



Employee Assistance Program Services Newsletter

SPRING 2006

10 Ways to Reduce Single-Parent Stress

One of every four American children today lives in a single-parent home. And though the circumstances may vary (some parents are divorced, widowed, and others are single parents by choice), the reality is that solo parenting is often stressful, demanding and hectic. If you are a single mom or dad, there are 10 things you can do to help minimize the stress in your life -- and bring back the joy of parenting.

1. **Get a Handle on Finances**

Raising a family on one income, or relying on an ex-spouse for child support, can be one of the hardest aspects of parenting alone. That's why it's important to take steps to budget your money, learn about long-term investments, plan for college and retirement, and if possible, enhance your earning power by going back to school or getting additional job training.

2. **Set-Up a Support System**

All single parents need help -- whether it's someone to watch the kids while you run out to do errands or simply someone to talk to when you feel overwhelmed. While it's tempting to try to handle everything alone, ask friends and family members for help. You could join a single-parent support group, or, if finances allow, hire a trusted sitter to help out with the kids or someone to assist with housework.

3. **Maintain a Daily Routine**

Try to schedule meals, chores, bedtimes and other family functions at regular hours so that your child knows exactly what to expect each day. A consistent routine will help your child feel more secure and help you feel more organized.

4. **Be Consistent with Discipline**

Children thrive when they know which behaviors are expected of them and which rules they need to follow. If you are divorced or separated, work with your spouse to create and observe consistent rules and methods of discipline (there's nothing more stressful than having one parent undermine the other). If your child has other caregivers, talk to them about how you expect your child to be disciplined.

SPRING IS IN THE AIR

Spring is when life comes alive in everything around us. Everything is fresh and new and the air smells different in ways that defies description. The sky is bright blue and the grass is beginning to take on that beautiful green glow that only is seen in spring. "If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant".

In the Spring, colors come and go and intermingle in ways that have not been seen for months. The vibrancy of life can be seen all around with the feeling of new energy and new opportunities. It is that freshness of opportunity that gives you the drive to remove the cobwebs from your mind and to begin anew to see life as the miracle it is. "Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility."

Spring is such a meaningful time of the year. Many miss the opportunities that spring brings and cast its beauty away. Enjoy every moment of spring this year and become a new spirit. Allow the newness of spring to apply itself to the world around you and see it change in the direction of your heart.



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10 Ways to Reduce Single-Parent Stress—Cont.

5. Answer Questions Honestly

Inevitably, questions will come up about the changes in your family, or about the absence of one parent. Answer your child's questions in an open, honest, and age-appropriate way. Make sure that your child gets the help and support he needs to deal with difficult emotions.

6. Treat Kids like Kids

With the absence of a partner, it's sometimes tempting to rely too heavily on children for comfort, companionship, or sympathy. But children have neither the emotional capacity nor the life experience to act as substitute adult partners. If you find yourself depending on your kids too much, or expressing your frustrations to them too often, seek out adult friends and family members to talk to. Or seek counseling, if necessary.

7. Abolish the Word Guilt from your Vocabulary

It's always easy for single parents to feel guilty about the time they don't have or the things they can't do or provide for their children. But for your own sense of well-being, it's better to focus on all the things you do accomplish on a daily basis and on all the things you do provide. If you're feeling guilty about a divorce or other disruption in your home life, think about joining a support group for other divorced parents. Focus on helping your child (and yourself) get the help you need.

8. Take Time for your Children

Even though the piles of laundry and dirty dishes may beckon, set aside time each day to enjoy your kids. And most important, focus on the love between you and on your relationship as a family.

9. Take Time for Yourself

Likewise, it's important to schedule time for yourself. Even if it's something as simple as reading a book, taking a warm bath, or having a chat with a friend, setting aside a little personal time will give you a chance to refuel.

10. Stay Positive

It's easy to become overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and demands of single parenthood. On top of that, you may be experiencing the pain of divorce or the death of a spouse. Despite all of your own feelings, though, it's important to maintain a positive attitude, since your children are affected by your moods. The best way to deal with stress is to exercise regularly, maintain a proper diet, get enough rest, and seek balance in your life. If you're feeling sad, it's okay to share some of your sentiments with your children, but let them know that they are not the cause of problems and that good times lie ahead for all of you.

If you or someone you know is struggling in the role of being a single parent, or have other parenting concerns, we can help! Call your employee assistance program, AssistNOW at 216.431.4140. You can also access our newly updated website @ www.assistnow.org for information on child care, elderly care, emotional problems and a variety of other topics.



Alfred Restaino is the new Director of AssistNOW, the EAP Division of Recovery Resources. Al brings with him more than 25 years of experience as a sales and marketing executive, and has enjoyed great success with both business start-ups and business turn-arounds.

Al began his employment on Tuesday, January 17th, 2006. His goal is to double AssistNOW's revenue over the next four years through enhanced program training as well as increasing our value to customers. As you know, profits from AssistNOW go back to Recovery Resources and to the community.

Al's success is our success!

Remember,
for confidential assistance
call

AssistNOW
The EAP Division of
Recovery Resources
216.431.4140
1.800.840.4654