

## FAMILY LIFE

# Stresses of Single Parenting

## What are some ways to avoid the stress of being a single parent?

Single parenthood can bring added pressure and stress to the job of raising children. With no one to share day-to-day responsibilities or decision-making, single parents must provide greater support for their children while they themselves may feel alone. The following suggestions may help reduce stress in your family:

### Get A Handle On Finances

Learn how to budget your money. Know when your paycheck or other income will arrive, and keep track of household bills. Do what you can to improve your finances. If you need a job, contact employment and temporary agencies for help. If you need more education, consider getting your high school diploma, a college degree, or other special training.

### Talk Early and Often

Let your children know about the changes in the family. Sit quietly with your children and allow them to talk about their feelings.

### Find Support and Use It

Don't try to handle everything by yourself. You will need the support that family and friends can give. Get to know other single parents through support groups. Your pediatrician can also be a great source of help and information.

### Take Time For Family

Being a single parent can be overwhelming. Set aside some time each day to enjoy your children. Spend quiet time playing, reading, working on arts-and-crafts projects, or just listening to music together. Your time is one of the most important things you can give to your children.

### Take Time For Yourself

Time spent away from your children is important for you and for them. Being a single parent doesn't mean you can't have an adult life. Get a babysitter and enjoy some time alone or with friends. Do things that you like. Go to a movie. Find a hobby.

### Keep A Daily Routine

Schedule meals, chores, and bedtimes at regular times so that your children know what to expect each day. A routine will help them feel more secure.

### Maintain Consistent Discipline

Divorced or separated parents should work together to discipline their children the same way. Check your local library for books on parenting. Local hospitals, the YMCA, and church groups often sponsor parenting classes. Learning good ways to handle your children's behavior will reduce stress for all of you.

## Treat Kids Like Kids

Though being a single parent can get lonely, try not to treat your children like substitutes for a partner. Try not to rely on them for comfort or sympathy.

## Stay Positive

Be aware that your children will always be affected by your mood and attitude. They will need your praise and your love through hard times. It's okay to be honest about your feelings of sadness and loss, but let them know better times lie ahead for all of you.

## Take Care of Yourself

This is a difficult time for you, too. Exercise regularly, eat healthy, and get enough rest so you can better deal with stress. Visit your own doctor on a regular basis.

## Find Good Child Care

Good child care is essential for your children's well-being and your peace of mind. Finding quality child care may be one of the most difficult tasks you will face.

### Keep the following in mind:

- Never leave your children home alone. Find someone you trust to take care of them while you are working.
- Don't rely on older brothers and sisters to babysit for younger siblings.
- Be careful about asking new friends or partners to watch your children, even for a short time. They may not have the patience, especially if a child's behavior becomes difficult.
- Children need to be cared for by an adult with proven experience in child care. The best way to make sure your child is getting good care is to visit the child care center or watch your babysitter when he or she is with your children.

Your pediatrician can offer advice on finding the best child care for your family. Your local city or county government may also have a list of licensed child care centers or homes.

**Last Updated** 11/21/2015

**Source** Single Parenting (Copyright © 2007 American Academy of Pediatrics, Updated 5/2007)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

Contact Us (<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/pages/contact-us.aspx>)

About Us (<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/pages/about-aap.aspx>)

Privacy Policy (<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/pages/privacy-policy.aspx>)

Terms of Use (<https://www.healthychildren.org/english/pages/terms-of-use.aspx>)

Editorial Policy (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/Editorial-Policy.aspx>)

---

e HONcode standard for trustworthy health (<http://www.healthonnet.org/HONcode/Conduct.html>)

© Copyright 2017 American Academy of Pediatrics. All rights reserved.