

Parenting Alone



Highlights

Single parenting is when children are raised by one parent.

There are many reasons why someone may be a single parent, which can be hard for you and your child.

There are ways you can help your child adjust and take care of yourself after becoming a single parent.

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What is Single Parenting?

Single parenting is when children are raised by one parent. There are many reasons why someone may be a single parent, such as:

Divorce or separation

The death of a partner

The use of conception assistance, such as IVF, to have a child

Can I Be a Successful Single Parent?

If you are a single parent, you can be a successful parent. Research shows that children with a single parent are just as happy as children living with two parents.

It's important for your children to have good relationships with their parents, no matter what family structure they live in.

You can help build a good relationship with your child by spending time with them. You can try:

Reading with them

Talking with them about their day and their interests

Doing homework with them

Successful parents may not feel confident all the time. You will feel a range of emotions as a parent. Successful parents will also think about:

Helping their children get along

Ensuring they have fun with their children, family, and friends

Helping their child to form good relationships at school

How Can I Manage Becoming a Single Parent Around My Child?

Experiencing a break-up or losing a partner can be very challenging.

If you have lost your partner, you can read more about helping children deal with grief and loss.

If you have gone through a breakup, it's very important to let your children know they are not to blame. It's also important to look after yourself and talk about your feelings. If you had hoped to bring up your child as a couple, you

may be feeling:

Angry

Hurt

Hopeless

Depending on your situation, separating from a partner may also mean being separated from your children. This can be even tougher.

You should keep negative feelings about your ex-partner to yourself. This can be one of the hardest things to do, but one of the most important. Your child should build their own relationship with their other parent.

You should also try not to:

Argue with your ex-partner in front of your child

Talk about your ex-partner to your child behind their back

It is best to speak with another adult rather than your child. Speaking to your child about their other parent may make them feel confused. They may feel guilty and unhappy about loving someone who you may not love anymore.

It's also very important to look after yourself. Adjusting to single parenting may be easier if you:

Eat healthily

Exercise

Sleep well

How Can I Help My Child Adjust to a Single-Parent Household?

Moving to a single-parent household is a big change for children. Becoming a single-parent household may also mean other changes like:

A new house

A different school

Moving away from their friends

This can be difficult for your child. They will need your support.

If you separate from your children's other parent, you may become their resident parent. In this case, there are things you can do to help your child adjust:

Stick to your child's usual routine as much as you can.

Be honest with them and explain to them what's going to happen.

Let your child know all families have their ups and downs, not just single-parent families.

Spend one-on-one time each day with your child and make the most of everyday moments.

Help your child have a relationship with their other parent even though this may be hard for you - children want to love and be loved by both their parents.

Build a support network for you and for your child, such as with family and friends.

It might take time to get used to having a one-on-one relationship with your child. This can be especially hard if you haven't been their main carer in the past. Go easy on yourself and your child if things take time to settle.

You can help your child feel more comfortable by giving them structure and stability. If you're living in a new place, it's important that your child has a spot they can call their own. Ideally, this would be a room. If that's not possible, try to give them a cupboard or place to store their things.

It's better for your child's development to see their other parent regularly, unless:

They are violent towards you or your child

You feel they are likely to abuse your child in some way

It is most important that children have a home free of conflict and violence.

How Can I Manage My Child's Behaviour as a Single Parent?

As your child adjusts to your family situation, you may find that they show some bad behaviours. You may notice these behaviours when they come home after

a visit with their other parent. This may not be their other parent's fault.

Challenging behaviour is sometimes the only way your child can tell you that they're upset and confused about the situation.

Small children can't understand and explain their own feelings. Instead, they might:

- Be angrier and more restless
- Have trouble sleeping
- Be distressed when you leave to do something
- Have tantrums
- Wet the bed

Older children may also show their distress in different ways. They might:

- Avoid school
- Lie to you often
- Withdraw from you
- Break rules

If you notice these things, there are things you can do to:

- Help your child manage their feelings
- Encourage good behaviour

If you are concerned about your child, you can also talk to your doctor.

With your support, your child will learn to look forward to visits and to coming home.

Acknowledging Feelings

Teach your child to name their feelings, even difficult ones. Then, praise them when they tell you about them.

Remind them that you and their other parent love them.

It can help to offer them lots of cuddles, even when they don't need or ask for them.

Creating Clear Rules

You can acknowledge your child's feelings without accepting inappropriate behaviour.

Clear rules and boundaries can make your child feel safe and secure. You should clearly explain your family rules to your child, and stick to them. If you have separated from your child's other parent, try to keep your rules consistent with how they were before.

It can be hard to be consistent with rules and boundaries when you're on your own. It can be more challenging if you are tired and stressed, or if your child is behaving poorly.

It's a good idea to talk with your child's other parent about rules. This way, you can come to an agreement and set the same expectations. If that's not possible, your child can learn that different people have different rules.

Choose Your Battles

Dealing with discipline issues can be especially hard when you're parenting alone.

It can help to choose your battles. Before you get irritated, ask yourself if it really matters. If you let the little things go, you'll have more energy to deal with important issues like safety or wellbeing.

What Do I Do If I Need Support?

Bringing up a child on your own can be a major challenge. Don't be afraid to ask for help from friends and family.

You may find the best source of support is other single parents. If you don't already know people locally, you can contact other parents through local support groups. You can also contact your local council to see what services

are available in your area.

These suggestions may help to relieve the pressure and make it easier to cope:

Suggest a 'swap' arrangement with other parents you know, where you take turns looking after the children - your child will benefit from having a friend, especially if they don't have brothers and sisters.

Suggest a regular evening's babysitting by a trusted relative or friend - you may find that they're delighted at the opportunity to get to know your child.

Grandparents are often glad to have a child stay overnight.

Tools and Assistance

If you need professional advice or guidance, you can reach out to a therapist, a parenting coach, or local community services that provide support for single parents. Seeking support and building a network of help will make the journey of single parenting easier for you and your child.