

SINGLE PARENTING

Becoming The Best Parent For Your Child!

SELECTED TIPS - 65 PAGES!

Single Parenting



65 Pages!

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The Transition And New Circumstance

"The transition and new circumstance - journeying down the path of the single parent

You are also growing and changing throughout this process. You will realize it, your kids will know and see it, as will others. This is another change you and everyone around you have to deal with as well, on top of everything else.

You might also feel anxious, lonely, and angry or evoke these emotions in your child/family. Again this is quite normal and natural behavior.

"Seeing things from the child's point of view

This is not only all about you either. Try and see things through the eyes of your child sometime and whole new worlds of understanding and possibilities will open for you.

"A new path and survival plan for single parents - rewards and challenges

We have spoken a lot in theory about what happens to you when faced with these situations. Now we get to the more practical WHAT DO I DO NOW, NEXT, IN MY CASE TYPE OF QUESTIONS?

"SETTLING IN AS INDIVIDUALS AND A NEW FAMILY UNIT

Challenges:

There are so many, that it is probably possible to write one whole book on this topic alone. We are opting to take a little less 'negative' approach to this. Rather focusing on the process and outcome than the surrounding, complexities and factors, uphill battles and obstacles some and all of us might specifically face. Here are some examples:

Getting everything done, on time, being where you need to be, do what you have to do and stay sane through it all.

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Finding the financial means (food, boarding/housing, transportation, food, clothing and providing necessities of life, safe place to stay, live and play) Baby-sitting and daycare, employment and income, support and other family-related challenges.

Emotionally supporting your kids, while and despite your world crumbling before your eyes. Being and providing the stability although you do not feel you can or have it in you.

Coping with loss and change and the new roles and responsibilities of being a sole custodian and major care-giver, provider and head of the family.

Rewards: Life does go on! You can do it!

Together with your kids you are embarking on reclaiming and building your life together. You are embracing your future with a positive attitude, hope and a plan of action.

Renewed connection, deepening love and caring relationship with your kids.

Organizing

Challenges: Tension, stress, harsh words, conflict, fights, arguments, quality of family life together, synergy, emotions that are rampant and patience wearing thin, upset at the smallest little thing. Lack of focus and direction

Rewards: How you as a family can bond together and work through things, caring and supporting each other, even when the going gets tough, making the bonds and connections even stronger than before. Talking about things that are hard and how you are coping can be an eye-opener, sharing perspectives and solutions very empowering!
Providing stability, order, schedule, routine and a firm foundation amidst uncertainty is a huge responsibility BUT also an immense opportunity to reconnect with each other.

Getting, staying and keeping everyone else on track and organized, fed, clothed, taken care of, on time, where they need to be, when they need to be, in clean clothes and staying sane in the process can be quite the challenge for any single parent. The reward is that it provides you with the opportunity to inspire, engage and mobilize your kids into and in your family unit. They take part in building and shaping their own happiness, family life and future. That is the great reward. A new start and beginning, possibilities and potential. Keep focusing on the positive as opposed to dwelling in and upon the past. It is of extreme importance that anyone and everyone stay connected, have a voice, speak up, communicate clearly and check in with each other regularly. This is the perfect opportunity to help starting the healing process, strengthening the bonds and connections between parents and kids, individually and collectively as a family unit.

You are the authority and disciplinarian in the family unit. Demand and earn respect, trust and honesty. Be fair, open and consistent. Do not over-react and set some rules that you all can live with in this new situation. Organizing and customizing your lives the way you want it. Who gets to do what, when? Which sports and after-school activities, weekends and hobbies and more can be discussed and decided together. The sole parent, guardian and champion of course has the final say and input.

Do everything in your power to foster your children's uniqueness and personality. Everyone has something that makes them unique NEVER FORGET THAT. Encourage their self-sufficiency

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and independence. Let them do chores around the house, take control of their lives and stop acting like victims, try and play guilt-games or manipulate, disobey, rebel or act out. Teach them to respect you, each other and others at all times.

How does your family (new) handle conflict, stress and crisis?

Are there verbal arguments in the household?

Can you still love and care for each other, despite the difficulty and or words that you are having? How do you stay grounded and connected with each other?

Are there opportunities for the family and you and the kids, one-on-one to discuss how they feel, what they want, concerns, disagreements?

New Family Unit

Challenges and rewards: letting go of the old and embracing the new, also involved moving beyond the past, breaking ties and moving on. As mentioned earlier, this causes a lot of stress and anxiety (especially for the kids). It is journeying into the unknown, uncertain and un-chartered waters and territory.

As a member of this new family situation and context, unit, everyone has a role to play and a contribution to make. Whether you are in an only child or multiple children situation, you will feel the weight of this one on your shoulder. These children's lives are entrusted and loaned to you to champion, enable, empower and foster. You are all they've got. You are the one left behind. Some children cope with changes, loss and upheaval better than others. **NO TWO KIDS ARE THE SAME.**

Dealing with fights, rebellious behavior, bad grades, even isolation and detachment, can be hard at times - especially if they are your own children. You can try and compensate for the missing parent but never replace or bad mouth. Teach and model respect, forgiveness and consideration, no matter how tough the situation. They are now looking to you for guidelines and direction.

If you have an only child, you might see this as your ONE opportunity to get things right. Do not put too much pressure and expectation on either of you. Enjoy and foster, grow your relationship, bond and connection.

Being over-protective is the real danger here. Attachment and preoccupation is quite common as kids become the core of our being and existence. They are the reason we live. Sometimes we as the single parent can take this too far and need to step back somewhat to allow our kids to live their lives, explore and define who they are, outside of us and the family unit.

THESE ARE THE FIVE “S” approaches to dealing with an only child:

Self-definition - who are you, where do you fit in and you are not the ONLY person in this household or the world that matters. Self-assured and important, self-absorbed and selfish need

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not be tolerated. Appreciation and consideration of others needs to be taught at home, in the family, even and especially if there is an only child in the unit.

Socialization - interacting with others, beside yourself is critical, especially kids their own age, friends and other neighborhood adults and families can also help. It is important for them to be and act their age!

Age - Appropriate Actions

Always remember that your child did not ask to be placed in this situation. Whether you have babies, teenagers or young adults in the house (early, mid or late adolescence) and/or kids who would want to assert their independence and use this as an opportunity to move out on their own, there are considerations, challenges and rewards. IT DOES NOT ALL HAVE TO BE BAD!

Uncertainty, conflict and opposition can be very real as kids start to become more and more self-sufficient and independent. It can be hard to allow this and not be over-protective, BUT YOU HAVE TO LET GO.

As the single parent you are the one helping your child/children shape who they are, becoming and will be. Their character and characteristics will begin defining itself, both physically and socially . Values, habits and wants change over time as they become more independent. This can both make a parent smile and frown with instant worry. You might be asking yourself if your child (and you) are ready for the challenges of life and the real world outside the family.

While this growing apart and separating happens over time, it can be stressful for both parties and cause discomfort even confrontation and conflict as these 'wills' collide.

Yet, it does not all have to be an on-going battle, there are lots that you can do to foster independence and get along living under one roof.

Energy, attitude and behavior are often the first tell-tale signs that something is different and changing. Negativity, rebellion and even experimentation that does not always meet with your approval might be happening.

Values, risks and observation are the single parent's arsenal for coping with this. Accountability and consequences, discipline and sensitivity, understanding and a firm, consistent stance can be life-savers as well. In everything try to work towards keeping and fostering that positive bond and connection that you share and always provide that soft spot to fall and come home to for them.

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Being considerate of you and siblings, as well as family life in general are all important. You have to teach your kids that they are part of the family and have a role to play, contributions to make, rules to respect.

School Society And Family

Single parenting also means you will not be dealing exclusively with the members of your immediate nuclear family, but also the social, societal and family networks and contexts around you.

As parents, we can easily push too hard, or not hard enough. Finding the right balance between encouragement and performance-driven motivation is important. You can foster a love for learning, reading and inquiry right in your home. Taking the time to do some homework, show interest in schoolwork, after-school activities and the like, will all help you rise to the challenge. Embrace both challenge and reward gladly and proudly.

Recognition, praise, reward, expectations all work together in a dynamic way. Celebrating achievement is important and even when failure occurs, kids need to know that they are still accepted and loved and that if they need help, they can ask and will get it! You have to be there for your kids. Not just obsess about your own competence and the achievements of your kids. There are more to kids than their grades! The role and importance of learning, self-discovery and exploration has to be fostered in the home as well. This role can not just be abdicated to the school. As a single parent you have to take interest in the schooling and development of your child. Read together, go to the library, work on projects, ask and support any outdoor, sports or extra-curricular activity your kids partake in. Support, love and care, show interest and develop a good partnership with the educators and role-models in your kid's/children's' lives.

Learning asks for brave steps and curiosity. You need to be able to make mistakes, look foolish, ask question without feeling dumb, stupid or left out, slow, ignorant. Kids need to know that they matter and that it is not the grades that you love! BUT THAT IT IS THEM! And that you want them to succeed. Performance pressure can be a very negative and de-motivating force for children. Try and make learning fun and reward good performance (within bounds and in moderation of course!).

Positive encouragement is always good. Let your child/children know:

It is OK NOT to know something, everything. We all have to start somewhere and can not possibly have all the knowledge in the world!

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Effort is good and keeping on trying encouraged (good for you, you tried, now do it again, let us see if you can do it)

No-one wants to feel 'stupid' in any way, admire their willingness to abandon, risk and ask!

Encourage inquiry. Be and keep things positive. If you are really worried about grades slipping or learning difficulties, get professional help, tutoring and keep on encouraging as your go along.

Single Parenting And Black Males

Every day, all over the world, single parenting is a quickly-growing family situation. It doesn't matter if the country is rich or poor, there are more single parents than ever before.

Societies are changing, and single parents aren't the social outcasts they were in olden times. Earlier societies that had strict moral codes used to view single parents as immoral or personal failures. They thought being a single parent was a sign of personal or intellectual weakness.

But today, many households are run by single parents, and single parents are not limited to one race or gender. You'll find single-parent families headed by men and women of many different races.

In fact, there are just about the same number of black and white males who are also single parents in the U.S. today. And those single fathers face the same challenges and problems.

The truth is that census figures don't really tell us how many black single-parent males are out there today, although the 2002 US Census did find that three of every ten children are raised by a single parent. But it's safe to assume that, no matter how many single black fathers there are today, the number is rising.

It doesn't really matter why. Whether children are born because they were wanted or not is not the issue. The fact that single parents choose to stay with and care for their children is the important point.

As mentioned earlier, black males face the same problems as do other single parents. And as other single parents are qualified for financial help, so are single black fathers.

Studies About Single Black Fathers

Several studies are available that examine the issue of single parenting for black males. They make one assumption up front: that single parenting is more difficult for men because they are not very domestic.

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They suggest that men do not cope with single parenting as well as women. Some psychologists argue that single mothers tend to be more mature and emotionally stable than their male counterparts, making them more capable single parents.

On the other hand, some professionals argue that men approach parenting more logically than women do and that they are more likely to impose consistent rules and discipline on their children than their female counterparts.

One ethnographic researcher talked to single black fathers about their reasons for deciding to raise their children alone. They told the researcher that they felt a sense of duty for their children, that they wanted to avoid their own childhood experience of having a father absent, that they wanted to be a role model, and they that felt a strong bond with their kids. These fathers had high expectations for their kids and got most of their parenting advice from their mothers. Most of the fathers reported that single-parenting had a positive impact of their lives, and they felt the relationships with their children improved their own satisfaction with life in general.

To learn more about the findings of research into the lives and challenges of single black fathers, you might read these timely articles. They are easily available on the Internet.

* **"Black Men: the Crisis Continues"** by Slaim Muwakkil. This article was published in a popular magazine. It discusses the political issues facing blacks today, focusing on black males.

* **"The Black Family: 40 Years of Lies"** by Kay S. Hymowitz. This magazine article talks about the social implications of being a single black father for the race as a whole.

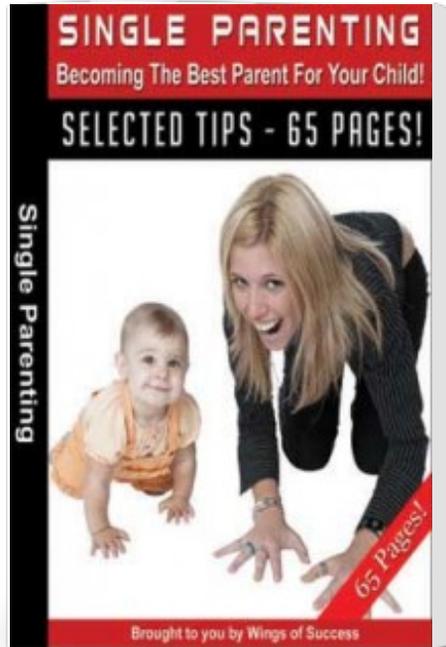
* **"Parent Trapped: Dating for Single Parents"** tackles the issue of single parents beginning to date again after the end of their previous relationship. The article discusses issues that black men identified related to single parenting.

* **"Black Single Fathers"** by Roberta Coles. Published in the Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, this article reports on research into the motives of African American full-time single fathers in making the decision to become parents.

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* **"African American Single Full-time Fathers: How Are They Doing?"** by Roberta Coles.
Published in the journal African American Men, this article reports on interviews where ten single black men talked about their experiences and attitudes with single parenting.

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