

INVOLVING THE MOTHERS OF THE COUPLE:

Sometimes couples wish a special recognition to their mothers - such as giving them a rose each on the exit. They also may read something special, light the unity candles at the beginning - or at the time of the unity candles (lighting the other candle - see below). In some ceremonies with step-parents this may not be appropriate.

UNITY CANDLES - Mothers of the couple:

If the outer unity candles are first lit by the mother of the couple (when each is first escorted forward), it may be appropriate to add:

"The outer candles represent the light of your separate lives before today. It is appropriate that the mother of each partner each lit these candles as it is from these from which the light of your life first shown forth..."

ROSE CEREMONY - Roses for the mothers:

If adding the Rose ceremony to the ceremony, couples will often stop on their exit and hand the mother of each partner their Rose, whispering "I love you" before proceeding with their exit.

Involving children in the ceremony

If children are coming into the relationship, there are many different ways to involve the children in the ceremony itself. I believe it is very important that if children are coming into the civil union that they be recognised or participate in some aspect of the ceremony itself. Children often cannot express fears or doubts they have.

It is important to be very aware as to how much children will be an influence in the couple's life together. Involving children in the ceremony help them to transition to the new relationship they are now a part of.

MENTIONING THE CHILDREN:

I think it is much more important that children hear their names mentioned in the ceremony, than it is that they play any major part of the ceremony. Mentioning their name during the union assures that they are an important part of the occasion and have special status which guests and other family members attending do not. Children need to feel important to their parents.

If children are coming into the union, it is appropriate to mention in the ceremony that not only is a union being formed, but also a family - and then name each child. If a prayer is in the ceremony, each child's name will be stated in the prayer.

WHEN CHILDREN TEND TO FEEL "LEFT OUT" IN A CEREMONY:

Most couples are careful to take time to talk to the children about the union before the day and involve children in some aspect of the ceremony. Where children tend to be left out is immediately after the ceremony. The couple walk away and are crowded by "big people" - with the children left out of the immediate post ceremony celebration.

When children tend to feel most left out is immediately after the ceremony. Children tend to see the world as revolving around themselves - and the ceremony as also their day. They feel very left out if all the adults celebrate and they are ignored at the end. They also do not know what they are supposed to do after the ceremony ends.

This is easily avoided. The couple should simply take a moment to hug their child/children, thank them for helping in the ceremony, and then telling them they are free to play. This 30 seconds of recognition is very important.

NON CEREMONY ROLES FOR CHILDREN:

With many unions, a good way to involve children (except very young) is to give each their own one-time use camera and have them take pictures they think are important. It will be interesting to see what pictures they take and the photos could be theirs later when developed.

EXCESSIVE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE CEREMONY:

Generally, children will not share your sense of excitement about the ceremony. Rather, to them it seems more a party occasion. Usually, giving children major roles in the ceremony quickly becomes chores. It is generally best to give a child only one active role and also to be mentioned in the ceremony, rather than to actively involve a child at many different points throughout the ceremony.

With teenagers, some care should be taken not to give them roles they may feel silly doing. Care should be given in asking a teenager to state agreement with the union - as the child may not really feel fully comfortable with the union, yet does not want to say so.

Finally, remember that while your children and children coming into a union are very important to consider, the ceremony foremost is for the couple.

ADVISE ME OF THE CHILD/CHILDREN'S NAMES:

Simply write the name(s) in the margin of the ceremony and I will mention their names at the appropriate place.

PARTICIPATION IN THE CEREMONY:

For younger children, usually the simple task of holding the rings or bouquet is enough to accomplish a sense of participation. For teenagers, the role may be as simple as standing up with the couple, playing the CD or tape of music, or even just taking pictures of the ceremony.

VOWS FOR CHILDREN:

Occasionally, a couple will have the children asked, "*Do you accept this family and the union?*" Care should be taken in this decision, as sometimes the child is not completely comfortable with the union.

THE ROSE CEREMONY:

If a couple is adding the "Rose Ceremony ", often they will have a rose for each of the children. After exchanging roses, the couple will then give each child a rose, a hug, and whisper "I love you."

Add to the Rose Ceremony *"Not only are _____ and _____ creating a union today, but they also are forming a family with (child/children's name). Just as it is appropriate for _____ and _____ to declare their love for each other in the gift of a rose, they also wish to show you (to the children) how much they love you with the gift of a rose."*

GIFT FOR THE CHILDREN AFTER THE EXCHANGE OF RINGS:

Typically, couples give children a gift right after they exchange their own rings and vows - usually a necklace or ring - along with a hug and an "I love you."

UNITY CANDLES:

Children tend to be fascinated with candles and involving them in the Unity Candles is an excellent involvement means. This can be done many ways. Usually, the couple light small candles for the children - and then all light the center candle together. While doing so, I will point out that the center candle not only represents the union, but also the light and unity of the new family.

INVOLVING GUESTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS**Asking for acceptance by guests and family members:**

(Some couples wish to involve guests and family members in an active and positive sense in the ceremony itself. This is one popular way and text. You may write your own or alter the wording. The officiant steps to the side and addresses those in attendance.)

"As the family and friends of _____ and _____, you are here to express your love, hope and joy for this occasion. If you truly love _____ and _____, you will never do anything to hinder their union, never speak against either person, and support the union through the good times and the hard times. Will you accept and support this union? If so, answer "WE WILL".

New Parent's vow to children:

If the marriage ceremony involves minor children coming into the family, sometimes the new parent will state a vow also the child(ren). He/she will address the child(ren) by name and then state a short vow accepting the child(ren) as their own and making a commitment to them. A new parent's vow to the children is NOT required and you may change the wording if you decide to make such a vow.)

"(State child(ren) name(s), " _____, I promise to accept and love you as my own child(ren) and to protect and love you all of my life. I promise to do my best to guide and support you - and to respect you enough to allow you to see the world through your own eyes."

Involving others in ceremony itself:

Having family members and friends participate in the ceremony adds much to personalise the ceremony and bring it to life. You are welcome to have friends or family member step forward for any reading, a poem, to read a bible verse or say a prayer or blessing.

Selecting other materials:

You are invited to add any materials to the ceremony. This may be a favorite poem, something you have written yourself, or a reading you wish to add. The ceremonies suggest locations for additional materials. You also may add a special song during the ceremony as well.
