

It's Not Easy To Be A Single Parent

How do you cope with the challenge of bringing up your children alone? Or how do you learn to live apart from them? How do you get the information you need to solve parenting, financial and legal problems? How do you rebuild a life that seemingly has come apart? And how do you do all of this --alone?

Our society for many years has been based on the strengths of the two-parent family, and it has been slow to accept that single parent families can be strong, too. Even today, when single parents head more than one-half of all families raising children, our institutions often do not allow for their special circumstances, and our leaders often do not appreciate their hardships or victories.

There are nearly 31 million single parent families today, but nevertheless single parents often feel alone and that no one understands. Learning to adjust to single parenting takes time and effort. For some of us, this can be a period of crisis, for others, a turning point in life.

We are Here To Help

And we've been here since 1957. Parents Without Partners is an international nonprofit educational organization of custodial and non-custodial single parents - widowed, divorced, separated or never married. Since our first chapter was organized in 1957, we have joined together for mutual support so that our single parent homes can provide a healthy family environment for our children.

Our chapters are located in all 50 states and most Canadian Provinces. Our members represent a typical cross-section of North American society, including all types of occupations, educational levels, faiths and political beliefs. What we have in common is that we are single, and we care about doing a good job in rearing our children.

What Can We Do For You?

The Most important benefit we offer is that you will have the opportunity to meet sympathetic and understanding men and women within our chapters who have experienced firsthand the challenges of single parenting. You can gain a new perspective when you discover you're not alone, that others have triumphed over the same difficulties.

You will learn that your children need not be "victims" of a single parent situation. Your children will benefit, too--not only from the PWP activities planned for them - but from the strength and self-reliance you can gain from the new parenting skills you can develop.

You'll be eligible for all the benefit programs we develop just for our members, such as group insurance coverage at competitive rates, a low-cost credit card, discounts on travel, national child support collection services and others.

As a volunteer based organization you will be asked to help at various activities. You get out of the organization what you put into it.

What Our Chapters Do

Our chapters, with professional advice, conduct a variety of programs, including:

- ❖ Educational programs and discussion groups on subjects such as parent-child relationships in single parent families, effective communication, learning to love again, how to be alone without being lonely, and a variety of other topics. Some chapters run special programs for the widowed, never married, or divorced.
- ❖ Recreational activities for the children, at low cost, such as camping, hiking, picnics, bowling and swimming parties, or crafts. PWP may be the one place where children from single parent homes meet others in the same situation, where they need not feel different, where they are never in the minority. Some chapters conduct discussions groups where parents and children together explore family concerns.

- ❖ Social activities for adults provide opportunities to develop a circle of friends and a supportive network. Single parents meet others who care about family life and learn to reenter the social world in a supportive, non-threatening atmosphere.

- ❖ Community service or advocacy projects, where chapters reach out to single parents in the community or share their collective experiences. Chapters may conduct community educational programs on divorce, raise awareness about child abuse, lobby for legal changes helping single parents, compile listings of community resources, or raise funds for children's hospitals, among a variety of projects.

What Our International Organization Does

- ❖ As the largest single parent organization in the world, Parents Without Partners conducts many programs to benefit its members and single parents in general. PWP:

- ❖ Conducts an advocacy program in Washington, D.C. to better the lives of children in single parent homes. Recent efforts included work on child support enforcement laws, tax reform beneficial to single parents, a study of solutions to visitation problems, fair housing and parental leave legislation.

- ❖ Makes available publications and bibliographies helpful to single parents on topics like custodial fathers, child support, child rearing, visitation, and educational policies.

- ❖ Provides group insurance programs, access to a PWP credit card, other services and a scholarship program for PWP children.

Ten Tips For Single Parents

1. Ask for help if you need it. Remember, it is a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek help and accept it when problems are overwhelming. Seek our professional counselors in your community, or from PWP and friends.
2. Allow yourself and your children time for readjustment.
3. Remember that a single parent home does not have to be harmful to your children, and does not attribute all difficulties to your single situation. Whether you are the visiting parent or the custodial parent, your ability to cope makes an important difference.
4. Allow bitterness, jealousy, blaming, revenge, and self-pity to disappear from your life. Such emotions drain energy from the important tasks of building a good home for your children and a new life for yourself.
5. Allow your children to respect and love the other parent. Do not belittle the parent or involve the children in battles, or force them to "choose". Remember that the children's feelings and perceptions of parents are not the same as those of a spouse for a spouse.
6. Try to remember the positive parts of your marriage, but without living in the past. Share the good memories with your children.
7. Make sure your children understand they did not cause the single parent situation and that they are not being rejected by the other parent. Make sure they know you will not abandon them, and that you will be able to care for them.
8. Be open and honest, share your feelings with your children and let them share theirs with you. But do not impose your feelings, or demand their confidences.
9. Make an effort to think of yourself as an individual and not part of someone else. Examine old feeling of dependency and neediness. The value you place on yourself will be reflected in your children's sense of self-worth.
10. While it is easy to become wrapped up in your children, take some time for yourself. Use your single status as an opportunity for growth and development. Make each day count by trying something new or making new friends. Remember that your situation will change old relationships and will lead to new ones.

How Can You Join?

To be eligible for membership, you must be a parent, and you must be single. You may be widowed, separated, divorced or never married. Custody is not a requirement.

Check your phone book or community hotline to find a chapter near you. If you cannot find one, and have a computer, check the PWP International Website. Chapters will be shown by zip code in your area.

Chapter dues are set by individual chapters, but usually range from \$30 - \$50 a year.

Why Not Form A Chapter?

New chapters are always being chartered. If no chapter exists in your community, we invite you to form one. With a minimum of 20 members, you may obtain a charter. Founding a chapter is a rewarding experience, and you will know you have brought help to the many single parents in your community.

Contact: Parents Without Partners, Inc.

By looking in the phone book for the nearest chapter or see our website at:

www.parentswithoutpartners.org



**ARE YOU A
SINGLE PARENT?**

Separated?

Divorced?

Widowed?

Never-Married?

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