

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.

What Are the Risks?

The risks of being a single parent start with the parent themselves. Single parents are much more likely to live in poverty than couples.¹ They are also much more likely to have poor health.² But the risks also extend to the children. These include:

- Increased probability of lower levels of education³
- Higher dropout rates³
- Increased delinquent activity, including alcohol and drug addiction⁷
- Higher likelihood of health issues²
- More likely to marry early and divorce more often⁴
- More likely to become pregnant outside of marriage⁴

Where Are You?

There are many possible problems and difficulties that can come from being single and raising children. If you are...

Married and Together

This is the ideal family situation for children. Make sure to spend time working on your relationship. Get good advice and counsel at church to continually grow and work on your relationship.

Married But Separated

Many marriages go through tough times that may even include separation. Even the hardest marriage can and should be saved. Seek out counseling from a local church and give grace where needed. Marriage is **NOT** easy - but it is good and right and worth all the effort.

Unmarried without Children

If you are not married and don't have children, your choice is clear. Choose abstinence until marriage. Not only will you avoid the troubles that can come with being a single parent, but you will also have healthier relationships and a healthier self-respect.

Unmarried, Living with A Partner, with Children

When couples live together, relationships are unstable and often provide difficult environments for children. One-sixth of couples who live together stay together for only three years; and only one in ten survives five

or more years.⁵ Out of all the people who live together, 67 percent never get married.⁶ The right move is to provide stability for your children by marrying your partner. If your partner is unwilling, it is time to look for someone who is interested in a healthy marriage relationship. Start by looking for a partner that is willing to wait until marriage to have sex. This will ensure the relationship is based on something more than physical attraction and provide a solid foundation for times when the love seems at low tide.

Single, with Children, Living Alone

Living alone is difficult, but it may be what is best for your family. Almost 24% of American children live with their mothers alone. Finding a mentor, another strong single mother who can give you advice as well as be a comfort to you, is a great advantage. Consider joining a single parent supporting group, a church women's group, or a local mom's club to provide emotional support and to give you a sense of belonging. If you are looking for a relationship, give your children the great example of waiting until marriage before you have sex. This will also help them during the transition by providing clear boundaries and an understanding that there is depth and love as the foundation of the marriage.

Moving Forward as a Single Parent

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.

When choosing child care, consider the following. Family is often a good option for child care but do not leave your child with family if there has been abuse in the past. Do not leave your child with someone, even someone who is responsible, if they will be in a home where others you don't know will be staying or visiting. If it is a professional establishment, ask what is done to make sure your child will be safe.

The most obvious complication of single parenting is the involvement of the father of your child. Whether the father is involved with your child or is absent, always treat him with respect. Second, 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. Finally, respect your child by keeping boundaries with men in your life. Choose your relationships wisely and proceed with caution. If your children are blessed to have a father who wants to be a part of their lives, protect that relationship as best as you can. Children without fathers are twice as likely to drop out of school, much more likely to go to jail, much more likely to commit suicide, much more likely to use drugs

Women who choose cohabitation while being a single mother are harming their child and themselves. Their children risk the same problems of all others with cohabiting parents: poor behavior, poor performance at school, and higher poverty rates. There is also a very real danger of abuse: emotional, sexual, and physical. This does not mean that single mothers should not date. Instead, it shows that mothers who date should date with the purpose of marriage in mind.

References:

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