

Single Parenting

Many children live in single parent families in our country. They often do just as well as children from two-parent families, especially if they have a stable, loving relationship with a parent and little disruption in the home. Single parenting is often hard to do, since you have less time for yourself. Here are ways to make it easier:

Make your child's life as stable as possible.

- Keep moves, new babysitters, and new schools to a minimum.

Have regular household routines

- Children feel more secure if they have set bedtimes and mealtimes and know when they will be picked up from school, daycare, or sitter. It helps to do the same things every day.

Have consistent rules and discipline.

- Set rules and stick to them.
- Don't be too permissive or too strict.

Spend "good" time with your child.

- It's not how much time you spend with them, but how you spend it.
- Hug or cuddle your child the first 5 minutes when you get home from work.
- Then give him something to do so you can unwind from your day.
- Talk, read books, play games, and take walks with your child.
- Let him help you around the house with cooking and cleaning, as his age and skills allow.

Don't try to do everything.

- You're only one person. Don't think you must do the work of two people.

Keep an active support system.

- Just because you are single doesn't mean you have to be alone.
- Get help from relatives, friends, church members and others.
- Take turns baby-sitting each other's children.
- Share shopping and car-pooling jobs.

Take care of yourself.

- Be sure that your own needs are met. You need balance (and other adults) in your life.
- You need a life of your own, not just taking care of children.
- Learn ways to reduce stress in your life.
- It's normal to sometimes resent your children because there are other things you would like to be doing.
- Realize that your child may feel jealous of your time if you are dating. Reassure him that he is still important to you.

Let children be around adults of both sexes.

- Consider Big Brother / Big Sister programs, scouting, drill teams, boys and girls clubs, YMCA programs as ways to meet adults outside of the family.

When two parents are raising a child in different homes:

- Use the same rules and discipline in both homes.
- Don't make the child carry messages.
- Don't say bad things about the other parent in front of your child.
- Talk to the other parent in private when you have adult issues to discuss.
- Be sure the school is involved
- Keep in close contact with your child's teacher. Let her know of any changes in your child's life.
- Be sure that the school and daycare know which adults are allowed to take your child home.

Call your child's health care provider if:

- You are having trouble parenting your child.
- You are always angry with your child and feel you may hurt him.
- You have questions or concerns.