

## The Single Parent

Parenting a child alone is very difficult. There are unique challenges and difficulties as moms have to learn to be dads and dads to be moms. While becoming a single parent can happen in many ways, the most common include divorce and pregnancy outside of marriage.

## Types of Single Fathers

- Full-Time Fathers: Men choose to raise their children FULL-TIME
- Cooperative Fathers: Men who SHARE responsibility for raising the children
- MISSING fathers: Men who are absent from their children's lives

## Full-Time Fathers

Some men choose to raise their children full-time, with only occasional help from the mother. This type of single parent household has increased 10 times, since 1960, and accounts for almost one in four single parent homes. They now account for over 2.6 million homes, nation-wide.

There are some amazing benefits to living with your child. When a child lives in the home with their father, they are much more likely to get A's in school, much more likely to stay in school, and much less likely to go to prison, in their lifetime. Fatherhood involvement is much more natural and common when fathers live in the same home. This leads to fewer behavior issues and greater likelihood of financial success for the child.

If the mother is still in the picture, treat her respectfully and do not say negative things about her, especially when your child is listening. She may not act respectfully, but if you love your child, you will treat his or her mother with respect. This can be difficult and finding a way to cooperate, civilly, is often tough. But it is part of being a good father.

Make sure your home is more than just a place where your child lives. Spend time with them. Interact with them and discipline them, correctly. Respect your child, by keeping boundaries with women in your life. If you have a girlfriend, do not let her be called mommy, until you are married. It is much more harmful to have many temporary mommies than to wait for the one you are truly committed to. Choose your relationships wisely and proceed with caution.

## Cooperative Fathers

A child who has a father involved, who does not live at home, is four times less likely to be described as destructive by their teachers and two times less likely to disturb other children in class. In addition, a child with an involved father, especially with boys, has higher test scores in math and reading.

It is important to provide financially for your child as needed. Child support payments are normally a significant amount of a paycheck. But it is important that you are willing and positive about helping your child, financially. Don't begrudge the money, and don't complain to either the mother or the child. Let them know that they are worth it, even if it is hard. At times, it may seem like you are supporting the mother more than the child. But it is still important that your child sees that you are willingly supporting both them and their mom. But you cannot stop with financial support.

You will lose a lot of natural time and involvement when you don't live with your child. But you can still have a significant impact. Make an effort to spend time with your child, at least weekly. Do not promise to spend time and then disappoint them. Instead, be honest, and then, do everything needed to follow through on your promises. Know what is going on in your child's life, and talk to them about it. Do what is best for your child, and be there for them.

## Missing Fathers

Fathers who are not involved in their child's lives are choosing to be selfish. But they are also choosing to harm their children. When a father is missing in a child's life, the children are four times more likely to live in poverty, are much more likely to have behavioral and educational problems, are more likely to abuse drugs, and are more likely to end up in prison. But there are even more serious effects of a father who abandons his children. Children without involved fathers are twice as likely to drop out of school, much more likely to go to jail, much more likely to commit suicide, and much more likely to use drugs. It is obvious that the harm caused by absent fathers is serious.

## Finding the Right Type

Being single can be lonely. It is often tempting to do whatever is necessary to make the loneliness go away. Some single parents compromise what they want in a relationship so that they can have a partner. Many single parents even find themselves living with a partner whom they do not think would make a good husband or wife. Others find themselves giving in to pressures for sex so that their partner will stay around. Unfortunately, relationships built on this type of "bought love" are damaging to the children and the adults involved.

Instead of compromising, the best route to take for both the children and the parents is to wait. There may be temptation to move in with another woman, especially if the relationship with the mother fails, but men who choose co-habitation while being a single father are harming their child and themselves. Wait for a partner who is not just looking for a place to live or to get sexual satisfaction. Wait for a partner who is interested in a marriage built on a relationship that was created outside the confusion of sexual involvement.

If you are currently involved in a relationship that involves sex outside of marriage, it is time to make a change. Start by seriously considering, is this the partner that will be my spouse for life? If so, talk to them about marriage. If you or your partner does not want to marry, it is time to get out of the relationship. A relationship based on something other than a lifelong commitment to love through marriage is not healthy for you or your children. If you find yourself out of a relationship, go back to waiting for the right partner with self-control and caution. Finding a partner who is spouse material can take time.

This solution is not very easy. It may take being lonely for a time. It may require rejecting possible partners who are not serious. It will require resolve and hard work. But the end result is a relationship that is built on love, respect, and serious commitment. A relationship that is best for you and your children. The end result is a relationship that will last.

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