

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS

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Single Parent, **Working Parent**

Eighty-four percent of children living with one parent live with their mothers, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Single fatherhood, too, is significant, with more than 2 million children living in father-only families as reported in 2009.

If you are a single parent, you also are most likely a working parent. Whether you share joint custody with your former spouse or are a full-time solo parent, you know that juggling work and family is a magic trick that sometimes even you cannot fully master.

Do not feel guilty

Studies have shown that many single parents feel tremendous guilt about leaving their children in order to work. But according to the U.S. Census Bureau, only 14 percent of all families have a full-time stay-at-home parent. Times have changed. The emphasis is on quality, and you are able to provide that as any parent.



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Build a network

Other working parents can offer useful advice, support and child care in a pinch. Places to network include a new mother's group, day care and your child's activity clubs or sports associations. Wherever there are other parents, there are undoubtedly other single, working parents.

Simplify your morning

A single working parent is on double duty to get sleepy children off to school, and to get to work on time. Here's how you can simplify your routine:

- **Start the night before.** Set out clothes and pack lunches — for you and your child(ren).
- **Wake up early.** Give everyone in the family more time to get going.
- **Set a timer** to ring 10 minutes before the bus or carpool is due to arrive to avoid the last-minute scramble.

Reconnect after work

Spend the first few minutes when you get home connecting with your children. This does not have to take long—just enough for him/her to know that you are “present.” Then you can go on to whatever you need to accomplish.

End the day on a positive note

After dinner, play a game, read a book together, color or talk. Keep your time together light and soothing. Try not to lecture or criticize. You and your children have had a busy day and this is your time to unwind and relate. Most of all, end the day on a positive note.

Make lists and reminders

Have many, such as:

- **Meal plans.** Plan a week of meals when possible.
- **To dos.** Make a list of your own and one to share with your child.
- **Fall backs.** This is a list of people willing to fill-in on snow days, sick days or emergencies.
- **The calendar.** Keep it visible; let your child add things, too.

Sources: *Parents Without Partners* www.parentswithoutpartners.org; *Single Parents Association* www.singleparents.org; “Only One Pair of Hands: Ways That Single Mothers Stretch Work and Family Resources”, by Hertz, Rosanna. *Community Work & Family*, Vol 1, No. 1, 1998; *The Complete Single Mother: Reassuring Answers to Your Most Challenging Concerns* by Andrea Engber and Leah Klungness, Ph.D. Adams Publishing, 1995; *Single Mothers by Choice* by Jane Mattes, C.S.W. Random House, 1994; *The Single Mother's Book: A Complete Guide to Managing Your Children, Career, Home, Finances and Everything Else* by Joan Anderson. Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 1990; *Single Parents: Mother and Fathers Embracing the Challenge* by Shoshana Alexander. Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

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