



## Tips for Parents: Single Parents

According to the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau, 26% of kids under 21 are living in a single parent home. There are 13.6 million single parents, 84% of them mothers. 6 out of 10 single parent households are living at or below the national poverty level. While some people prefer to raise a child on their own, most would agree it is not the ideal situation.

In fact, statistics show that children raised in single parent homes often receive lower grades, have higher drop out rates, and more often engage in high risk behaviors. But that doesn't mean that all single parents are bad parents, or that all kids raised by single parents are trouble.

### Single Parent Issues

Many factors can make single parenting more difficult than parenting with a partner or spouse. These can include significantly reduced income; conflict with the ex; grief, anger or depression over the loss of the relationship; more responsibilities than time in the day; meeting children's needs on your own; negative social views of single parenting; lack of support, and much more.

### Single Parent Dos and Don'ts

Parenting on your own can be stressful, confusing and exhausting. Here are a few do and don't tips for single parents to help you manage your time, your kids, and your sanity!

#### Do:

1. Take care of yourself by eating right, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and by making time for yourself on a regular basis.
2. Make spending time with your kids a priority. Daily rituals like eating dinner together, helping with homework, or reading a bed time story together make your child feel important and loved.
3. Make a point of having a stable and secure home. The situation that caused your single status likely damaged your child's sense of security, and security is very important to a child's well being and ability to trust. Try to maintain a daily routine, limit the number of people that come and go in your lives and in your home, and allow kids to have a space of their own they can control.
4. Build a network of friends, family and adopted "family" for friendship and support. Spend time with positive, caring people and make sure your children have the opportunity to do the same.

5. Encourage everyone to communicate with and listen to each other. Share joys and frustrations, and ask the kids how they feel about what's going on. Allow the kids to see your emotions, but don't overburden them. Lean on a trusted friend for times when you need to vent.
6. Focus on the positives of your situation, try to find something to look forward to every day, and be a positive support for your kids.
7. Ask for help. Trade babysitting with friends, accept assistance when offered, and seek out resources that will make your lives easier such as job assistance, help paying for food, medical coverage and child care, etc. Remember your church, community organizations, and state and federal programs are all available to help if you qualify.

## **Don't**

- Stuff your anger or depression. After the loss of a spouse or partner you will need to grieve. Allow yourself time to do this. Learn healthy ways to deal with your feelings. Seek a counselor if you feel overwhelmed.
- Make hasty decisions. Understand all your options and weigh the pros and cons before moving, taking a different job, making legal decisions, etc.
- Rush into a new relationship. Give yourself time to heal, understand what went wrong in the last relationship, and to learn how to be independent and understand who you are.
- Think you can do it all. You are only one person, and there will have to be some things that you'll have to let go. Set priorities and let the smaller things slide. Let the guilt go.
- Take out your anger on your kids. You may resent that you are burdened with taking care of them by yourself, but remember, they aren't in any way responsible for your situation. They didn't choose life, you made that choice. Express your frustration in an appropriate way and make sure your kids know every day how much they are loved.
- Let the kids control you. You are the adult and the boss. Many single parents allow the kids to rule the house or to become partners in decision making, but that is inappropriate. Set the rules and the consequences for breaking them, and stick to it consistently. If you need help making decisions, consult a trusted friend.

### ***For more information:***

[Single Parent Articles](#) from Baby Zone

[Discipline for Single Parents](#) from Supernanny.com

[Single Mothers House Sharing \(CoAbode\)](#) and other resources

You may also find these related Tips for Parents helpful:

[Tips for Parents: Divorce](#)

[Tips for Parents: When a Mommy or Daddy Dies](#)

[Tips for Parents: Step Parents](#)

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