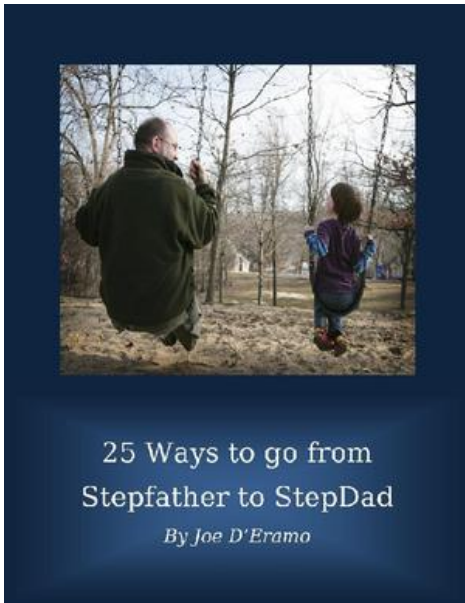


Joe D'Eramo goes from stepfather to stepdad in new book

Photos Zoom

By Emily Clark
[Wicked Local Plymouth](#)
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PLYMOUTH — Well, this was a little awkward. Joe D'Eramo knew a thing or two about marketing, business and how to win over Karin. But knowing what to do with her kids? Ah, that was another matter.

He quickly learned that, not only do kids not come without manuals, stepkids come without manuals and warnings and with somebody else's genes. It's not like he could rely on DNA here, or instinct or "Gee-I-think-my-own-dad-did-it-that-way," because his own dad didn't get a divorce.

It was unfamiliar territory where what not to do suddenly became as important as what to do. But, um, ...what to do?

For instance, the kids were 6 and 8. So should he make sure they follow certain rules in the house, make up new rules, forget rules and just let mom be The Heavy (thereby becoming the Good Guy and Friend)? Should he talk a lot to fill those awkward silences, let the awkward

Courtesy/J. D'Eramo

In *25 Ways to Go from Stepfather to Stepdad*, Joe D'Eramo shares his experience helping to raise his wife's children.



silences get so pregnant they pop, or just pretend like nothing out of the ordinary was happening? Clearly, these kids weren't dumb. They knew mom had met someone important, because D'Eramo was showing up all over the place. There was no point in pretending his inclusion in everything from baseball to dinner was no big deal. So, what to do?

D'Eramo was so flummoxed, he just came clean.

"I haven't been down this road before, and you haven't either, so let's help each other," he told the kids.

The honest approach worked, because kids can always tell when you're not being real with them. In time, D'Eramo learned to defer to his wife on matters where the kids were concerned. He shouldered the role of lead advisor and enforced her directives, like the kids doing their homework as soon as they got home from school.

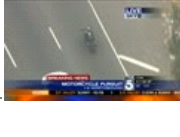
It's just one jewel of wisdom D'Eramo offers stepfathers in his new book, *25 Ways to go from Stepfather to Stepdad*. His odyssey involved plenty of missteps and successes, and he realized the information could help others in his position – so, he wrote a book about it.

"Basically, a lot of stepfathers fall into the trap of trying to be their (children's) buddy," D'Eramo added. "During the dating phase, that's OK. But day-to-day, you have to be an authority figure while trying not to sacrifice the relationship."

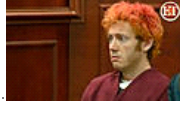
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