

“When I got married, the dream I had of having a big family came true in a way I’d never imagined”

Victoria Merrick, 54, is married and has four stepchildren, aged 21 to 16. She lives in Lincolnshire and runs a craft workshop business called Wicked Stepmother’s World (wickedstepmothersworld.co.uk).

“I’d often dreamt of having a big family with six children, but somewhere along the line, work seemed to get in the way. I’d moved from Sydney to London and was happy living the life of a professional single woman, working as a restaurant consultant in the City. But there were times when I did want to settle down.

So, when I met Shaun at a party, fell in love with him and discovered he had four children, I didn’t feel daunted.

We dated for six months before I met the children – we both wanted to be sure of our relationship first. Shaun had been separated for a year when we met and the children shared their time between him and their mother. I’ll never forget that first

meeting. The twins were five and the girls were eight and nine, and I went to stay at Shaun’s house for the weekend. When I arrived, the two eldest were there to greet me with nervous

smiles and presents – the youngest two were tucked up in bed. They were so welcoming that my own nerves diminished and, over the next couple of days, they introduced me to their life. We had a great time, walking the dogs and playing games. I was very lucky that they accepted me from the beginning.

It was only when Shaun and I got married (with their blessing) that my role changed. I understood that the children’s lives were of the utmost importance and that I would have to surrender parts of my old life to meet their individual needs. I was nervous – after all, nothing can prepare you for instant family life.

I moved from London to Lincolnshire, and set up my own business because the hours I worked before weren’t conducive to my new situation. My life changed completely and, although it was hard and difficult at times, I loved it and the children have brought me a great deal of joy.

I don’t regret for a moment leaving behind my single lifestyle. Shaun has made me the happiest I’ve ever been and I’ve learnt so much from his children that I’m a much more rounded person now. Having the big family I’d hoped for came true in a way I never thought it would.”

Victoria’s tip for stepmothers: Be sure of your relationship before getting involved with the children, and see your role as a friend and mentor. >>

