

Effective Single Parenting

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Valerie, a mother of three teenagers, sat in the pew behind the youth director, she looked weary and discouraged. "What's up?" the youth leader asked. "I am so tired of my kids' father, aka my ex. He disappoints them every week, saying he will pick them up to spend time with them and then shows up too late to do anything or doesn't show up at all. It was one thing for him to frustrate me when we were married, but now he frustrates me with the kids. It is like the old wounds keep reopening almost every week."

Many single moms and dads do not only have to face the emotional challenge of raising their kids by themselves, but they often have to deal with the leftover problems associated with their exes. It is daunting at best, and there are so many nuances to situations like Valerie's that give single parenting a position of great valor!

Most important to your success as a single parent is your health spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically. Growing in these four areas will bring you to your best as a person and a parent.

Spiritual Health for Single Parents

Our God is a tender and caring Being who treasures those who need special care and nurturing. Think about Abraham's concubine, Hagar, who birthed Abraham a son because Sarah was barren and couldn't. Hagar hadn't chosen to be joined to him to provide a son, but through personality clashes and arrogance, Sarah rejected her. Then Abraham threw Hagar out of the family, to keep peace. Wandering in the desert with her son, God visited Hagar and gave her promises of a hope and a future for both her and her son. Yes, He cared!

It is only in Jesus that you can find rest for your soul. (See Matthew 11:28.) He realizes you may be weary, you may be overburdened, but you can find rest. You don't have to do anything on your own. God wants to partner with you to solve all the issues you face. Your identity in Christ assures this.

Mental Health for Single Parents

One of the most prevalent mental health issues is depression. Depression can come from the guilt of being divorced. This is especially true of many Christian divorcees who vowed, "Till death do we part." Others can feel a heavy sense of failure because of the stigma of losing a spouse. Unresolved anger can build to a place where you don't want to rehash the issues in your head one more time, yet

you can't seem to get the thoughts out of your head. They become a heavy weight on your mind and heart and can be difficult to release.

If you have continuously negative thoughts about your ex-spouse, you will often find these come to the surface via a word slip, body language, or a facial expression that signals to your children as to how you feel. Are there issues you can forgive your ex-spouse for right now? Perhaps you can forgive little things that your ex learned growing up from his/her family. As time goes forward, you can begin to strengthen to the point of forgiving him/her for other actions and words. Your overall goal is to eventually achieve total forgiveness.

Emotional Health for Single Parents

You can lose yourself in your multiplied tasks, decisions, and care for the family. Single parents can be devoid of time for replenishing and healing. Set aside certain times for you to receive care. Prioritize these according to their recuperative effects and their costs of time and money, but do put them on the schedule!

Jesus only had three years to bring to salvation, train, and disciple a dozen "nobodies." He could have pressed his followers into a frenzy with an aggressive timetable. But He said, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31, NASB).

Physical Health for Single Parents

The normal healthful practices that are recommended for all adults obviously are important for you as a single parent. A proper diet, exercise, and regular checkups are important, as expected. With children now relying on you even more than before the divorce, you should be aware that your health has quite a bearing on you completing the job that is set before you.

I recommend that you find the promises of God throughout the Word and put each of your children's names into the verses. Recite these promises to reclaim who you are...a wonderful, blessed woman who has been given special permission to raise incredible creations straight from God's heart.

The blessing is there for the taking. Grab hold!