

Never make your child a pawn to manipulate or force your ex to yield to your wishes. If they say or do anything that you have an issue with, talk to them privately and do not put them down in front of your child.

Don't bottle up your feelings

Let close family and friends you trust know how you are feeling. If you find it hard to open up to them, you may find it helpful to contact us at Care for the Family. We can signpost you to counsellors who can provide a confidential, non-judgemental space where you can work through your feelings.

Look after yourself

Taking time out for yourself isn't selfish – it's important and necessary. Find ways to give yourself some 'me time' such as reading a book, having a long soak in the bath or going for a coffee with a friend.

Hopes and dreams

Keep a positive attitude and be inspired! You may not have the freedom or time to pursue your ambitions right now, but there will come a time when you can. Write them down and even put baby steps in place to start you off along the road to fulfilling your dreams.

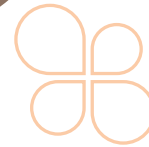


Helping you to be an even better mum or dad



For more information and tips on family life, visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk. You might like to:

- Attend a local *parenting course* www.careforthefamily.org.uk/courses
- Attend a *Take A Break* holiday. www.careforthefamily.org.uk/tab
- Read *The Sixty Minute Mother* or *The Sixty Minute Father* by Rob Parsons www.careforthefamily.org.uk/shop
- Visit the *Single Parenting* section of our website – www.careforthefamily.org.uk/singleparenting



Care for the Family is a registered charity and has been working to strengthen family life since 1988. Our aim is to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties.

For information on the wider work of Care for the Family visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk

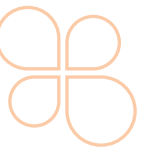
Care for the Family

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Top Tips For Parents



Single Parenting



Bringing up children is hard enough, but when you're parenting alone, it can be even more difficult. Here are some top tips for single parents to help you on this journey.

Time

Spend time together as a family without interruptions as often as you can. Make mealtimes 'us time' when you sit down around the table together and chat about how the day has gone, giving your children your full attention. Go out for day trips together or have pyjama days in. If finances are tight, find fun, free things to do such as going for a walk in the woods or watching movies at home. Plan one-to-one time for each child whenever possible to focus on, listen to and see them as the unique individuals that they are.

Stay healthy

Looking after children can be exhausting, so aim to build up your energy and resilience by increasing your level of fitness. The key to this is fitting exercise into your family's daily routine with activities such as swimming together or going for walks or bike rides.

Try to eat as much fruit and vegetables as you can, along with slow energy releasers such as wholemeal bread, porridge, and wholemeal pasta. These foods alleviate fatigue, improve your mood, and make you feel a lot better in the long run. Drink lots of water and get plenty of sleep whenever you can.



Be organised, prioritise and think ahead

Devise a structured family routine that works for you and your children so everyone knows what they are doing and when. This makes life easier for you and gives children a sense of security. Try to balance work and family life, prioritising what is important to you. Allocate times for meals, bedtimes and chores, and make shopping easier by ordering your groceries online to be delivered to your home. On more relaxed days, cook double quantities of food and freeze half to use on busier days. Put clothes or anything needed for the next day out the night before.

Discipline

Raising children alone means that you do not have anyone to back you up when children act up, so it is important to establish a clear set of house rules and agree on consequences for not sticking to these rules. Try and create rules and boundaries with the other parent or caregivers in your child's life. Be loving and consistent with discipline, making sure you mean what you say and following it through. Make sure you praise and encourage your children when they have done well.

Accept offers of help

Don't be too proud to accept help if it is offered. You are only one person and no one is superhuman. When family or friends want to help clean, babysit or run some errands for you, take them up on the offer.



Build a community of friends

A strong community can provide emotional support and a sense of belonging – the perfect antidote to the isolation that comes with single parenting. Local support groups are great ways to meet other parents in similar situations, and you can interact with others through online single parent groups and forums when you are unable to get out and about. Remember, you are not alone. Check out Care for the Family's Single Parent Support Facebook page.

Budgeting

It's important to have a budget as raising a family on one income can be very difficult. If you need help or advice with this, contact your local Citizens Advice who offer a free money advice service.

Respect your child's other parent

The manner in which you and your child's other parent treat each other, communicate and arrange access will affect your child.