

Stresses on Single Parent Families

<http://www.parents.com/parenting/dynamics/single-parenting/how-to-reduce-single-parent-stress/> **10**

Ways to Reduce Single-Parent Stress

One of every four American children today lives in a single-parent home. And though the circumstances may vary (some parents are divorced, others are widowed, and others are single parents by choice), the reality is that solo parenting is often stressful, demanding, and hectic. If you are a single mom or dad, there are 10 things you can do to help minimize the stress in your life -- and bring back the joy of parenting.

Get a Handle on Finances

Raising a family on one income, or relying on an ex-spouse for child support, can be one of the hardest aspects of parenting alone. That's why it's important to take steps to budget your money, learn about long-term investments, plan for college and retirement, and, if possible, enhance your earning power by going [back to school](#) or getting additional job training.

Set up a support system

All single parents need help -- whether it's someone to watch the kids while you run out to do errands or simply someone to talk to when you feel overwhelmed. While it's tempting to try to handle everything alone, ask friends and family members for help. You could join a single-parent support group, or, if finances allow, hire a trusted sitter to help out with the kids or someone to assist with housework.

Maintain a daily routine

Try to schedule meals, chores, bedtimes, and other family functions at regular hours so that your child knows exactly what to expect each day. A consistent routine will help your child feel more secure and help you feel more organized.

Be consistent with discipline

Children thrive when they know which behaviors are expected of them and which rules they need to follow. If you are divorced or separated, work with your spouse to create and observe consistent rules and methods of discipline (there's nothing more stressful than having one parent undermine the other). If your child has other caregivers, talk to them about how you expect your child to be disciplined.

Answer questions honestly

Inevitably, questions will come up about the changes in your family, or about the absence of one parent. Answer your child's questions in an open, honest, and age-appropriate way. Make sure that your child gets the help and support he needs to [deal](#) with difficult emotions.

Treat Kids like kids

With the absence of a partner, it's sometimes tempting to rely too heavily on children for comfort, companionship, or sympathy. But children have neither the emotional capacity nor the life experience to act as substitute adult partners. If you find yourself depending on your kids too much, or expressing your frustrations to them too often, seek out adult friends and family members to talk to. Or seek counseling if necessary.

Abolish "guilt" from your vocabulary

It's always easy for single parents to feel guilty about the time they don't have or the things they can't do or provide for their children. But for your own sense of well-being, it's better to focus on all the things you do accomplish on a daily basis and on all the things you do provide -- and don't forget about all the love, attention, and comfort you're responsible for! (If you ever question your day-to-day achievements, just make a list.) If you're feeling guilty about a [divorce](#) or other disruption in your home life, think about joining a support group for other divorced parents. Focus on helping your child (and yourself) get the help you need.

Take time for your children

Even though the piles of laundry and dirty dishes may beckon, set aside time each day to enjoy your kids. (After all, isn't that what parenting is all about?) Spend quiet time playing, reading, going for a walk, or simply listening to music together. And most important, focus on the love between you and on your relationship as a family.

Take time for yourself

Likewise, it's important to schedule time for yourself. Even if it's something as simple as reading a book, taking a warm bath, or having a chat with a friend, setting aside a little personal time will give you a chance to refuel.

Stay positive

It's easy to become overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and demands of single parenthood. On top of that, you may be experiencing the pain of [divorce](#) or the death of a spouse. Despite all of your own feelings, though, it's important to maintain a positive attitude, since your children are affected by your moods. The best way to [deal](#) with stress is to exercise regularly, maintain a proper diet, get enough rest, and seek balance in your life. If you're feeling sad, it's okay to share some of your sentiments with your children, but let them know that they are not the cause of the problems -- and that good times lie ahead for all of you.

Single Parent Resources

The following resources can provide additional information and support.

CompleteMom.com (www.completemom.com) Created by author Sheila Ellison (*The Courage to Be a Single Mother* and *The Courage to Love Again*), this Web site offers a wealth of parenting information and helps women find or create single-mother support groups in their area.
www.completemom.com >>

Parents Without Partners (www.parentswithoutpartners.org) Established in 1957, this nonprofit organization -- with more than 50,000 members in the U.S. and Canada -- offers educational, family, and social activities through its local chapters. Its Web site provides links to organizations, resources, research, and articles of interest to single parents.
www.parentswithoutpartners.org >>

Single Mothers by Choice (www.singlemothersbychoice.com) Founded in 1981 by Jane Mattes, a psychotherapist and single mother by choice, SMC offers support and information to women who are considering or who have chosen single motherhood, either through conception or [adoption](#).
www.singlemothersbychoice.com >>

Women's Institute for Financial Education (www.wife.org) This nonprofit organization helps women learn to manage their money, invest and save wisely, plan for college and retirement, become "fiscally fit," and more.
www.wife.org

<http://www.singleparentcenter.net/>

Single Parent Statistics

As far as single parenting statistics go, there are about 14 million single parents here in the U.S. today. They are responsible for raising 21.6 million of our nation's

children. The statistics about single parents show that most single parents are mothers. Statistics show that 83.1% of the single custodial parents are mothers as compared with 16.9% being custodial fathers.

Further single parenting statistics show that single mothers are either divorced or separated. There are 45.9% of single mothers that are either currently separated or divorced, 30.5% of single mothers have never been married or 1.7% of single mothers are widows. Single parenting statistics about single parent fathers who are custodial parents show that 56.4% are either separated or divorced, 23.1% are currently married, 19.7% have never been married or 0.8% are widowed.

There are a lot of struggles that single parents must face. It almost seems as though the deck is stacked against a single parent from the get-go! The single parent has to know how to balance work, housework, childcare, visitation schedules not to mention the children's activities. When all is said and done, the single parent needs to set some time aside just for his or her very own.

One of the biggest struggles that a single parent faces is the financial one. This is true especially if you are the custodial parent. With a two-parent household, if both parents work, money is usually not such a hot topic. For more advice and information on finances, please read [Grants For Single Parents](#). However, single parenting is not all bad. It is true that your children need guidance, attention and quality time but you can be there for them. Here are some things that you as a single parent can do with your children:

- Read to your children especially when they are very young. There is never a time when it is too early to read to your children. Even though they may not understand what they hear, your children learn to identify the tone and rhythm of your voice. Nursery rhymes are very good to read to little ones.
- It is very important that your children feel loved every day. One way of showing your love for them is by tucking little encouraging notes in their book bags so that they find it when they get to school.
- Make sure that you show your children that there is no going back to past relationships. The only way you can show your children that you are ready to move forward is to close the door on the past.
- Schedule a regular reading time either after dinner or before bedtime so you can wind down and relax with your children. This is a time to enjoy each others company and it provides a good bonding opportunity.
- Get into an exercise routine and go bicycling with your children. You should work up to about 30 minutes three times a week. This is not only good exercise but a great stress reliever.

Yes, single parenting is not such an easy thing to do, but with more and more single parents nowadays their lot in society is improving. Remember that the most important thing is your children. Make sure that they grow up in a loving and nurturing home and you will be doing an excellent job! Need more advice on [raising a teenager](#)?

Possible Effects of Single Parenting

If you are divorced and your ex husband or wife is still in the picture, you may have help from him or her in the form of joint custody, shared custody, or financial support. However, even with help from an ex spouse, it is important to understand

the possible effects of single parenting on your child. Remember that all of these possible effects of single parenting are taken from **statistics**, so it is very probable that your child will not experience any of these effects of single parenting and will be completely fine. However, it is important to understand what you could be dealing with.

Psychological Aspects

The psychology of your child is important when viewing the effects of single parenting. Divorce can make your child wonder if he or she did anything wrong to cause the divorce. This can be devastating for a child. Being raised by a single parent and never knowing your mother or your father can be equally disturbing for a child. He or she may wonder, if the absent parent is alive, why that parent abandoned him or her.

Despite telling your child that he or she was not abandoned, the feelings may still exist. Your child may want to find the absent parent and begin a relationship with him or her. Whatever the feelings that your child has, make sure that you know about them, are close with your child and understand the feelings, and if necessary you have a psychologist involved to help your child deal with these feelings.

Educational Aspects

Education is very important. However, children who go through any trauma tend to see a sink in grades in the immediate future. A child may feel despondent if one parent moves out and you suddenly become a single parent household. This despondence may carry over to their school work. This is a tragic effect of sudden single parenting.

Teachers may give your child slack because they know he or she is going through a tough time—do not let them! This will simply result in snowball effect. If your child misses a few weeks of learning, he or she will be behind for the rest of the year and possibly miss out on learning crucial elements upon which the rest of his or her education will be based.

Make sure that you know how your child is doing in school and are actively in communication with teachers to make sure that your child does not fall between the cracks. Knowing what possible effects of single parenting could arise will allow you to nip them in the bud if they do present themselves.

<http://ssw.unc.edu/jif/famtrend/docs/Single.pdf>