

Being a Sensational Single Parent

Becoming a foster parent, adoptive parent, or relative caregiver is inherently a somewhat challenging endeavor. However, when you are single and moving forward on your own, you might hear things like, “I couldn’t imagine being a single parent. It must be so difficult.” 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 questions like:

- Do I have enough time?
- Do I have enough energy?
- Do I have the necessary support?
- 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 of parenting or caring for a child or youth.

Another challenge that single parents face is the absence of a partner or teammate. Sometimes, you feel like you have given all you have, are exhausted and spent, yet you must carry on.

There are, however, 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 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. You, indeed, 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 thinking about being a single parent, you might have thought about all the positive and beautiful things parenting could entail. Sometimes, it may feel like it is hard to remember those reasons. Still, 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.

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Perhaps your list may have included:

- Having more than enough love to give a child.
- Having supportive family and friends.
- Fulfilling your desire to parent.

Remember and focus on the positives 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 may want to consider creating a support network of people who will empower you and encourage you to be the best caregiver you can be. Your support network can include multiple people who can be there for you in various situations to help in your parenting journey.

One single parent shared her feelings about 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 who 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 relationships that fulfill your social and emotional needs. These people in your life accept you for who you are. If you 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 who will be there for you no matter what. Your support circle 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, 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 who will encourage you to stay active. This may be a friend who fulfills your social and physical needs with activities such as running or walking together, playing a pick-up basketball game, dancing, or attending 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 that help you find your internal peace and bring out your best self. These tasks could be combined with physical activities like yoga or meditation.

Parenting is the most rewarding and challenging task we will ever do. As you move forward in your journey, know that all parents strive to be the best they can be for their children. Most parents and families succeed best with a support network that lifts them in all aspects of their lives. As you walk the parenting journey, you may want to ask yourself, in which areas do I need more support to be my best self?

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 are when I have taken the time to nurture myself and care for my needs. When I have filled my cup with the support I need, I have more to give back to my child.”

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



Resources

From the Resource Library

- *Adopting On Your Own: The Complete Guide to Adoption for Single Parents*, by Lee Varon
- *The Best Single Mom in the World: How I Was Adopted*, by Mary Zisk

Additional Resources

- [The Good, the Bad, and the Sticky: 4 Tips from a Single Foster Mom](#)
- [I'm a Single Parent. I'm a Foster Parent.](#)