

# **Parenting Without a Partner**

***Raising Happy, Healthy  
Children by Yourself***

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## **Introduction**

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading the book, *Parenting Without a Partner; Raising Happy, Healthy Children by Yourself*.

Are you trying to raise a child or children on your own? Parenting without a partner is one of the most challenging duties that adults take on in the world today, and it is also one of the most important. This book will give you some pointers on how to survive single parenthood, raise a child or children to be happy, responsible adults, and feel good about yourself in the end. If you are raising a child or children on your own, then this book is for you.

Thanks again for downloading this book, I hope you found it useful and enjoyable!

## **Chapter 1: Statistics on Single Parenting**

If you are a single parent in today's world, you might find comfort in knowing that you are not alone. Single parents are heads of more than 12.3 million households, according to the United States Census Bureau in 2012. Single mothers led the pack by raising 10.3 million of those children, which adds up to about 35% of U.S. children.

Ethnicity in single parent households varies. Statistics show that 16 percent of single parent households are white. Latinos amass 27 percent, and there are 52 percent African American single parent families in the United States. These single parent homes all face similar challenges.

The biggest challenge is poverty. With only one income, the family doesn't have many of the advantages that two-parent families have. It sometimes means that the parent will need to take on a second job to help to make ends meet. This is a real challenge, and many problems are caused by the absence of the only parent in the home. This is one reason that more single parents are looking into public assistance to help with expenses. The parent's age and education has a huge impact on this situation. More than half of low-income mothers are younger than 34 years old, and 61 percent of them do not have college educations, keeping them on the lower end of the wage level.

Healthcare is another issue for single parent families, although with Obamacare, this situation may soon be remedied—if it works. Of course there is always CHIPS that covers all children. But if the parent does not have healthcare, there can be a huge gap in the welfare of the family if the parent gets really sick or has an accident.

And of course, one of the main challenges is to actually have the time to “parent” your children when you have to work so hard to be able to provide the necessities for your family. When do you have time to spend with your children so that they feel the bonds of being a family?

These are the issues that single parents deal with every day of their lives. And there are no easy answers for these folks. The following chapters of this book will offer some suggestions to make this journey a little easier on single parents and help to handle the stressors of single parenthood. These tips will help parents to be all they can be!

## Chapter 2: Establish Family Rules & Enforce Them

One of the most important roles as a parent is to lay down the groundwork for teaching your children right from wrong. As a single parent, this means that you will not only set down the rules of your household, but you also will be the only parent who will be enforcing these rules. This is not an easy task.

First, sit down and think about the most important rules you want your children to observe. These will be the NON-NEGOTIABLE rules: the ones that will keep them safe, promote respect for each other and for your property, and keep your home a safe haven where they can grow and develop their self-worth.

These rules should be written down somewhere where they can be seen as reminders. Perhaps you can type them on your computer in a nice bold font and add some color or images to them. Then put them in a frame and hang them up on a wall, maybe in each of their bedrooms. This eliminates any “I didn’t know that was a rule” responses when one of the rules gets broken.

Next, you want to think about all of the little things that build up into bigger things that cause you stress. One suggestion here is to go into each room of your house or apartment and think about some basic rules that should be observed. Organize this list according to each room. For example:

**Bathroom:** (1) All wet towels must be hung over the shower curtain rod until they are dry, then put dry towels in the laundry. (2) When the toilet paper roll is empty, please get another roll out of the closet and replace empty roll. (3) Please keep toilet seat down when you are not using it.

**Kitchen:** (1) Put dirty dishes in sink or in dishwasher. (2) Keep cupboard doors closed. (3) When trash can is full, please take trash bag to garbage area outside and place a new bag in wastebasket. (4) When you use the last of something, please write on grocery list what needs to be replaced.

And so on for each room: these rules do not need to be hung anywhere, but when you sit down with your kids to go over these rules, you can always have them sign their initials to each one, showing you that they understand the rule and will follow it. This might sound like a military school, but it works. When you have all of these things written down, you discuss in detail the rule and why you made it a rule, you will have two possible responses: (1) the kids will follow the rules from the get-go, or (2) if or when they break a rule, you have an initialed copy of these rules that you can always pull out to verify that it is one of your rules, and they broke it.

It is a good idea to ask them if they have any rules that they would like to add to the lists. If the rule is something that they feel strongly enough about, they will be the police for that rule with their siblings. They make them their own, and then they are more likely to respect them and follow them.

No one wants to hear, “I told you ten times not to do that.” If you write them down, explain them, and have the kids initial the rules, there is no reason for them to offer any excuses. It is that simple. People on average only apply 25% of their listening potential at any given time, so it is very possible they don’t hear you when you tell them something that doesn’t affect them.

Then there are the chores that each child, regardless of what is his/her age, must have to do in order for them to be part of the family team. This is where the children should take part in dividing the chores. If your children are older and can do all of the chores you assign, they can rotate the chores. This can be marked on a calendar—who does what this week. If you want to give them an allowance that is up to you, but it should not be expected. How much do they pay you for doing their laundry or taxi-ing them where they need to go? A team does things together for the betterment of the team. A family does the same.

As far as the consequences for breaking the rules or not doing their chores, they should also be involved in setting the consequences. Offer them suggestions such as grounding, no TV or computer, extra chores, etc. When the kids help to create the tasks and the rules, they own them. What this means is that they KNOW what will happen if they break the rules. Do not let them slide on these basic rules. Enforce them!

## Chapter 3: Understand Each Other's Quality World

What is a quality world? William Glasser wrote a book called *Choice Theory*. In this book, he discusses a theory that he calls “quality world.” This is defined simply by what each person might feel are the most important things in their own world.

For instance, a single-mother might feel that the most important things in her world are (1) the happiness and health of her children, (2) a clean house, (3) the time she spends making memories with her children, (4) paying all of the bills on time (5) having enough money left over to do something special with her children, and (6) having a close relationship with them.

A three-year-old child will want sweet and tasty things to eat, Mommy to be there when he/she needs her, fun toys to play with, and a fuzzy pal to sleep with. That will be his/her quality world.

A teenage girl will place these things in her quality world: her friends at school, her boyfriend, her cell phone, her bedroom, make-up, her hair, and her clothes.

Now are you getting the picture? See how the lists change here? Are there any things in common in the three people’s lists? Did either child say that a clean bedroom is in their quality world? Mommy listed the children in most of the things that are in her quality world. Three-year-old child wanted Mommy there when he needs her. Teenager did not even mention Mom or siblings. See how vastly different the needs of the three people were?

So what happens when Mom’s second quality need—a clean house—is not being fulfilled? If baby decides that he/she doesn’t want to pick up baby’s toys, then how does Mom’s need get fulfilled? Does she yell at the child or stand there and make the baby pick up his/her toys? What then happens? Mom’s first need and last need are not being fulfilled either. So, is it worth damaging your relationship and spoiling the children’s happiness by forcing your second need for a clean house on children who do not have *that* need in their quality world? Make any sense?

Now you are probably thinking, “Yeah sure, do everything for your kids so they don’t have to do a thing. You become their servant, and they are your masters.” That is not the case, I assure you. This is where the reality and the choice come into play.

First, let’s look at reality. It is reality that you want a clean house; it is also reality that the kids really do not care how the house looks if they have to clean it? Being an adult, it should not be so difficult to see this as reality.

Second, look at choice. This is where the rubber meets the road. As mentioned earlier in the last chapter, if the kids play a role in creating the rules, they adopt

them and make them their own. This is where we have a sit-down meeting with the bigger kids and have them do the quality world exercise.

Draw a circle on a nice big piece of paper—one for each child. Then have each one use a marker to write in the circle all of the things that are important to them. This is how you find out what is in their quality world. While they are doing that, you do one for yourself. Then when everyone is finished doing this, you explain what they have just done. You discuss what is in your quality world. Show them how they can all help to fulfill the needs in each other's quality world. Give them examples of how it works. They will see that you have put things in your world that apply to them.

After you discuss yours, have each child do the same. Talk about the things in their worlds, and ask them what they think they should do to earn these things. If we all want to have these things in our quality worlds, we need to work for them. For example, if Sally's favorite thing to do is hang out with her boyfriend, and this is contingent on whether Mom drives her to his house, shouldn't she do something to help Mom's need for a clean house? If Mom allows her to go on a date with her boyfriend, would she help Mom by cleaning her own bedroom? If she doesn't clean her room, should Mom drive Sally to her boyfriend's house or let Sally use Mom's car?

The point is that we all have to help each other to keep what is in our quality worlds. It is a team effort. If Sally puts a clean bedroom in her quality world next to her boyfriend, then she can have 2 of the things that are there. So it is her choice. If she makes that choice, she will be the one who fulfills the needs in her quality world—and she will help to fulfill the one in her mother's.

If we have problems with the kids seeing that, then we will need to find a way to "help" them to see it. That means that we do not drive Sally to her boyfriend's house. We do not allow her to use our car. We merely say, "Sorry, it is not in my quality world." If she wants to see her boyfriend badly enough, she will find a new need to place into her quality world. It will be her choice. When the kids see that their choices affect the outcome of their needs, they will make better choices. As single parents, we need all of the cooperation we can get.

This exercise will help to enforce your rules in a way that makes the kids believe that it is in their best interest to follow the rules. It will also help them to think about others in the family and less about themselves. We are all responsible for our own happiness, and as a family, your happiness includes the rest of your family. As a family, we work together to help all of our important needs to become reality.

## **Chapter 4: Education VS Discipline**

There has always been a fine line between discipline and learning. The synonyms for “discipline” include punishment, correction, chastisement, castigation, and restraint. What kind of connotation do these words emit? Don’t they sound very negative? What kind of picture do you conjure up when you think about these terms?

Why do we discipline our children? Most of you would answer, “We discipline them because we are trying to teach them right from wrong.” Isn’t that merely a teaching position? What if the teachers at schools would discipline their students instead of teaching them? Would we be in the principal’s office immediately demanding that the teachers “teach” them and not punish, castigate, or chastise them?

If we really feel that way, why do we punish them when they do something wrong? Why not just teach them like we say we want to do? When children do something wrong and they get spanked, what have you just taught them? You have taught them that they get hit when they do something bad or wrong. You have taught them that it is okay to hit someone when they do something wrong. You have taught them that violence is okay. You have taught them to fear you. Do you want your child to fear you? If you are a single parent, whom can your child turn to if they are afraid of their only parent?

If you are a single parent, don’t you want the time you spend with your child to be quality time? Do you want to spend what little time you have with them fraught with this kind of negativity? There are so many different ways to teach your children right from wrong.

First, there is example, your example that you set for them to follow. There is a saying that our children do not always follow our guidelines, they follow us. Not sure who wrote that, but it surely has some good advice. A good parent never says, “because, I said so!” “Do as I say and not as I do” is wrong in so many ways. Children learn what they live. So take the time to teach your children not only the rules, but also why it is a rule, what can happen if the rule is not followed—consequences and outcomes of making bad choices. This is how we teach things.

Punishment should only be given when a child deliberately breaks a rule, knowing the consequences and possible outcomes. This is where the written rules come into play. And there should never be any kind of physical violence as a punishment. Once you know what is in their quality world, than that is where the consequences should lie.

## **Chapter 5: Quality Time**

When you are a single parent and you have to work long hours making ends meet to support your family, it is very important to spend quality time with your children. When your time is so limited, your focus must be on them. It may seem so overwhelming, but it will be worth it. Consider eliminating that clean house need for now and be with your kids.

There are many things that you can do together that do not cost a lot of money. Set aside a time each week for family time. Most families do this on Sunday. Few people have to work on Sunday. Go on a day trip somewhere not too far away. Go to the park and have a picnic. Go to a lake to swim. Go to free museums. Rent a movie and make popcorn. The most important part of all of this is just doing things together and bonding as a family. Don't make your time with them boring or full of unpleasantries.

You will have a lot of time after they are grown to clean your house and do things by yourself and for yourself. When we choose to be a parent, whether we are single parents or become single parents for whatever reason, our first obligation is to parent our children. We come second. That was our choice. And time goes by so fast, that they are grown before we know it. At that point it is too late to make up for time we might have missed with them while they were growing up.

Don't let that happen to you. Regrets will haunt you forever. Sharing good times with your kids not only helps you to enjoy them, but you all will know each other better, and you will form close bonds that will last a lifetime. People say that you should be parents, not friends, to your children. Why not be both?

## **Chapter 6: Be Supportive**

It is a parent's duty to teach and support their children through their learning process. This means that you should be involved in the things that are very important to them. Help them to build their self-esteem by encouraging them to get involved in positive activities. Then, when they do, be there to support them and to cheer them on!

As a single parent, this will again require your time, but what else do you have to give to them that is more important than time? It is the only thing that you can give them that you cannot buy. So that makes it more valuable than anything you can put a price on.

If your child chooses to get involved in sports, that will reinforce the team/family values and skills. It is a win-win situation for both of you. There are other activities that would be good for your children too. Schools have many musical and art programs for them as well. Outside of school there are dance and music lessons, Karate, the YMCA, and so many others. And your participation and support of your children in their activities shows them that you really care about them and are proud of them.

If your children work hard and something happens that they are being unjustly blamed for something or just being treated unfairly, you should 'have their backs' (as they call it). Support them in their quests. Don't assume that the authoritarians are always right. They aren't. When this happens, be their leg to stand on. Show your children that it is right to defend themselves and to stand up for what they believe in.

There is no such thing as black and white. There are various shades of grey; some are whiter and some are blacker. That means that there is plenty of room for some people to be right and some to be wrong. And if you support your children when they believe that what they feel is right, they will not only develop self-respect, but they will respect you for supporting them.

Help them to help themselves when it comes to their education. Guide them gently, showing them where they can find the answers to their questions. Don't just tell them the answers or do their homework for them. Teach them how to look it up! Then when they find the answers, they will feel very good about themselves. And you will be proud of them, and they will take pride in knowing that they found it themselves. The best part is that they will learn that information better than if you had just told them the answer, and they will have learned how to help themselves the next time they have a question or need help!

## **Chapter 7: Family Meetings**

A very good idea is to have a family meeting every week. This meeting should be on a Sunday evening, just before the new week is about to begin. The purpose of this meeting will be to summarize the week's activities, check in on each other, and to prepare for the new week ahead. As a single parent, you need to be on top of things so you can organize your schedule. You will be amazed how these meetings will be the glue to hold your family together and make things easier for you to handle.

The best place to have your meetings is at the kitchen or dining room table. Everyone should be sitting up and not lounging or slouching on a couch or the floor. Have a calendar and markers ready and a pad and pen to write with.

The first topic should be "how was your week?" Each family member must have at least one comment to make. For every negative comment that is made, there should be a positive comment. Stick to this rule; it helps to prove to your children that there are positive things that are evident in their lives. When we focus and discuss only the negative things that we deal with every day, then the tone of the meeting will be negative, no matter how hard you try to make it positive.

Who should go first? Make it vary; don't always make the same person go first. Leave it up to them to volunteer or set up fun little ways to determine who will be first to talk. Change the order for each meeting. One week, you can start with the oldest and go down to the youngest, and the next week, do the opposite. Use alphabetical order, using the first letter of the kids' first or middle names. Go by the month of their birthdays. Be creative with your order patterns. This can make it a fun meeting for them.

When a child makes a negative comment, put everyone in charge to come up with a solution to that problem. Do this until the issue is addressed and the child is satisfied with a solution. Then this child must make a positive statement, and everyone offers their support or praise. When the children are finished, then it is time for you to share your thoughts. The same rule applies to you. You must have one positive statement for every negative one. This shows the children how important it is for each one of them in being a part of a family that communicates with each other. A family united is what counts.

After the issues have been addressed, it is then time to discuss the upcoming week. You should have a large calendar—one of the big desk calendars works really well for this step. Each child will report to you what kind of obligations he or she has for the week. This is a great way to be sure that all of your children will be able to meet their obligations, when and what they need to do for school and extracurricular activities. Being organized and informed helps things to run most smoothly.

This will enable you to work your schedule around seeing that they all have transportation to be where they need to be. It will allow you to seek help if you need it. Then you can avoid surprises at the last minute.

When you are the only parent in a family situation, there are so many things that need to be addressed. These things can cause huge problems when they pop up at the last minute. This calendar must be used with respect; for example, one person cannot write really big and not allow enough space for others. Perhaps each child could have a different color ink to write down his or her activities. Or the parent can do the writing.

This meeting offers an occasion where each person can be heard and have their problems addressed with the other members of the family to help and support them. Also, sharing their successes can help to show a sense of pride in each other. Communicating problems with the whole family can easily solve them, when more “heads” think about the problems and offer solutions.

Be consistent with the meetings and the rules of the meetings. Family meetings are not to be complaint sessions only—that is why there must be a positive for every negative. Make your family a democratic family—where every person’s thoughts and ideas are welcomed and respected.

This is a good time to make plans for fun things to do with your kids. Making plans for a happy outing gives everybody something to look forward to when the school week is ended. After your meeting is over, play a board game or do something that will be a fun bonding session. It will help to seal the deal of the meeting.

## **Chapter 8: Establish a Support System**

Being a single parent is quite a task, so it is important that you have some kind of support system for situations when you need help. There has to be someone who can help you and your children when push comes to shove.

If your parents are still alive, they will probably be happy to help where they are able. If you don't have them, perhaps a sibling or older nieces or nephews may be able to help you if you need someone to babysit or to provide transportation for your children to an activity. There are usually other parents who can help out with carpooling and/or sharing transportation duties.

Perhaps there might be a "Parents without Partners" group in your area. This is a great network of people who are in the same situation that you are, and they all tend to help one another in these kinds of situations. They would also be a good group to plan family activities with; you never know, you just might meet someone there who has the same family values that you have, and a perfect match could be made! Then you would not be a single parent any more. You would be part of another kind of parenting problem, a blended family!

Either way, being a parent requires a great deal of work, and single parenting requires even more. Work hard to make your family a well-oiled machine that works together, plays together, but most of all, stays together.

## **Works Cited and Consulted**

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<<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/single-parents-4202.html>>

## **Conclusion**

Thank you again for downloading this book!

I hope this book was able to help you to begin the process of learning how to be a loving and effective single parent. You have been given the most important role of raising life's most precious gift. Give your children a chance at a great life that starts out with a parent's unconditional love and teaching them the skills that they will need as adults in today's world. It is definitely worth the effort!

If you found this book to be useful and would recommend it to other single parents, please take the time to share your thoughts and post a review on Amazon. It would be greatly appreciated!

Thank you and good luck!

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