

SPEECH OF MS RAHAYU MOHAMAD, PPIS PRESIDENT

PPIS VS STEPFAMILY DAY 2017

SATURDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2017, 10.50AM AT SENTOSA

Assalamu'alaikum Wr Wb

Minister for Communications and Information, Minister-In-Charge of Cyber Security and Minister-In-Charge of Muslim Affairs, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim,

Colleagues from the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and Ministry of Communications and Information

PPIS Chief Executive Officer, Mr Mohd Ali Bin Mahmood,

PPIS Board Members, Staff of Vista Sakinah and all the stepfamilies present today,

A good morning to all,

Significance of Stepfamily Day

1. To our partners, stakeholders and families, thank you for joining us today as we celebrate a unique event called the Stepfamily Day.
2. To most of us, this might seem rather unheard of, to be celebrating such an event. In the United States, it has been 20 years since the National Stepfamily Day movement was started by Christy Tusing-Borgeld. This was part of her aim in creating more awareness as well as garnering love and support for successful stepfamily living.

3. With a similar hope in Singapore for stepfamilies to grow in resilience within the local communities, PPIS Vista Sakinah is joining in this celebration as a continued commitment to stepfamilies. The National Stepfamily Day is a day to celebrate and remind that the love of a family is life's greatest blessing. PPIS looks forward to growing awareness for the National Stepfamily Day as an occasion to commemorate, give recognition to stepfamilies and remind them to cherish their time together.

Growing significance of stepfamilies in our community

4. We want to give our warm welcome to all the stepfamilies present for joining us on this special day.

5. Stepfamilies are significant amongst us. Chances are, if we are not in a stepfamily, we would know of someone who is; perhaps relatives, friends, colleagues, schoolmates and neighbours who may be remarrying or living with a stepfamily. It is also not unusual for us to know those who are second-generation or third generation stepfamilies where they have parents or grandparents who remarried.

6. Clearly, stepfamilies have been around and are here to stay. Stepfamilies - just like other families - will continue to be a part of our community. Striving to live as productive members within the same living spaces, sending their children to school to excel in their studies, working hard to earn a living for the family, contributing to the local community in various ways and being present in the wider online virtual world as well.

Unique journeys of stepfamilies

7. Despite stepfamilies' obvious presence, their experiences still remain relatively unknown to us. The unique and crucial challenges in adapting to living in a stepfamily may not be as widely understood by the larger society. Stepfamilies face different needs and challenges compared to families formed through first-time marriages. Couples do not enjoy an adjustment period that allows them to adapt to the changes gradually and they usually take up multiple roles immediately.

8. The problems that stepfamilies encounter range from facing societal pressures of conforming to typical family norms, to navigating through the step-parenting challenges, managing couple differences and ex-spouse disputes, to figuring out how to manage the many battles between stepsiblings. Forging a good relationship with new members in your stepfamily is not immediate and it takes time to learn, adapt, compromise and trust your new family members.

9. This is also a greater reason why a celebration of milestones, a validation of your efforts and gathering together – like today - is very important. As a community, let us appreciate the uniqueness of stepfamilies and show compassion and care for them. All of us play a role in helping families grow and thrive. Stepfamilies, you are not alone.

PPIS' commitment to families

10. PPIS has always believed in the importance of having a strong family unit. We believe in strengthening different family types through various support services, so that each family unit can continue being strong building blocks of our nation. It is important that couples prepare for the remarriage and for their new roles as stepparents so that children are given the nurturing spaces to develop and eventually navigate through their own lives.

11. With PPIS Vista Sakinah, we remain committed in providing remarriage preparation programmes, consultation services, children support workshops as well as organizing enrichment programmes and meaningful events such as this Stepfamily Day. This is by no means enough, because more can be done in creating awareness and understanding towards stepfamilies.

12. As we celebrate Stepfamily Day today, we want to invite stepfamilies to also remember the importance of spending time and caring for one another. Make time for each other. Send an affirmation to each family member. Tell them how you appreciate moments like these. When was the last time we sent our hugs and sweet encouragement to our family members? Continue to support each member and never stop trying to be kind. Turn to another stepfamily and remind them to keep going. To all other stepfamilies who could not join us today, remember them in your prayers.

13. Traversing our life paths is never about merely reaching a destination or immediate success. It is about the stock taking of many small steps, tripping over and getting back up, attempting to take leaps of faith and experimenting strategies, meandering through ups and downs of successes and learning lessons.

Reflections are important and pledging our commitment to make it work is necessary. This odyssey of life – especially stepfamily life - can never be undertaken alone.

14. In line with today's celebration, let's continue to strive together as a community and hustle hard. Happy Stepfamily Day!