



Being a Sensational Single Parent

Choosing to become a foster or adoptive parent, in and of itself, is a challenging endeavor. However, when you choose to do it alone, chances are you will hear things like, *"I couldn't imagine being a single parent. It must be so difficult."* As a single parent, it's likely you've heard that sentiment—or something similar—on more than one occasion. And though the circumstances may vary—some parents are divorced, others are widowed, and others are single parents by choice—the reality is that solo parenting is often stressful, demanding, and hectic.

Complex Feelings

One of the challenges that many single parents face is the feeling of guilt. Some parents have shared with us that they often ask themselves the following questions:

- *Do I have enough time?*
- *Do I have enough energy?*
- *Do I have the necessary supports?*
- *Will I have the resources to meet the needs of my child?*

Lack of resources is not limited to finances, but also encompasses the emotional, physical, and social aspects that children require.

Another challenge that solo parents face is not having a "tag team partner." Sometimes

it may feel like you are in a doubles wrestling match, but you don't have someone to "tag in" when you are feeling exhausted and spent.

Benefits of Single Parenting

There are, however, several benefits of single parenting that we sometimes forget or overlook. As a single parent, you are the rule setter. You get to make the rules and you are the sole enforcer when rules are not followed. Think of yourself as the CEO of your family. Single parents do not have to consult, discuss, or argue with a partner about establishing or following the household rules.

Many single parents have a strong and intense bond with their child or children because you are your child's *everything*. It's true that you are their disciplinarian, but you are also their comforter, encourager, and nurturer.

Being Your Best

One of your tasks in becoming the best parent you can become is to find a way to address and learn to let go of the guilty feelings. Guilt can be an intense emotion that can freeze your ability to be your best parenting self.

When making the choice to be a single parent, you most likely thought of all the



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positive and wonderful things parenting could entail. Sometimes, now, it may feel like it is hard to remember those reasons, but if you allow yourself a moment to reflect on all those items that fell into the “pros” category of your list, you might just remember why you knew parenting was the right thing for you.

Perhaps your list may have included:

- having more than enough love to give a child.
- having supportive family and friends.
- Or, through choosing to become a single parent, you would be fulfilling your desire to parent.

Try to remember and focus on the positives that you brought to the table as a parent.

Seeking Out a Support Network

The factor that can raise average parents to good parents, good parents to great parents, and great parents to amazing parents is who you surround yourself with. As a single parent, you do not have a natural tag team partner and, as a result, you may want to consider creating a support network of people who will be there to empower you to be the best parent that you can possibly be. This support network may include a variety of people who fulfill multi-faceted needs including parenting, social, physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects.

For single parents, a tag team partner is more like a whole team, as it often includes multiple people in your life who can be there for you in a variety of situations to help in your parenting journey.

One single parent shared her feelings of

having a supportive family network to assist her and her son:

“In my path as a single parent, my own parents have played a large role in helping me parent my son. As a single mom of a growing young man, I have intentionally brought my father in to be a male role model for him. Through the years, there have been other friends and family members that have helped in that role, as well. Choose people who will be in your child’s life and yours for the long road ahead. As the saying goes, ‘it takes a village to raise a child.’”



It can also be helpful to develop a network of mutually satisfying relationships that fulfill your social and emotional needs. These are the people in your life who accept you for who you are. If you can allow them to be good friends to you and graciously accept their assistance when they

offer, it can be reassuring to know that you have trusted people in your life who will be there for you no matter what. Depending on your personality, this can vary from a few close friends to a larger group of people such as a support group.

Taking Care of Yourself

Welcome people in your life who stimulate your mind and challenge you on an intellectual level, as well as those who keep you active physically. On the intellectual level, this may be a book club or a chat room on a topic you enjoy, or perhaps a co-worker with whom you enjoy discussing the day’s events.

It is also beneficial to keep physically active and have people in your life who will

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encourage you to stay active. This may be a friend who fulfills your social needs, as well as your physical needs, with activities such as running or walking together, playing a pick-up game of basketball, going dancing, or going to an aerobics class.

Lastly, nurture your inner self through activities or rituals that lift your spirit. This may be a more traditional spiritual ritual or an alternative activity. Be sure to frequently incorporate activities into your life that help you find your internal peace and bring out your best self. These tasks could be combined with your physical activities, such as yoga or meditation. Parenting can be stressful and feel overwhelming at times; so including activities that nurture you as a person will strengthen you as a parent.

Parenting is the most rewarding and challenging task most of us will ever choose to do. As you move forward in your parenting journey, know that all parents strive to be the best they can be for their children. Most parents and families find that they succeed best when they foster and grow a support network that lifts them up in all aspects of their lives, including parenting, social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual. As you walk the parenting journey, you may want to ask yourself, in which of these areas do I need more supports to be the best self that I can be?

It may be helpful to keep in mind this advice from a sensational single parent:

“I may not be an amazing parent, but the days that I feel like I’m doing well is when I have taken the time to nurture myself and take care of my needs. When I have filled my own cup with the supports that I need, then I have more to give back to my child.”

**Several of these concepts were used with permission from Patricia Parker’s presentation on Single Parenting.*



Resources

Additional Resources

- [Parents Magazine: Single Mom’s Survival Guide](#)
- [The Ripples Project](#)
- [The Good, the Bad, and the Sticky: 4 Tips from a Single Foster Mom](#)
- [I’m a Single Parent. I’m a Foster Parent.](#)
- [Adopting as a Single Parent](#)



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