



Solo and Supported: Thriving as a Single Foster, Adoptive, or Kinship Parent

Single parents are raising children in millions of homes across the country — and doing it well. Whether you came to foster care, adoption, or kinship caregiving as a single person by choice or by circumstance, your commitment to providing a child with a stable, loving home is what that child needs.

This tip sheet is for you. It won't tell you that parenting solo is easy — no parenting is. But it will offer practical guidance on building the support, tools, and rhythms that help single caregivers not just manage, but thrive.

Your Strengths as a Single Caregiver

Single caregivers bring real strengths to the parenting role. Consistency is one of them. When one person sets the tone, the household rules, and the daily rhythms, children — especially those who have experienced trauma, instability, or loss — often benefit from that clarity and predictability.

Single parents also frequently develop exceptionally close relationships with the children in their care. When you are the constant presence, you often become deeply attuned to the child's needs, moods, and signals. That attunement matters, especially for children who need to learn that adults can be trusted and that relationships are safe.

You are a child's anchor. That is not a small thing.

Practical Considerations for Single Caregivers

There are some practical areas where single foster, adoptive, and kinship parents may want to be especially intentional.

- **Backup caregivers.** Licensing requirements for foster care typically require that you identify approved backup caregivers — people who can step in when you are unavailable. Think about this proactively. Who in your circle could be trained or approved? Having two or three people you can call on is a genuine safety net.
- **Respite care.** All caregivers need breaks, and single parents especially so. Respite care — short-term relief care provided by a trained caregiver — is available through many agencies and support networks. Ask your agency what is available to you and how to access it. Taking respite is not a sign that you are struggling; it is a sign that you are planning ahead.

- **Your “co-parenting team.”** Two-parent families have a built-in partner for decisions, logistics, and emotional processing. As a single parent, you can build that same function intentionally — not with one person, but with a team. This might include a trusted family member who helps with logistics, a close friend who is your sounding board, and a therapist or support group where you can process the harder moments. Naming and nurturing those relationships matters.
- **Time and energy management.** Parenting solo means there is no one else to hand off to at the end of a hard day. Protecting your time and energy — through routines, realistic expectations, and a willingness to ask for help — is not a luxury. It is part of being able to show up consistently for your child.

Building Your 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 throughout your parenting journey.

One single parent shared her experience building that network:

“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. Over the years, other friends and family members have also helped in that role. 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 own social and emotional needs — people who accept you for who you are and who you can turn to when things are hard. Your support circle can range from a few close trusted friends to a broader community, such as a parent support group.

Connecting with other single foster, adoptive, and kinship parents in particular can be especially valuable. They understand the specific terrain you are navigating — and many have practical wisdom to share.

Taking Care of Yourself

You cannot pour from an empty cup. That is true for all parents, and it is especially important to take seriously when you are parenting solo.

Look for people in your life who engage you intellectually, keep you active, and nurture your spirit. 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 stay physically active and to have people who will encourage you to do so. This may be a friend who meets your social and physical needs through activities such as running or walking together, playing a pickup basketball game, dancing, or attending an aerobics class.

Lastly, nurture your inner self through activities or rituals that lift your spirit. Be sure to incorporate activities regularly to help you find your inner peace and bring out your best self. These could be combined with physical activities like yoga or meditation.

As one single parent put it:

"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."

As you move forward in your journey, ask yourself: in which areas do I need more support to be my best self? Then take one step in that direction.

The Wisconsin Family Connections Center is here to support you. Call, email, or drop in to talk with a member of our Resource Team whenever you need help.

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

Resources

From the [Resource Library](#)

- [The Best Single Mom in the World: How I Was Adopted](#), by Mary Zisk

Learn in [the Champion Classrooms](#)

- [Healing-Centered Engagement: The Power of Community and Connection](#)
- [Building Strong Relationships: Parenting with Courage](#)

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.](#)
- [Single Parent Adoption: The Process and Experience of Adopting Unpartnered](#)
- [Foster Care Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Resources for National Single Parents' Day](#)