



Education

Single Parenting

A single parent is a parent who raises a child without another parent in the same household. Single parenthood may be a result of loss, such as divorce or the death of a spouse, or by choice, such as adoption or artificial insemination.

Being a single parent is not easy. The following suggestions may help your family:

1. **Find stable places for child care and home.** Check out child care options carefully before you choose one. Try to avoid changing caregivers and making too many other major changes too close together.
2. **Create a daily routine and try to stick to it 7 days a week.** It helps to wake up and go to bed at about the same time every day and to eat meals together on a regular schedule. It also helps to pick your child up from child care at an expected time.
3. **Plan regular visits with the other parent if possible.** Staying in contact with the other parent, both by phone and by visiting in person, is usually in your child's best interest. Your child will do better if he knows that both parents love him.
4. **Discipline consistently.** Set limits for acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Notice good behavior and praise your child. Use methods such as time outs or job grounding when children misbehave. Do not bribe your child or try to buy the child's affection.
5. **Don't put your child in the middle.** If you are raising your child in 2 different homes, don't ask your child to carry messages between parents. Don't ask the child to give you information about the other parent, or to choose sides in adult battles.
6. **Answer questions about the other parent briefly.** Answer only the questions that are asked. If you have negative feelings about the other parent, talk them over with another adult, not your child.
7. **Spend time with your child each day.** Try to spend some quality time with each child daily. Spending hours with your children watching TV is not quality time. Take the time to sit down with each of them and talk about the day or their problems. This can be calming and reassuring for both parent and child.
8. **Make and keep family traditions.**
9. **Set up a good support system.** This is important for both the parent and child. It may include extended family, a consistent play group, neighbors, friends, or parenting groups. Organizations such as Big Brothers or Big Sisters can help provide another adult in your child's life. Raising children is difficult, and you need a good backup when you are frustrated or exhausted.
10. **Volunteer to participate in activities at your child's school.** This helps you to meet other parents and have something to talk about with your child. Also talk with your child's teachers or school counselors about your situation. They can help watch for problems and support your child.
11. **Develop a social life separate from your child.** This could include an exercise group, book club, or church group. These are also good sources for support.
12. **Consider your situation when dating.** Dating can present different challenges, depending on the age of your child. At first, it may be easier on your child for you to meet your date away from home. Young children tend to attach easily to adults who spend time with them. Older children can feel jealous or threatened by someone with whom they must share their parent's time and space.
13. **Seek professional help if serious problems develop.** Feelings of grief or loss are common after divorce or death of one parent. Individual or family counseling can provide support for both the children and adults.
14. **Explain your money problems.** If the status of the family changes from a two-parent home to a single-parent home, finances are often affected. You may have to explain to your children that buying "extras" and some activities have to be limited. However, treat your child like a child. Your child should not be concerned with adult problems. Your child is not your best support for personal problems. It might be a good idea to talk to a financial planner or accountant for help.

Where can I get help?

Organizations and books are good resources.

Organizations

Parents Without Partners International, Inc.
1650 South Dixie Hwy., Suite 510
Boca Raton, FL 33432 (561) 391-8833

SingleMOTHER P.O. Box 68 Midland, NC 28107 <http://www.singlemothers.org> (704) 888-5437

Single and Custodial Father's Network, Inc. <http://scfn.org>

Books

In Praise of Single Parents: Mothers and Fathers Embracing the Challenge; by Shoshana Alexander; Houghton Mifflin, 1994

Mom's House, Dad's House: A Complete Guide for Parents Who Are Separated, Divorced, or Remarried; by Isolina Ricci; Simon and Schuster, 1997

The Single Parent Family: Living Happily in a Changing World; by Marge Kennedy and Janet Spencer King; Crown Publishers, 1994

Single Parents by Choice: A Growing Trend in Family Life; by Naomi Miller, Insight Books, 1992

The Ultimate Survival Guide for the Single Father (e-book); by Thomas Herner; Harbinger Press, 2002

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