

**09-222b Strengthening Stepfamilies:**  
**A Developmental Journey – 6 Hour Seminar**

Elizabeth Einstein, M.A./L.M.F.T.  
Friday, June 19, 2009 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Course Description**

In spite of the high remarriage divorce rates, stepfamilies can succeed—when professionals who work with them understand the realities of stepfamily living. Your awareness of how stepfamilies differ in development, structure and process will make you more effective in working with this complex family system and its inherent challenges. During this fast-paced and creative day, participants learn a “trail map” to guide families through their challenging developmental path. The course is based in family systems and developmental theory and consists of four learning components: The Stepfamily Journey—Not for Wimps; Teenage Trouble Spots for Stepkids; Bonds, Boundaries & Stumbling Blocks; and using Satir’s process Model of Change to work with stepfamilies. Each teaching block includes an experiential component to lock in the learning.

**Faculty: Elizabeth Einstein, M.A., L.M.F.T.** - is a Marriage and Family Therapist, author, workshop presenter and one of America’s leaders in the dynamics of stepfamily relationships. Her books and educational materials have been used throughout the country by single- parents, remarried couples and professionals who help stepfamilies resolve their challenges. Her newest book, *Strengthening Your Stepfamily* (Impact Publishers), was released in 2006. In March 2007, she co-authored *Active Parenting for Stepfamilies*, a video-based “teach out of the box” educational program with Dr. Michael Popkin. It won a national Telly Award for excellence. Ms. Einstein was the founding editor of *Stepfamily Bulletin* and served on the first Board of Directors of the Stepfamily Association of America, now the National Stepfamily Resource Center.

**Learning Objectives**

Participants will:

1. Explore the special challenges & dynamics of the remarried family from a theoretical perspective of systems and development to understand why this approach is most effective with stepfamilies.
2. Examine how a stepfamily differs developmentally & structurally.
3. Identify the normal stage and tasks of The Stepfamily Journey.
4. Gain insights into challenges of adolescents in the stepfamily.
5. Understand troublesome bonding & boundary issues that create destructive triangles.
6. Learn how Virginia Satir’s Process Model of Change can be used to reduce anxiety in the stepfamily system.
7. Develop awareness of clinical guidelines to working with these vulnerable families.
8. Learn creative teaching techniques to enhance any program you teach.

## References

- Einstein, Elizabeth & Albert. L. *Strengthening Your Stepfamily*. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishers 2005. This workbook explores the pitfalls and potential of stepfamily living. It examines the remarried couple relationship, roles, stepchildren's dilemmas, dealing with discipline and the normal developmental process of making a healthy stepfamily.
- Popkin, Michael & Einstein, Elizabeth. *Active Parenting for Stepfamilies*. Atlanta, GA: Active Parenting Publishers, Inc., 2007. This book is the basis for teaching the award-winning video-based parenting class to single parents and stepfamilies as you acknowledge, and teach them, about their differences and strengths.
- Papernow, Patricia. *Becoming A Stepfamily: Patterns of development in Remarried Families*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993. This author presents information that is crucial to the understanding of stepfamilies so that mental health professionals can better support their development.
- Pasley, Kay & Ihinger-Tallman, Marilyn. *Remarriage & Stepparenting: Current Research & Theory*. New York: Guilford Press. This book of research articles was born from the collective wisdom of nine scholars.
- Stahl, Philip M. *Parenting After Divorce: A Guide to Resolving Conflicts and Meeting Your Children's Needs*. Atascadero, CA: Impact Publishers 2000. This knowledgeable advice from an expert child custody evaluator provides the basis for understanding why a healthy divorce becomes essential for stepfamily living.
- Einstein, Elizabeth. *Success or Sabotage: Which Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Will the Stepfamily Create?* in *Understanding Stepfamilies: Implications for Assessment and Treatment*, Editor Debra K. Huntley, American Counseling Association, 1995.