *the wife of oneâ€™s parent when distinct from oneâ€™s natural or legal mother.*

Or in the Netherlands, where we live, things get a little more complicated. According to the Dutch government, legally you are considered a stepparent when you are married to or have a registered partnership with the parent of a minor child. If you are not married or registered partners, you may still take on the role of a stepparent, but you donâ€™t automatically have the same legal rights and obligations.

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So what I am learning is that it differs slightly from country to country. But basically it comes down to being in a relationship with the other parent and being part of the childrenâ€™s lives. And by some laws, it would indeed mean being married or having a registered partnership.

It does not make sense to me at all that, just because a relationship is not registered but has all the other ingredients, you are in a long-term loving relationship, you sleep together, you live together, you eat together, you take care of the kids, you are suddenly not a stepparent?

Or does it matter that you FEEL like a stepparent? Can someone really take that away from you anyway?

Maybe that is why the comment stung. It wasnâ€™t really about whether or not I was using the correct word. It felt like something very real and valuable to me was being questioned. A relationship, a role, years of being part of each otherâ€™s everyday lives.

And maybe there simply isnâ€™t a perfect word for all the shapes a family can take these days. If you donâ€™t live together anymore, does that suddenly change what you are to each other? If you were never married, does that make those years of being a family any less real?

I donâ€™t think so.

So yes, I am, for lack of a better word, a stepmum. Period.

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