

**Q&A with  
IZZY ROSE,  
Author of  
THE PACKAGE DEAL  
(May 2009; Three Rivers Press)**

**Q: Statistics tell us that there are more than 15 million stepmothers in the country today, yet many of them, you have discovered, feel isolated and alone. Why do you think this is?**

*IR: I think stepmothers often feel isolated and alone because stepparenting isn't a mainstream discussion. But that's changing. And quickly. There are just too many of us now to keep quiet. Plus, I'm part of a new generation of stepmoms who want to talk, talk, talk. We talk about everything else—sex, our skin, our careers—so we're not suddenly going to be quiet about this huge change in our lives but rather reach out to one another, sharing our stories and developing much-needed camaraderie.*

**Q: How would you like to change the image of the modern-day stepmom?**

*IR: Well, first of all I'd like our culture to ditch the wicked stereotype. It's just not accurate. Signing up to help raise another woman's kids isn't what I'd call "wicked"—it's pretty selfless work. And where the stereotype likes to characterize us as driving a wedge in a family, I disagree. I said "I DO" to joining a family that existed long before I came along. On a good day, I'm just trying to fit in!*

**Q: Will your book appeal to women who aren't stepmothers?**

*IR: Absolutely. While The Package Deal is about my adventure as a new stepmother, at its heart, it's a story about modern-day marriage, the negotiating of family and career, the necessity of friendships, the constant search for identity, and the many ways to make a home.*

**Q: What is your number one piece of advice for soon-to-be instant moms?**

*IR: I have three:*

- 1. Alcohol in moderation*
- 2. A sense of humor*
- 3. Lots of therapy (with you and your man, alone, and maybe with the kids, although you might want to wait on the whole family combo deal until they unpack).*

**Q: Is it true that the mommy club is often closed to non-bio mothers? Why is this?**

*IR: I don't know that it truly is closed, but it sure feels that way. I've sensed a prevalent attitude from the mommy club that stepmothers aren't "real" mothers. It's almost like because we didn't shoot a kid out of our birth canals, we don't get to have the same bragging rights as the bio-moms. And while it is true that the kids in our homes aren't biologically ours, they're still our kids in a way, and we're playing a mothering role. I*

wish we could all recognize each other as mamas in our own right who are trying, as best we can, to build solid families.

**Q: Have your boys ever said to you, *You can't tell me what to do. You're NOT my mother!* And what did you say?**

*IR: Thankfully, they haven't said this (yet), but should the occasion arise, I will simply tell them, "You're right. I'm not your mother. And this does not change the fact that you still have to unload the dishwasher."*

**Q: You've included a mix of irreverent and poignant "STEPMOM RULES" throughout the book. Where did these come from?**

*IR: Who knows where this crackerjack wisdom came from! It wasn't until I started writing the book that they popped into my head. For example, when I wrote about the boys first moving in and how I automatically wanted to treat them like party guests by providing them with kid-friendly refreshments and clean hand towels, I formulated Rule Number Two: Don't Act Like a Hostess, Act Like a Mother. Because many of us become instant mothers without much, if any, prior advice or instruction, I thought it would be fun to give readers my version of "the rules."*

**Q: How did you deal with the pressure to feel love for these kids at first sight?**

*IR: I write about the L-word a lot in the book and how I didn't immediately feel love for the boys. And I felt pretty crummy about this admission until I asked myself, Why would love be instant? Just because you adore the man doesn't mean you will feel the same way about his kids. Love takes time. Of course, I hoped that I would eventually fall for them and they me.*

**Q: How has being a stepkid prepared you for the stepmother role?**

*IR: Because I grew up in a stepfamily, I wasn't scared off by the possibility that I'd eventually create one of my own. It's familiar territory and I know that a stepfamily can work. On the other hand, because I'd never had kids of my own, I was pretty spooked by the stepmom (emphasis on mom) thing. I had no parenting credentials. The only advantage I had going into the arrangement was that I already spoke the blended family language. I often get what the boys are going through because I've been there. My similar upbringing has afforded me compassion and patience . . . on most days.*

**Q: *The Package Deal* is an extension of your blog, [www.stepmothersmilk.com](http://www.stepmothersmilk.com). What inspired you to start the blog?**

*IR: When I first became a stepmom, I went looking for a support group—like a Stepmothers Anonymous. When I couldn't find anything with the right attitude, I started my own. In June of 2007, I launched [www.stepmothersmilk.com](http://www.stepmothersmilk.com), an online community that I hoped would connect me to other stepmoms who, like me, were searching for support and advice. The site took off and within months, stepmothers from all over the*

*country were asking me for help. I remember thinking, Hold on, ladies, I'm no expert. I'm just living it day to day.*

**Q: What have you learned from other stepmoms around the country?**

*IR: We all have different stories to tell, but we're struggling with the same questions: What is my role? What are the rules? How close can I get to this kid? How close do I want to get? And how (pray tell) am I supposed to behave around the ex-wife?*

**Q: In your opinion, what is the proper etiquette in dealing with your husband's ex-wife?**

*IR: That's another book for another day. I'm still working on a happy ending.*

**Q: What do you hope to get across to other stepmoms by writing this book?**

*IR: I hope to create a dialogue. By putting my imperfect self out there, I hope to give other stepmoms the courage to creep out of the shadows and share their individual stories. When we connect, we no longer feel alone. And when we can laugh at ourselves and with one another, we avoid crazy-lady insanity. I, of course, also hope to acquire some new take-home advice for myself.*