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### **Did You Know That Father's Day Is Really For Single Dads?**

Father's Day was started as a way to honor a single parent. Sonora Dodd celebrated the first Father's Day on June 19, 1910 in honor of her father, William Smart, who raised six children by himself after his wife died in childbirth. Dodd picked June because it was her father's birth month. In 1972, President Richard Nixon signed a law making Father's Day a permanent part of our calendar.

Statistics show that 40 percent of America's children do not live with both biological parents. The National Fatherhood Initiative reports that more than 27 million children now live apart from their fathers. The organization's National Survey on Fathering found that 99 percent of the men surveyed said being a father was important, 30 percent of children who do not live with their biological father have no contact with their nonresident father, and only 40 percent have contact once or more per month.

"Fathers can overcome some of the long-term consequences of divorce by cultivating a close connection with their children," said Ken Canfield, Ph.D., founder of The National Center for Fathering and the new director of the Center for the Family at Pepperdine University.

Fatherless homes account for 63 percent of youth suicides, 90 percent of homeless/runaway children, 85 percent of children with behavior problems, 71 percent of high school dropouts, 85 percent of youths in prison, well over 50 percent of teen mothers. No doubt about it, guilt is the Father's Day gift that keeps on giving for those who worry that their divorce has wrecked their kids. So, it's no surprise that 91 percent of those surveyed feel that America is suffering from a "father absence" crisis. Parenting is definitely harder when you're not physically present. All else being equal, 81 percent said that men perform best as fathers if they are married to the mothers of their children.

Here are eight rules for the road to help you navigate Father's Day when you're divorced.

1. Recognize this may be an especially tough holiday for dad. "It's especially risky for men not to be connected with family," said Vincent DiCaro, Director of Public Affairs for National Fatherhood Initiative. "When men start to become disconnected from family, they are more likely to get involved in behaviors that are going to be harmful to themselves or to their family.
2. Give the kids space to be real. Divorce is hard on children. "Many children feel that one parent is responsible for the break up of their home. Since most children don't want

a divorce, they may feel angry for a while," said Dr. Judith Wallerstein, who has spent 30 years studying the effects of divorce on families.

3. Settle your feelings about the stepfather. "Men tend to be very competitive and territorial. But, when they're parenting the same child, they need to think about being on the same football team, not opposing teams," said Tom Wohlmuth, President of Stepfamily Network.

4. Don't let money limit you. "You show you value them as a person by how much time you spend with them," said Wohlmuth.

5. Don't let distance stop you. "Celebrate Father's Day regardless of whether or not you will see your kids," said DiCaro. "Send them a card, call them, or send them an e-mail telling them how much you love them and how proud you are to be their dad."

6. Make way for daddy. "In a divorce, it's helpful to the children if the mother encourages them to participate in the Father's Day celebration, especially in joint custody families. Where the mother is less friendly that can be a problem," said Dr. Wallerstein.

7. Practice forgiveness. Maintain a consistent relationship with your child and don't get pulled into dissing their mother no matter what she's done. "When you do that, you put the child in cycle of despair because you're constantly saying what a lousy mom she was," said Dr. Canfield.

8. Take responsibility to get what you want. Traditionally, mom helps the kids pick out gifts for dad and takes care of figuring out dinner. If you're a divorced dad, you can try asking your ex if she'd be willing to do this. You can return the favor by helping the kids get ready for her birthday or Christmas or any other special day.

"In the end, it's about love, respect, generosity, kindness, understanding, and support for one and other to reach our full potential as humans," said Wohlmuth. And isn't that what good manners are all about?