



My Family | Single Parenting

Single parent families are different from families with two parents living under the same roof. There are different reasons why a person becomes a single parent. They may choose this lifestyle, they may have been in a relationship which they left, or perhaps their partner has died or left them. The challenges faced by the single parent vary according to their circumstances, but there are common experiences.

How Single Parenting Differs from Dual Parenting

The most common difference between single parenting and dual parenting is the way in which the parent interacts with the child. In dual parenting families, the mother and father usually decide together how to run the household, while in single parent households, issues such as holidays or major family purchases may be more likely to be decided with the children.

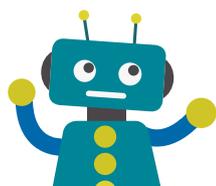
Other common differences include:

- Children of single parents may have more duties and responsibilities around the home from an earlier age, simply because there isn't another adult around.
- The single parent may feel very stressed because they try to be the perfect parent and the sole breadwinner when there are only 24 hours in every day.

Possible Difficulties for Children

Some of the common problems faced by children in single parent households include:

- The need for 'extra hands' around the house may sometimes reduce the time a child can take part in typical child activities such as hanging out with friends or playing.
- If a child is used to having a near-equal say in the household, they may clash with teachers and other authority figures who expect unquestioning obedience.
- The child may not appreciate that their parent needs adult companionship too.
- The child may feel torn between their two parents and feel they must 'pick sides' – this is especially the case if the parents are hostile towards one another.



Possible Difficulties for the Single Parent

Some of the common problems faced by single parents include:

- The child is more likely to misbehave for them – the day-to-day disciplinarian – than for the parent who lives outside the home.
- It can be hard work to be the only disciplinarian in the house
- You may feel grieved if your child envies friends with two parents at home.
- New relationships may be difficult, particularly if your child is suspicious or jealous.
- A lonely parent may cling to their children for support and company, making it harder for the child to eventually leave home.
- The demands of income earning, child-raising and housework mean the single parent may have little or no time for themselves.
- Visitation Issues

Common issues facing separated or divorced families include:

- Single parents may (inadvertently or otherwise) make the child feel guilty for having fun with their other parent.
- Parents may involve their children in any disputes, instead of discussing the issues in private.
- Some separated parents find it difficult to be civil at changeover time, which can place the child under stress.
- Parents may interrogate their child about what they did or who they saw during the visit (such as the ex's new partner).
- The child may take some time – from a few hours to a few days – to settle down again after visiting with their other parent.

Positives for the Single Parent and Child

Some of the positives of a single parent household include:

- The child is typically mature and responsible.
- The parent is typically self-reliant and confident.
- The relationship between parent and child is close.
- Single parent families are less likely to follow traditional gender-specific roles than two parent families.
- Single parents tend to rely on positive problem-solving strategies rather than punitive discipline when faced with difficult child behaviours.
- A child from a single parent home who is loved and supported has no more problems than a child from a two-parent home.

