



THE SINGLE PARENT CHALLENGE

*What You Need,
What You Get*



One in four parents raises a child alone. Of these single parents, 90 percent are women. From their experiences, information about how to cope with this challenge is becoming more readily available.

As a single parent, you'll probably need extra understanding, patience and cooperation. In turn, you're likely to develop a new sense of independence and self-confidence.

You can become strong and adaptable. Your children can become responsible and secure. Your relationship with your children can become closer than ever.

Common Trade-offs

Most parents make sacrifices for their children. Single parents compromise for two. You can probably expect:

- a sense of loss of self, along with loss of personal time.
- tension from forced association with an ex-spouse or in-laws.
- taking blame for the upsetting behavior of your child.
- worry about finances.

Your list may be shorter or longer. Most single parents agree that, in the beginning, they feel poor, lonely, overwhelmed and guilty.

Ways to Cope

Once you understand your feelings, you can make a plan to reduce your stress. First, you might take the time to get quality day care. This can reduce your distractions while you work.

Second, you might want to talk with others who have solved single parenting problems for themselves. Friends, support groups, and coworkers can share ideas. You may also be able to share chores and services.

Third, you can take advantage of the resources available for single parents. Community and special interest groups exist to provide help when you need it. Financial advisors, time management experts and others can help you feel you're in control.

Fourth, you can take good care of yourself so you can provide quality time for your children.

It's estimated that the average parent spends just 20 minutes a day with an individual child. This is barely enough time for checking and scolding. When you're feeling good, you can have the energy to be more involved.

Benefits for Your Children

Children who travel to visit the other parent make new friends and spend time with new adults. This experience can be enriching. Talking about it can help your child feel secure within the family.

The interdependence that you and your children develop can help you feel closer to one another. Children of single parents often develop an early sense of individual responsibility.

For example, sharing housework can provide special time for sharing feelings and experiences. Performing assigned duties can give your child a sense of importance in your household.

Turn Negatives Into Positives

By discovering how others cope, you can find ideas for yourself. You can turn negatives into positives for you and your child.