Families that Fall Apart

Working with Single Parent & Remarried Families

W. Bryce Hagedorn, PhD, LMHC, NCC, MAC

Some Facts

• Single parent families
  – By 2000, almost _____ of families were headed by a single parent
  – Single parenthood is increasingly common across all socioeconomic & cultural groups

• Remarried families
  – By 2000, _____ million marriages involved a formerly married partner
  – 3 out of 4 people who divorce remarry
  – _____ of all children have lived in a blended family before age 18

Single Parent Families

• Definition
  – Families headed by a mother or father who is responsible for taking care of her or himself and a child or children

• These families occur as a result of
  – divorce
  – death
  – abandonment
  – unwed pregnancy (both by choice and not)
  – adoption
  – uncontrollable and/or temporary circumstances (e.g., deployment, long-distanc job, etc.)
Single Parent Families

• Needs of single parent families - divorce
  – Helping tasks
    • Resolution of loss of partnership
    • Acceptance of ____________________ & responsibilities
    • Renegotiation & redefinition of relationships
    • Establishment of satisfactory arrangement with former partner
  – Children
    • _______________ tell about the divorce with care & concern
    • Give children advance warning of parent leaving
    • Ensure that children aren’t divorced from either parent
    • __________________ (age-appropriate)
    • Give children space of their own physically & psychologically
    • Help children __________________ visit with non-custodial parent

Single Parent Families

• Needs of single parent families – death
  – Helping tasks
    • _____________________________ must be absorbed
    • Mourning must be completed
    • Family members must talk to each other & help each other grieve
  – Children
    • May become anxious, hope for a reunion, blame themselves or others, become overly active
    • To cope, they need to:
      – Be given __________________ about what happened
      – Receive support from peers & surviving parent
    • Facilitate progression through the stages of grief

Single Parent Families

• Needs of single parent families
  – Uncontrollable and/or temporary circumstances
    • Cope with relocation, ________________
    • Parent involved usually doesn’t have a choice
    • Parent left in charge of household is overloaded & without additional resources
    • Readjustment of essential tasks, postponed obligations & __________________ is necessary
Single Parent Families

• Needs of single parent families – overall challenges
  – Defining and redefining ____________________
  – Educational achievement
  – Difficulty in establishing clear gender identity & relating to opposite gender
  – Financial stressors
  – Coping with __________________________

Single Parent Families

• Prevention
  – Premarital counseling
    • More likely to seek marriage therapy when necessary
    • Marriages experience lower levels of stress
    • Couples benefit more from marital therapy
  – Programs that help a spouse after a __________________

• Treatment approaches
  – Help family members __________________ & frequently with each other
  – Encourage weekly family conferences to talk about concerns, resolve problems, and plan for the future
  – Link family members to needed resources & social support
  – Assist them in getting financial needs resolved
  – Educational methods

Single Parent Families

• Theoretical approaches
  – Structural Family Therapy – putting the parent in charge
  – Strategic Family Therapy
    • Focus on immediate problem-solving with a particular problem
  – __________________ Family Therapy – finding exceptions
  – Bowen Family Therapy – resolving the past
    • Examines family patterns
  – Experiential Family Therapy – ________________________
    • Helps them enact troublesome & unresolved situations
  – Narrative Family Therapy – externalize the problem
    • Future stories can be therapeutic by providing hope & direction
Single Parent Families

- Therapist roles
  - Lay aside personal prejudices & biases
    - Assist family with giving up negative stereotypes
  - Deal with _____________________________
    - Stay focused on family interactions
  - Help them tap inner resources & support groups

- Successful counseling should result in clients being able to:
  - Manifest more confidence & competence in themselves
  - Establish ________________ boundaries
  - Make informed decisions regarding future partnerships
  - Utilize community & personal resources

Remarried Families

- Definition
  - Occurs when a person whose previous marriage has ended (in death, divorce, or abandonment) marries a previously married person or someone who has never married

- Terms for remarried families include:
  - __________ families
  - reconstituted families
  - recoupled families
  - __________ families
  - patched families
  - __________ families
Remarried Families

• Transition issues for children
  – Liabilities of remarriage include:
    • Grieving loss of the previous family unit
    • Losing ______________
    • Moving into new area
    • Having to relate to new family members
  – Benefits of remarriage include:
    • Closeness with biological parent &/or with step-parent
    • Increased ______________ from new relatives
    • Find areas of common interest with new stepsiblings
    • Moving may allow development of a ______________

Remarried Families

• Transition issues for parents/step-parents
  – Role uncertainty
    • No accepted social roles for stepparents
  – Established ______________ may be difficult to modify or break
  – The previously unmarried parent may have difficulty making
    a place for themselves
  – Expectation that new family will act like the old one
  – Dealing with the ______________
    • memories or physical encounters
  – Children do best having parents who form an ongoing
    parental alliance

Remarried Families

• Needs of remarried families
  – ______________
  – Alleviating fears & concerns about stepfamily life
  – Establishing or reestablishing trust
  – Fostering a ______________
  – Becoming emotionally/psychologically attached to
    others
Remarried Families

• Needs of remarried families
  – Finding time to consolidate the couple relationship
  – Dealing with feelings
  – Integration of members into cohesive family unit
    • On average, it takes _________ years for stepparents to form an in-depth relationship with stepchildren
  – Recognize and accept “___________________”
    • Process of family development
    • Legal processes

• On average, it takes _________ years for stepparents to form an in-depth relationship with stepchildren
  – Recognize and accept “___________________”

• Treatment approaches
  – Guidance in retaining _____________________
    • Don’t have to give up old ties to form new ones
  – Focus on parental involvement
    • Stepparents _____________ involvement with biological children, stepchildren, former spouse & current spouse
  – Provide education
    • Understand differences between stepfamily & nonstepfamily systems

• Don’t have to give up old ties to form new ones

• Treatment approaches
  – Assist in creation of _________________________
    • Provides predictability & stability
  – Apply structural & experiential family therapies
    • Help readjust boundaries
      – Membership
      – Space
      – Authority
      – Time
    • Assist in seeing dysfunctional patterns
  – Do transgenerational work
    • Aid families in _______________________________
Remarried Families

- Therapist roles
  - Children must be given special consideration
  - Work at ________________ & mutually satisfactory arrangements between divorced parents
  - Work to foster strong & healthy ________________
  - Focus on external & internal factors that tend to unbalance the family system
  - Bring about multiple person resolutions

Remarried Families

- Therapist roles
  - Four issues must be addressed:
    - Relinquish __________________________
    - Learn effective ways of communication
    - Complete structured programs of ________________ & get reading lists that are germane to situation
    - Maintain a forum within which they can mourn the loss of previous relationships & develop new relationships

Remarried Families

- Successful counseling should result in clients:
  - Understanding themselves as a ______________
  - Supporting new parent & sibling subunits
  - Becoming more tolerant of & deal realistically with each other
  - ________________ in a new family
  - Fostering new traditions
  - Developing healthy self-concept of themselves as a family