

How to Help Single Parents

Did you know that over 22-million children are being raised by single parents? I'm sure you can think of a few in your own life. Regardless of whether or not you are a single parent, we are all affected in one way or another. Have you ever thought to yourself, "I could really use some help" or "I wish I could assist in some way?"

Single parenthood is not easy, for parents or children. It can mean less income to support the family. If you can't arrange or afford childcare, keeping a steady job can become difficult. Single parents can feel isolated and alone without another person to share the daily tasks of raising a child and maintaining a home. Parents can easily become tired and distracted, making it difficult to be as consistent with discipline and rules as they need to or would like to be. Any of these sound familiar? We would like to offer some suggestions that may help you meet some of your needs while still providing your child with what they need as well.

Take a moment and think about your family and friends. Chances are, there is a person who comes to mind who is parenting on their own. Maybe your child's best friend only lives with one parent, or your next-door neighbor is a single parent. Ultimately, we are all touched by this topic. Whatever the cause, there is a higher number of single parent families in our country than ever before. That means all of us are touched by single parent families in one way or another. What are some ways that we can reach out and help them?

1. Provide hands-on help. Offer to babysit, pick up the dry cleaning, or drive their child to soccer practice. An extra set of hands can make a huge difference.
2. Keep them on the guest list. Don't leave out friends who are single because they don't have a partner or seem too busy. Loneliness can be a huge problem with single parents. Even if they can't make it, they will appreciate being included. This applies to holidays also. No one wants to spend holidays alone.
3. Surprise them with a freezer-friendly meal. What a treat to not have to worry about dinner!
4. Ask what it is like to be a single parent. Just be a friendly ear and listen. Being heard can be very validating.

Source: ministrytoparents.com

Tips to Help Single Parents



Helpful Tips

The number of single-parent households has more than tripled in the last 50 years. The following are some suggestions that you could maybe instill in your own routine.

Find a schedule that works for your family

There is no ideal schedule for everyone. Each family has different activities and responsibilities that make them unique.

1) If childcare and work schedules aren't in sync, talk with your boss about possibly adjusting your hours. Be honest about your situation.

2) Be very conscious about what you commit yourself and your children to do. You must be realistic about what you can accomplish. Consider location of activities, cost involved, time of activities/ practices. You can't do everything and be everywhere, but you also want to set the standard for your children to be accountable for what you agree to do. Make sure that you also set aside time to be at home and spend time together.

Childcare

Get creative about childcare. Create a babysitting network with friends and trade off on providing childcare. That way everyone gets time without the kids and no one has to pay babysitting fees.

Support System

One of the most common difficulties of single parents is that they feel isolated and alone. Don't be afraid to reach out to other people. Join forces with other parents in similar situations. This may be another single parent, or a friend whose spouse works odd hours. Maybe you have a friend whose spouse is deployed. Building community can provide social support and give a sense of belonging. Look into support groups through your church, social sites or YMCA. The other side of this is being willing to accept help if it is offered. Don't be too proud to admit that it is hard to do it alone.

Be organized

If your home is in disarray, it can be easy for things to become disorganized and hectic. Keeping things streamlined and organized can help daily routines to run more smoothly. Keep a calendar of daily activities so everyone knows what each day contains. Be prepared for urgent situations. Have emergency numbers of people you know you can count on and that you can call if something happens. We all get sick, even if you are solely responsible for the family. As children grow, hold family meetings. Talk about everyone's schedule and how to share responsibilities around the house. It helps when everyone is on the same page.

Encouragement

As overwhelming as it can be at times, there can be some benefits to being single. You can raise your child according to your own beliefs, principles and rules. Single parents often develop extremely close bonds with their children. Many children in single parent households may become more independent and mature because they have more responsibility within the family. Don't let yourself get caught up in couple envy, thinking that things would be better or easier with a partner. This could be true in some instances, but the truth is that there are problems with married couples too!

Above all, make sure to cover your family in prayer. Ask people you trust to pray for you and your family. Don't neglect your spiritual walk in the middle of your busyness.

Isaiah 41:10 says: "Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my Righteous right hand."

Jeremiah 29:11 says: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Every family situation is different. We hope that these suggestions can help your situation.