

## Reinventing Romance: Can a Non-Child Person Be a Stepmother?

By Sherry Amatenstein, LMSW

She's lacking a motherhood gene, but her widower beau has two teenage kids. Can this relationship work? Our dating expert answers.



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Dating expert Sherry Amatenstein

**Q. At 45, I long ago made peace with the idea that I just don't have the motherhood gene. For the past two months, I have been dating a 49-year-old widower with two adolescents. They're great girls, don't get me wrong, and I enjoy their company but wonder if marrying Joe would be the right thing. My first marriage broke up years ago, but there were no kids caught in the crossfire. If the marriage doesn't work out, these kids will once again suffer a major loss in their lives. Advice, please. -- Ellen**

**A.** Kudos for the maternal instinct you do show by wanting to spare your boyfriend's daughters if the stepmommy thing ultimately tanks. However, at this point in the relationship, the primary person who should be on parental patrol is the parent. How deeply has he involved you in his children's lives? Are you introduced as his pal or as his girlfriend? Only two months in, most of your time with Joe should be spent sans kids. That way the fallout in the event a breakup will be minimal. If the two of you decide to commit, you should gradually be brought more into the family mix.

I'm wondering if the primary motivation for your question is due less to altruism and more to said lack of motherhood gene. Here you are, already anticipating the end of the relationship while it's still in its infancy. Could you be kidding yourself that you like his kids? That is, trying furiously, perhaps futilely, to push a square peg into a round hole? Sally Landau, an LA-based life coach suggests, "Way before jumping to the possible demise of this very new relationship, seriously consider how much you like this man and how much future you might have with the understanding that, should problems arise, blood is thicker than water."

[Sally Landau](#) >>

Adryenn Ashley, author of *Every Single Girl's Guide to Her Future Husband's Last Divorce* offers more blunt commentary: "Being a stepmother takes a lot of diplomacy and effort, and if you don't like the kids you shouldn't do it. Kids have barometers and can smell fear and dislike."

[Buy Every Single Girl's Guide](#) >>

And doesn't Joe merit your concern? He's already suffered the loss of his wife and doesn't deserve to become attached to a woman who will leave. Sue Stevens, 61, says, "If the children are a deal-breaker, break it off now!" Eleven years ago Stevens, a Texas-based university public affairs specialist, married a younger man with three children. Her take? "I fully knew what I was getting into -- the girls have a mother and I was already fond of the little girl -- but I can assure you it is not easy."

Should you decide the guy is worth it and discover you possess a partial motherhood instinct toward his children, go for it with hope and the knowledge that no matter what the outcome -- we all know about the high divorce rate! -- your intentions are clear to yourself and honorable toward all involved.

Do you have a tough question about dating or relationships? E-

mail Sherry at [DatingExpert@More.com](mailto:DatingExpert@More.com) and your question might be featured in an upcoming column.

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**About Sherry Amatenstein**

*Sherry Amatenstein, LMSW, is the author of Love Lessons from Bad Breakups and Q&A Dating Book. She runs dating seminars around the country and does private coaching -- not to help singles marry in 60 days, but to uncover their blocks. She has given relationship advice on the Early Show, Regis, Inside Edition, CBS News, VH1, BBC, and many other programs. Her philosophy is that the most important relationship you'll ever have is with yourself.*

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