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10 Challenges of a Single Parent

It's not easy raising children. And if you have to do it on your own, or as divorced parent, with views on education and discipline, different to those of your ex, it can be a significant challenge.

Ideally, despite of being separated, you would be able to speak to your ex on how to raise your children and combine your efforts as parents, to work as a team. Nonetheless, there are instances when that best case scenario doesn't work out, for one reason or another, and so you need to be fully prepared for the challenges of being a single parent.

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Don't Let Children Divide and Conquer

Your children may try to take advantage of you not speaking to your ex. Hearing, "Dad said I could", especially if you disagree with the decision, can be enraging and frustrating. The way to avoid this, is staying in touch with your ex. The two of you could also set up some ground rules, for instance only allowing your children to do something, after you have both agreed. Your children need boundaries and rules, and shouldn't be allowed to use that trick to get what they want. It is understandable that you may want to spoil your children in order to compensate for the divorce, but that won't work to their long-term favor.

Staying Strong

You may feel like an emotional mess after the separation. It is not uncommon to feel lost in trying to go on with your life. Add your children's constant demand for attention and focus on your part, and it is easy to start feeling overwhelmed or frustrated. Don't be afraid to ask for

your family's help or to confide in a friend. It's normal to feel overburdened and to need time to settle your thoughts.

Don't Give in to Blackmail

You may feel guilty for putting your children through such a hard thing as a separation, but that's no excuse for them to do whatever they want. Although it is normal for children of all ages to test your boundaries – that is how they learn about the world – you also shouldn't be afraid of setting clear rules. Despite of the divorce, your children still need to behave, have good grades in school and be respectful towards you and others.

Communicating with Your Ex

It's key to keep at least a small channel of civilized communication open between you and your ex. Whether it's through phone calls, texts, e-mails, the mediation of friends and relatives, at least the important information regarding the welfare of your children needs to be conveyed. Avoid using your children as the messengers, as you don't want them to suffer the consequences of your ex being angry at the messenger.

Staying Calm with Your Ex in Front of the Children

If the separation has ended badly and you're still fighting, this can be a tricky thing to accomplish. Remember, your children could only suffer more when they watch you fight. Besides, they are not responsible for the arguments, so they shouldn't suffer the consequences. If you can't stand to be around your ex, then try to ask a member of your extended family to mediate conflict and pick up your kids on weekends for instance, or just talk to your ex through texts and e-mails, rather than phone calls or in person. Although this may present a significant challenge, remember that remaining civil with your ex, for the sake of your children, is the most wonderful approach you can have after the dissolution of the relationship.

Organizing Your Life

Although you may now have one less person to count on, you still have to work, plus do all of the housework, take care of the kids, and of yourself as well. If your children are a bit older, they can start helping out with small chores around the house. Not only will this take some of the weight off of you, but it will also give them a sense of responsibility. In this way, your children will be able to put themselves in your shoes and you will teach them the key life skill of empathy. You can also ask your extended family to help out or have friends sleep over.

Financial Novelty

There used to be two paychecks coming into the household, and now there's only one. You may find yourself in a tight spot for a while, and might need to control your spending. Certainly, you will regain your financial stability at some point, you just may need to rough it out for a while.

Dealing with the Extended Family

They may not agree with how you raise your children, the fact that you have decided to separate from your ex-partner, or other lifestyle choices you have made. Still, this is a time when it is important to keep your relatives close, because their help may turn out to be invaluable. Nevertheless, there should also be boundaries and a certain distance between you, so that you can keep your privacy. Just make sure you try and find a balance, without ever alienating your family. Although they can be frustrating at times, they are also your support system.

Holidays and Vacations

Sometimes it can be a true nightmare and you may find yourself without your kids on Christmas. It's sad and you'll probably have to endure some emotional suffering. However, remember that just like you need to adjust, so do your kids. The only thing you can do is be there for them, while staying loving and supportive, no matter what. Most importantly - stay strong with the help of your friends and family.

Living Your Own Life

You're single now and have needs, other than being just a parent. Try to find a new hobby, make new friends, go out every once in a while, and maybe start dating. Your children may try to discourage you at first, because this situation is new, strange, and perhaps even scary for them. However, if you take the time to talk to them and explain why you are trying to start a new life, gradually they will understand – after all, they love you and want you to be happy. What you shouldn't do is allow yourself to be lonely, you're entitled to happiness.

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