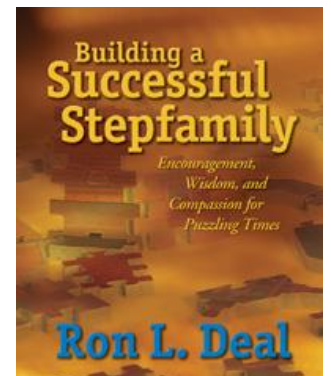


Conference Host Guide

BUILDING^a Successful StepfamilyTM

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To schedule a seminar complete the “We Want to Host a Conference” request form on the Host a Conference page. • www.SmartStepfamilies.com • Planner Revised August ‘13

getting started

Congratulations on hosting the Building a Successful Stepfamily Conference! You are hereby becoming an active agent in facilitating healthier families. But where do you start? We've created this booklet to give you guidance to help maximize your event!

5 Steps to Hosting an Event

1. Pray
2. Date, Schedule, and Location
3. Determine Registration Price
4. Recruit Your Team
5. Plan Your Follow-Up

1 Pray

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” - Proverbs 16:9
 We believe that prayer is the most important detail of any event. Unless the Holy Spirit is at work, the hearts of families will not be changed, no matter how perfectly an event is planned. We encourage you to commit every part of the planning process to prayer. Begin praying for the families in your community, and pray for wisdom in hosting this event.



Best Practices Tip

Consider your organization's calendar as well as the community's calendar before finalizing the conference date.

2 Date, Schedule and Location

Give yourself roughly 16 weeks (4 months) to prepare and plan your event. Once you have a location in mind; take steps to reserve the facility for the dates of your event. If you plan to host the event at your church, make sure you receive permission from your pastor and keep him informed throughout the planning process. The *Hosting a Building A Successful Stepfamily Conference* PDF may be helpful to share.



Best Practices Tip

When considering your location, think about your target audience! If many couples are unfamiliar with a church environment, perhaps hosting the event outside of a church setting might make them feel more comfortable. Pray about it! God will direct you through the process!

3 Determine registration price

Smart Stepfamilies™ does not require a registration fee for attendees. However here are some thoughts for you to consider:

1. A fee (even a nominal one) is helpful because it requires a commitment from the participant. They will value the service more if it costs something. In addition, you will have a more accurate pre-registration count (necessary to order manuals) and less “no-shows” if a fee is required.
2. Whatever amount you decide to charge we recommend it should be per individual with spouses or fiancés attending free (e.g., “\$65 per person with spouse attending free”). This makes it more likely that couples will attend together.

Below are the basic elements you need to consider in determining your price:

Facility

If you aren't going to use your church building, you may have to rent a space. It's a huge plus if you can secure a location for free, but don't necessarily count on it. Be prepared to make an offer that is realistic.

Materials

Each participant should receive a Conference Manual. The cost for each is \$7 (or \$14 per couple) plus shipping, payable to FamilyLife. You will only pay for the manuals you use; any extra manuals may be shipped back to FamilyLife at the host's expense.

Note: Some have wondered if one manual per couple would help in reducing costs. This is not recommended because it inadvertently encourages one spouse to be "responsible" to take notes and apply the principles while the other is free to disengage from the presentation. We want to encourage each person to take their own notes and then discuss their ideas with their spouse or fiancé. Two manuals accomplish this objective best.



Best Practices Tip

- Place your order for manuals no later than two weeks before your event to ensure delivery.
- Pens! Each couple will need a few. Make sure you have spares!
- Name Tags! They make for a nice touch, and are super helpful during registration.

Childcare

A conference without childcare is doomed. PLEASE make sure your facility can accommodate childcare. Factor in the costs and manpower required to facilitate childcare properly.

Refreshments

We recommend having some type of refreshment table at the event. Snacks are comforting; they take the edge off attitudes for guests who had a hectic and crazy time getting to the event. Plus, they're a great way to boost your blood sugar and concentration. But don't go overboard with a buffet. Keep it simple.



Best Practices Tip

- *Prepackaged grab-n-go snacks make it easy for the guests, and eliminate the need for plates and plastic wear.*
- *Easy to eat fruits like apples and bananas satisfy those with dietary needs.*
- *Have plenty of coffee and water!*
- *Consider having each of the couples on your team or hospitality team provide a snack for the event. Not only is this a great way for them to get involved but could also be a cost savings to the event budget.*



Best Practices Tip

- Giveaways! Everyone likes to win something. Plus, canvassing your local businesses is a great way to build relationships with your community.
- Ron will likely give away some resources at the beginning of the conference, but it's nice if you have a few items to give away as well.

Discounts

Our thought: give 'em if you can! It's always a good idea to provide scholarships for couples that truly need to be at the event, but cannot afford registration. Build some type of discount into your budget if possible



Best Practices Tip

- Try partnering with a local military chaplain or first responders (fire, police, ambulance) who may be able to subsidize the cost of manuals.
- Consider providing slots for local pastors to attend the event for free. It's a great chance for you to bless those who bless others on a daily basis and gives them an opportunity to learn about an area of ministry.

Promotion

There are a myriad of ways to promote your event. We'll talk about this in more detail in the next section. But for now, in your budgeting process, consider what you may need to purchase. From signs and billboards to newspaper and radio ads, be Strategic about what is most effective in your area.



Best Practices Tip

Create shirts that distinguish your team! It will help them look, feel, and act more professional. Plus, it helps create a safe environment for your guests, knowing there are official personnel standing by, designated to guide them through the event. Or perhaps you already have matching church shirts that you could wear that would serve the same purpose.

4 Recruit Your Team

Pray about couples you know who are marriage-minded and have the heart for blended families learning God’s truth, hope, and vision for marriage. Ask them to prayerfully consider:

- Committing to pray daily leading up to the event, using the ***40 Day Prayer Guide***.
- Planning as a team the ***Building a Successful Stepfamily Conference™***, from promoting, setting-up, providing refreshments, greeting, serving, and facilitating the event.

Once you’ve recruited your team, make them aware of the different roles that will need to be filled during the event, in addition to all the prep that goes into the pre-event phase.

The basic roles are as follows:

1. Greeters-This team will welcome couples at the door, escort them to the registration table, make them familiar with their surroundings, and direct them to the room where the event is held.
2. Registration- This team will facilitate the onsite registration, print/write nametags, provide manuals and pens, and briefly explain the event schedule.
3. Resource Table- This team will man the resource table, answer questions about the various resources, recommend further reading/lectures/events, and complete sales transactions.
4. Prayer- This team will commit to praying before the event, during the event, and after the event.

5 Plan Your Follow-Up

Decide now if you will launch small groups or a Bible class after the event. We strongly encourage you to do so; this gives people a natural “next step” and helps connect them to other families on a similar journey. We can recommend curriculum if you are interested.

promoting the event

When do you start promoting *Building a Successful Stepfamily Conference™*? As soon as you've agreed on a date, schedule, price, and location! Create your flyers, posters, digital send-outs, and begin to saturate the culture around you. Below we've listed several ways you can create a buzz!

Personal Invitation

Many studies have shown the most effective form of promotion to be a personal invitation. As a team, have each member make a list of people in their sphere of influence they will personally invite - friends, family, coworkers, ministry partners, sports contacts, community groups, etc. Distribute event flyers to them with the pertinent information, including links to online information.

Social Media

Leverage your contacts on Facebook, Twitter, email, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, as well as your "blog-sphere" to encourage your friends near and far to register for the event.



Best Practices Tip

- Create an event on Facebook!
- Tweet about your excitement surrounding the planning process!
- Keep event news up-to-date on your church website.
- Send out an "email blast!"
- Use the free tools provided by Eventbrite, an online registration system that will help you promote your event. Eventbrite has an email template, website widgets, social media tie-ins, and other electronic invitations all available online at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/features/>

Venue Promotion

Where will you host the event? Do you have access to the facility leading up to the event? Is it a church? Are you able to set up a table in the lobby with information? Here are some various forms of promotion to consider:

- Posters
- Flyers
- Banners
- Brochures
- Information table
- Pulpit announcements
- Bulletin inserts
- Newsletter Articles
- Skits
- Your personal testimony

For access to graphics, sample brochures, and radio ads for the conference, please visit: www.smartstepfamilies.com/view/host. Keep in mind that sample brochures may be out of date (e.g., Ron's bio) so please send us a proof of your brochure so we can help you stay current.

Community Promotion

Check your local newspaper and radio station websites! Do they have community calendars on which to post events? Don't overlook National Public Radio stations or Christian radio stations, which often have online community calendars. Consider posting flyers on community boards at coffee shops, military bases, libraries, frozen yogurt shops, coffee shops, colleges, community centers, YMCA's, gyms, spas, barber shops, hair dressers, etc. Get creative!

Community Contacts

Include local organizations and business owners in your event by inviting their members or employees to attend. Make announcements, show videos, and use newsletters and websites to publish invitations and endorsements. Organizations may include: local ministerial alliance, athletic clubs, teachers' associations, music/arts groups, schools, neighborhood organizations, chamber of commerce, pro-family

organizations, and business clubs. Send multiple reminders to ministers and churches reminding them of the event.

Discounts

If you've been able to provide discounted registration for target groups such as military, first responders, pre-married couples, or pastors, make sure to create specific flyers for those various target groups!



Best Practices Tip

- Invite local pastors to attend the conference for free! If that's not possible due to time commitments, at least ask them to sit through one session and ask them to meet Ron. This might encourage them to host an event in their church in the future or start a Blended Family Ministry.

Future Event Promotion

We've found it's helpful for churches to offer "follow-up events" where they can dive deeper into teachings on marriage and family. If you choose to offer this, plan on what that format would look like with your team and pastor. It could be a stand-alone Wednesday night teaching, a Sunday School series, or a small group study. Whatever the format, make sure you have details in place to promote it at your Building a Successful Stepfamily event.



Best Practices Tip

The Smart Stepfamily DVD curriculum is a great review for eight weeks following the event. The material goes over some of the same themes of the conference and is a great way to reinforce key principles and go into deeper discussion about applying those principles.

pre-event checklist

You have 16 weeks to prepare! Consult your calendar and count out the weeks prior to your event. Then fill in your “phase to be completed” dates below!

Event Date _____ / _____ / _____

planning phase

Weeks 16-11 before Event

Planning Phase to be completed by this date, 11 weeks before event:

_____ / _____ / _____

Checklist:

- Prayer - See prayer guide for details
- Date, Location, and Schedule
- Confirm you have access to the correct audio/visual equipment in your facility
- Determine registration price
- Obtain permissions for location, if required
- Develop a plan to invite others, soft invite via personal contacts
- Recruit your team
- Begin creating promotional materials @ www.smartstepfamily.com
- See Presentation Room Set-Up & Materials Check List
- Present Promotional Plan to Pastor

preparation phase

Weeks 10-8 before Event

Preparation Phase to be completed by this date, 8 weeks before event:

_____ / _____ / _____

Checklist:

- Pray
- Create a music playlist for breaks. We recommend Stephen Curtis Chapman’s CD “All About Love”.

- Contact local newspapers, radio stations, business
- Prepare invites for email
- Facebook, etc...
- Create videos, additional signage, banners, etc...
- Plan the “follow-up” event/small group/bible study
- Contact military chaplains/first responders to help subsidize costs
- Keep inviting people

promotion phase

Weeks 7-5 before Event

Promotion Phase to be completed by this date, 5 weeks before event:

____ / ____ / ____

- Pray
- Email Blast
- Social Media Invite (Facebook, Twitter, etc...)
- Distribute Flyers
- Set up info table (at church/venue, other local churches, etc...)
- Hang banners/posters
- Hit up local businesses/community organizations
- Post your event in community calendars
- Promote via radio, newspaper, etc...
- Announce regularly in your church via video, skits, etc...
- Keep inviting people

registration phase

Weeks 4-3 before Event

____ / ____ / ____

- Pray
- Divide up your team’s responsibilities
- Regularly staff the information table; include registration brochures or flyers (or other print material)
- Make a list of snacks/refreshments that need to be purchased

- Make a list of other purchases needed for event (pens, name tags, etc...)
- Emphasize “last day to register” in your promotions
- Keep inviting people

momentum phase

Weeks 2-1 before Event

This is it! It's go time! The final 2 week push before the event. If you're on task, you should have no problem tying up all the loose ends.

_____ / _ _____ / _ _____

- Keep praying!
- Coordinate all purchases (snacks, refreshments, supplies, etc...)
- Refreshments, etc.)
- Send out a final email blast with “registration deadline”
- 2 weeks prior to event, order your Building a Successful Stepfamily workbooks
- Set up the venue as soon as you have access to your facility
- Make sure your info table is stocked
- Test audio/visual
- Test lights
- Make sure your team clearly understands their responsibilities
- Keep inviting people!!

day of event: you made it!!!

Congratulations! You're ready! Now, gather your team, pray together, and trust that you've done all you can. The rest is up to God. And that's a good thing!

Conference Set-Up & Materials Check List

Room Set-Up:

- Participants should be seated in movable chairs at round tables if possible.
- One large lectern or two small lecterns at the front of the auditorium (on stage).
- PA system with a wireless microphone (for Ron) and one extra microphone for announcements and demonstrations.
- Projection system for Power Point presentation and video clips. Ron will supply the laptop computer and remote wireless control. PA connection cords to run sound out of the laptop into the PA system.

Resource Sales Tables:

- Set-up 3 long display tables for book & video resources. Materials will be shipped before the conference.
- Two volunteers at each table (minimum) are needed to take money and answer questions.
- Have calculators and small change for cash sales on hand. Order forms for you to print and place on the sales table will be emailed to you (each person also gets an order form at check-in).
- Connect with Ron at the end of the event to determine payment of product sales to FamilyLife.

after the event

wrap it up

After the last guest leaves, gather your team together for a debriefing of the event. Thank your team for all their hard work and encourage them that God has used them to build his kingdom!

Together, review the evaluation forms as a team.

- Discuss strong points and weak points.
- Ask team members to share meaningful moments.
- Determine who will follow up with couples.
- Finally, PRAY. Pray for the couples, the team, and for future events.

Thank God for the ground that was taken back from the enemy and ask for God to reveal upcoming opportunities to take back more ground!

Next, work together to restore the facility to its pre-event condition. Leave it better than when you found it! Remember, these are simple, yet important ways to demonstrate good character and leave a positive impression. You're almost there. Finish strong!

Finally, CELEBRATE! You're done! And know that this was indeed...a weekend well spent!



Best Practices Tip

Share your evaluations with us! Email your stories, testimonies, and salvations to nburns@familylife.com We'll stay in contact with you. Our staff loves to hear how God changes lives!