

Nancy Vogl, a native of Michigan, is a writer, speaker, entrepreneur, single mother of three daughters (adding a fourth daughter to her brood a few years ago) and the coauthor of *Chicken Soup for the Single Parent's Soul*. Along with her daughter, Heidi, also a single mother, she is also the author of the upcoming illustrated children's book, *Am I a Color Too?* Its poignant, yet simple, message on diversity from a child's point of view is already garnering great praise.

Chicken Soup for the Single Parent's Soul can be purchased at your favorite bookstore, or for a personalized, autographed copy go to <http://www.nancyvogl.com>. Or consider having Nancy present at one of your upcoming PWP meetings where she can autograph books.

Dish Up a Bowlful of Single Parent Inspiration by Nancy Vogl

Parenting, while it is (mostly!) a joyful, rewarding role, is also one of the greatest responsibilities given to those of us privileged to have children. And for single parents, the everyday tasks are escalated and can seem daunting and monumental. Sometimes, it's a very lonely position to be in.

If you are a single parent, you are far from alone! According to statistics nearly one-third of all American households with children under the age of eighteen are single-parent families - equaling millions and millions affected by single parenting. This is an astonishing figure! That number does not include those of us who have children over age eighteen but are still faced with raising older teenagers and college-age children. (And really, does parenting ever really end, single mom or not?!)

Single parents are a special breed though! Somehow we find an uncommon tenacity to survive and thrive. Why? Simply because we have to! We have bills to pay, children to care for, obligations to meet, work schedules and double the household chores, with little time, if any, leftover for ourselves.

Yet there is a level of pride we feel because of our role as single parents. We find ourselves doing lots of things we never knew we could do, but had to because there was no one else to help. And for many of us, we find ways to go beyond the day-to-day living to attain things that matter to us...perhaps buying a house, opening a business, traveling somewhere wonderful, exploring our creativity, potential and purpose.

As for me, I've been able to take my experiences as a single mother and parlay them into something I've always dreamed of doing - writing - creating an edition for the most successful book series in the history of publishing, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*®.

Chicken Soup for the Single Parent's Soul, which was released in February, is filled with wonderful stories offering inspiration, hope and encouragement to single parents worldwide.

Having raised three daughters alone (adding a fourth daughter later on via the heart) for the last twenty years, I feel utterly qualified and blessed to have the opportunity to connect with other single moms and dads through this special "Chicken Soup" book.

For a sneak "taste" of one of my stories, the following, will hopefully resonate with many of you. And remember, you are not alone. Enjoy!

I Love You Double

Taking a big bite of his pancake at our favorite breakfast haunt, out of the clear blue, with syrup dripping out of the corner of his mouth, my five-year old grandson Tyler said, "How come I don't have a dad?"

The inevitable question had been asked and I was the one left to answer it. Think! What do I say? In an important moment such as this one, when one needs to think quickly and come up with the best possible response, it's amazing how much can run through one's head in a flash.

As I looked at Tyler's inquisitive face, it caused me to dredge up a lot of old memories...how challenging it had been raising my own three daughters alone. Countless times the girls would lament over not having a "normal" family and I would go overboard trying to make up for their "lot in life" as children of a single parent. Adding to that, my relationship with the girl's father was always strained, we never had enough money, and we were four girls trying to grow up together at the same time (yes, me included). Just trying to survive wreaked havoc constantly over the kind of home life I wanted to provide for my little family. All of it amounted to some pretty tough times, emotionally, mentally and physically. Over the years, guilt was an emotion I struggled with often - from taking the initiative to leave the girl's father to not being able to provide for them financially in a single parent home as well as they might have been in a two-parent home. I ached for them daily knowing none of us had it easy.

Snapping back to the present and looking at the beautiful child sitting across from me, I relished in the gift of his being. Tyler is the best of all bonuses bequeathed on me for all the years I struggled as a single mom. Knowing the legacy of single motherhood has been passed on to my oldest child, I desperately want my daughter and he to have more stability and mental freedom from the challenges of being in a single parent family than I had.

Tyler has posed a serious question of which I must find the answer right for him at this moment in time. Telling him that some children simply don't have a mom or dad just isn't adequate nor is it true in his case, yet five year olds demand the truth. But telling him that his father is in prison? That his presence here on earth was from a time when my daughter was having a tough time in life? Would that imply he was a mistake? No,

no child is ever "a mistake," never ever, regardless of the circumstances. But how do you explain any of this to a little boy? And what would his mother want me to say in this instance?

Then I realized what Tyler really needed to know...am I complete? do I matter? am I loved?...and the words came to me. "Tyler, you don't have a dad in your life right now but you do have a mom who loves you double." I repeated and emphasized, "Double," adding, "and with Grandma loving you as much as I do, make that triple!"

Reflecting on my seemingly brilliant reply, it suddenly hit me that the guilt I had immersed myself in for years and years had been useless. I realized I did the best I could given my circumstances and that, in my case, the girls fared far better with just a mom than they ever would have in a two-parent family fraught with constant fighting, turmoil and unhappiness. I loved them double too.

Responding to my answer, Tyler looked at me with a face full of satisfaction and replied, "Well, I guess that makes me pretty lucky then, doesn't it Grandma?"