



## iQuestions Faculty, Dr. Gary Smalley

---

### Question:

*I'm remarried. I don't get along with my spouse's children. What can we do?*

### Answer:

I know it can be frustrating after you remarry, and you have two sets of children—your spouse's children—and you say they're not getting along as children, and so, in fact, they don't even want to know each other. It's all the pain of the divorce, and now the remarriage, and you're trying to blend two families together. Now, that's tough.

And I found something that really works. It's miraculous, in fact, with blended families. And it's actually just as powerful with your family, as husband and wife and your original children, and it's just amazing how it works. I call it, how to let your children bond in an unusual way that the bonding stays connected for sometimes life, for me. It's such a strong bond.

Years ago, a group that was studying this problem tried it in a boys' detention home. And what they did is that they actually broke a water pipe at midnight, where they were staying—all these boys together and the counselors—and they woke everybody up and said they had an emergency, and they had to fix this pipe. And so, all the guys got up and said it was going to flood us out. And so, it was going to be a mess in this place, if they didn't get it fixed right away. And so, all the guys jumped up, and they got dressed, and they all worked as a team, and they all got the thing fixed. And what they noticed is that over the next couple of weeks, the kids were interacting in ways they never had before. They were high-fiving, and laughing about the experience, and



talking about other unrelated areas with enthusiasm. They just seemed to be more bonded than they were before the pipe was caused to be broken.

It was so effective, incidentally, that from then on, every new group they got in, after they were there for a while, they broke that same pipe, because, when these guys worked as a team in a difficult situation, what happened was it drew them into a more bonded relationship, even a friendship.

And so, what I discovered with my own children, and what I've discovered with blended families, is that you choose certain activities that you guys can do together, as a family, a new family, and choose things where things can go wrong—for example, camping. Rent a camper, a pop-up, rent a tent, or buy a tent, you know, or a motor home or whatever. But anytime you camp, we found, as a family, there's always disasters. Something breaks. You know, you get stuck somewhere. Somebody didn't bring the right food. You know, the fire won't start. Or add to it by bringing a blow-up raft with you that you can go down a little stream or, you know, big enough to take the raft. There's always things that go wrong in a canoe or raft. If you take a weekend, and have fun camping, rafting, or canoeing, and eating out under the stars and in the woods, it's amazing. You may even argue. They may have a little bit of a tiff with each other during the time, but the amazing thing is that it takes about three weeks for the glue to dry, and once it dries, you're going to notice that your kids seem more bonded.

Now, you'll just do one, if you can do different things—a night out. If you have little kids, just camp out in the back yard. There's always the potential of something going wrong—a storm, lightning, anything's possible. That's what we experienced, and still to this day, my kids are in their thirties and forties, and we are still close knit and still laughing



about all the disastrous things that happened to us as a family while we were camping.

So, that's one way you can help the two sets of kids be drawn closer together.