



FIG 2-5 Fathers who assume care of their children may feel more comfortable and successful in their parenting role.

Parenting in Reconstituted Families

In the United States, many of the children living in homes where parents have divorced will experience another major change in their lives, such as the addition of a stepparent or new siblings (Kaakinen, Gedaly-Duff, and Hanson, 2009). The entry of a stepparent into a ready-made family requires adjustments for all family members. Some obstacles to the role adjustments and family problem solving include disruption of previous lifestyles and interaction patterns, complexity in the formation of new ones, and lack of social supports. Despite these problems, most children from divorced families want to live in a two-parent home.

Cooperative parenting relationships can allow more time for each set of parents to be alone to establish their own relationship with the children. Under ideal circumstances, power conflicts between the two households can be reduced, and tension and anxiety can be lessened for all family members. In addition, the children's self-esteem can be increased, and there is a greater likelihood of continued contact with grandparents. Flexibility, mutual support, and open communication are critical in successful relationships in stepfamilies and stepparenting situations (Fig. 2-6).