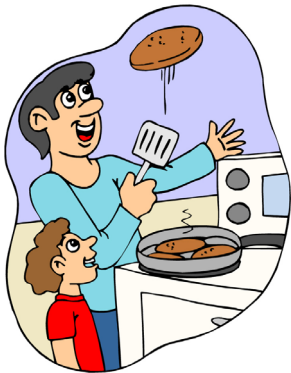


The Joy of Being a Single Parent



Twenty-five percent of American children live in a single parent home. Being a single parent is often very stressful and demanding. It can also be joyful and very rewarding.

- 1. Find a support system.** Every parent needs help—a babysitter, advice on repairs and adult-talk time. Rely on family, friends or neighbors to support your family. Join a support group. Find middle or high school students that can help with childcare and household chores.
- 2. Set up and post your family's daily routine.** Kids need structure. Some need more than others. Have a family schedule for meals, chores, morning routines and bedtime routines. If your older children are home alone after school, make an hourly schedule of home-alone time for each child.
- 3. Make and post family rules.** Children need to know what behaviors a parent expects from them. Treat everyone with respect should be your first rule.
- 4. Be consistent with praise and discipline.** Help your children follow the family rules. Praise them often when you see them follow rules and help the family. Do not let them get away with bad behavior, even if you feel too tired to say no.
- 5. Treat your kids like kids.** Kids are not small adults. They cannot emotionally and

physically handle adult problems and jobs. If you need help, find an adult to use as a sounding board.

- 6. Get a handle on family finances.** Learn how to budget. Use your budget every month. Look for ways to increase your income. Go back to school. Get job training. Be creative in planning meals and family activities. Check your school and community calendar for free or low-cost family events. Sports events, concerts and plays are a great place to make friends.
- 7. Refuse to feel guilty.** Concentrate on the good you do for your family. Focus on helping your kids. Kids cannot have everything they want. That alone is a powerful lesson for all. Be thankful for what you have, and teach your kids to be thankful. Let them see the rewards for working to make life better.
- 8. Schedule time together as a family.** It is easy to get wrapped up in job and household duties. Do not forget to have fun. Play games—together. Go on outdoor adventures—together. Read books, watch movies and listen to music—together.
- 9. Find some time for yourself.** If you cannot afford a babysitter, find time after the kids are in bed. Early morning can also provide quiet time.

A single parent needs to think and be positive. It helps to eat healthy meals and get plenty of rest. Turn to others for help when you feel stressed. Avoid taking out your frustrations on your kids. They want you to be happy, too.

Call the Parent Help Line. We listen. We can find you help.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.