



WHY STEPFAMILY LIFE TAKES OVER YOUR HEAD

And the one shift that starts to change it





Hello

I'm so glad you requested the private podcast and journaling sheet.

Something in you has recognised that you needed a little extra support - and it's courageous to ask for it.

A lot of women in a stepmum role spend a long time minimising what they're carrying, telling themselves it could be worse, that they just need to push through, that feeling this way means something is wrong with them.

It doesn't.

And I hope that by the time you've listened to the episode and spent a little time with these pages, you'll feel that more clearly.

I've worked with a lot of stepmums, in one-to-one sessions, in workshops, through the podcast, and the thing that strikes me every single time is how much women are carrying, and how rarely they've had a space to put it down, even briefly, and just look at it honestly.

That's what this is for.

This journaling sheet goes alongside the private podcast episode 'Why Stepfamily Life Takes Over Your Head, And the One Shift That Starts to Change It.' If you haven't listened yet, start there and come back to these pages afterwards. The episode does the emotional heavy lifting. This is where you make it yours.

There are no right or wrong answers here. No performance required. Just some honest questions, a little space to write, and, I hope, the beginning of something shifting.

Take your time with it,

With my best wishes,

Katie

Katie South
Founder, Stepmum Space

What You're Feeling Is Normal

There are some things that come up over and over with the women I work with in coaching and workshops, and in messages that land in my inbox.

I want to share them here - see whether any resonate with you.

You feel like a guest in your own home.

- On certain days, in certain moments, something shifts. You become more careful, more measured.
- You hold back things you'd normally say.
- You adjust how you move through your own space.
- On your best behaviour.
- In your own home.

Your head doesn't switch off.

- You replay conversations long after they've finished.
- You anticipate what might happen, you monitor, you track.
- There's a low-level hum of vigilance that doesn't really go away.

And the exhausting part isn't just the thinking, it's that all that thinking doesn't actually help

You feel resentment. And then guilt about the resentment.

- The resentment builds slowly, toward the situation, the ex, your partner, sometimes the stepchildren.
- And the moment it arrives, the guilt kicks in.
- You tell yourself you shouldn't feel that way. So you push it down. It comes back. You push it down again.

"That's the guilt spiral. Feel the feeling. Judge yourself for the feeling. Push it down. It comes back. Judge yourself again. Round and round. You're not just dealing with the original feeling, you're dealing with it and hating yourself for having it. That's double the weight."

"Both things can be true. You can love your partner completely and resent the situation you're in. You can care about the children and sometimes wish your life looked different. You can be a good person, AND have all of these feelings. None of it makes you a bad person. It makes you someone carrying a lot, in a role that came with almost no preparation and very little acknowledgement."

Why It Happens

These patterns aren't random. They're highly predictable because of the position you occupy inside the stepfamily system.

You are deeply invested in the family but have limited control over how it runs.

Decisions get made without you.

Plans change.

Someone else's choices land in your life and you're expected to absorb them.

And because you care, you try.

You monitor the atmosphere.

You manage the emotions in the room.

You adjust yourself: what you say, how you behave, even where you sit on the sofa.

That level of monitoring costs you.

Over time your nervous system starts responding before things have even happened.

The message arrives and your stomach drops before you've read it. The handover comes and you're already braced.

This is not a personality flaw.

It's a completely predictable response to the position you're in. Which means the question changes.

It stops being: what is wrong with me?

And starts being: what am I carrying that isn't mine to carry?

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You can be a good person, AND have all of these feelings.

None of it makes you a bad person. It makes you someone carrying a lot, in a role that came with almost no preparation and very little acknowledgement."

The One Shift – How It Actually Works

This is not about deciding not to feel things. You cannot think your way out of a stomach drop when the ex's name appears on his phone. The feeling arrives... you don't stop that. What changes is what you do with it once it's there.

Step One - Notice and Name

Don't analyse it. Don't solve it. Just name what's happening.

- "Something in me just reacted."
- "My chest just tightened."
- "I felt that drop in my stomach."

Naming it creates distance between you and the feeling.

You go from being inside the reaction to being someone who noticed it.

That distance is where your choice lives.

Step Two - Ground Yourself

Before you reply, react, or start managing, come back into your body for thirty seconds.

- Feet on the floor.
- What can I feel right now?
- Am I holding my breath?

Your nervous system fires before your brain catches up.

Acting from that state means acting from your most reactive self.

Thirty seconds gives you access to the steadier version.

Then, from that steadier place, ask:

"Is this mine to carry... or mine to notice?"

Is This Mine To Carry Or Mine To Notice?

Maybe the answer is yes, this is mine to act on. Okay. You can do that, from a steadier place.

Or maybe: this is the system doing what the system does.

This is someone else's feeling that landed near me. I can put it back down.

Either way, you made a choice. Instead of the feeling making the choice for you.

In practice — the message from the ex

Old pattern:

1. Message arrives.
2. Stomach drops.
3. Brain kicks in — what does this mean, what should I do, how do I manage this.
4. You carry it through your afternoon, through dinner, into the evening.

The shift:

1. Message arrives.
2. Stomach drops. You notice and name it, "I just felt that".
3. Feet on the floor. Breath.
4. Then: is this mine? Is sorting this my job right now?
5. Or can I acknowledge it and put it back down until there's an actual decision to make?

The message came in. You felt it. You didn't let it run your evening.

Your Reflections

There 's no right or wrong here - just be honest with yourself.

Think of something you've been carrying recently.

When you ask "is this mine to carry?" - what comes up?

Next time something lands, what would it look like to name it and ground before you do anything else?

What would need to be different for you to do that?

Your Reflections

What's one feeling you've been telling yourself you shouldn't have?

What would it mean to let it be there — without the guilt on top of it?

What are you taking away from this private podcast and journaling sheet that you want to remember or change?

Ready To Go Further?

If this has been helpful and you're ready to go further, I'd love to tell you about the Stepnum Reset.

It's two sessions, live and online, with me and a small group of women.

We work through your values - what actually matters to you, and where stepfamily life has been pulling you away from it.

We look at what you actually need, not what you think you should need.

And we get clear on what a more sustainable happier version of a life in line with your values and what you need looks like.

You'll spend time with me and other Stepnums in a safe, supportive, judgement free space.

You'll leave with a personalised Stepnum Reset Playbook — something written, and bespoke to you and your situation, that you can come back to.

"Most women say the most powerful part isn't just the content.
It's the first session. The moment someone else says something... and the room goes quiet.
Because everyone recognised it.
That moment, of not being alone in it, that's what shifts first.
And the connection doesn't end when the workshop does."

*Find out more and book your place: www.stepnumspace.com/stepnumreset
Or message me directly at katie@stepnumspace.com — I read everything.*

*I hope you've found this helpful,
With my best wishes, Katie*