Employee Assistance Program
Administered by Magellan of California

Living Healthy
Working Well

# Single Parenting

Raising a child in a two-parent home is a tough job. Raising a child as a single parent can be overwhelming. Surveys indicate that single parent families represent 30% of all U.S. households and more than 70% of children will spend some time in a single parent home.[1] This article offers some helpful tips about single parenting.

## How Can I Make Parenting Alone Easier?

Keeping yourself organized can make single parenting a bit easier. Here are some simple tips to help you stay on top of your activities:

- ***Make lists.*** Don't try to remember everything. Instead, write down your tasks and put the most important things at the top of your list. Keep a notepad by your phone or bed and write down things as they come to mind.
- ***Pay bills all at one time.*** Dealing with your finances can be stressful. Set aside regular times to pay your bills so that you complete this task and move on to more enjoyable activities.
- ***Have a schedule and stick to it.*** Having a routine can be helpful for both you and your child. Set aside a specific day or night each week to do your house cleaning, grocery shopping, and errand running.
- ***Assign tasks to older children.*** Giving your children their own tasks will not only help you, but it will make them feel good knowing they are contributing to the family.

[1] *Information adapted from www.divorcewizards.com*

## Making Time For Yourself

Even though it may be difficult, it is important to set aside time for yourself. If you need help freeing up your time, look to these resources:

- ***Friends and Family.*** Often it seems hardest to ask favors of those closest to us. Ironically, friends and family are usually the most willing to help. Don't feel guilty about reaching out to those around you.
- ***Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (www.bbbsa.org).*** If you feel that your child isn't getting as much one-on-one time with adult role models as you would like, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BB/BS) of America can help. BB/BS helps single parents by pairing up adult volunteers and children.
- ***Single Parent Support Groups.*** Get to know other single parents in your area. If a single parent support group doesn't exist in your neighborhood, start one. Just because you're a single parent doesn't mean you have to do everything alone.

# Five Stress Relievers for Single Parents

Does your schedule look like this?

6:00 a.m. – Wake up and get yourself dressed
6:30 a.m. – Wake up the children and get them dressed
7:00 a.m. – Prepare and eat breakfast
7:30 a.m. – Get ready to leave for school and work
8:00 a.m. – Drop the children off at school
8:30 a.m. – Arrive at work

And that's just the morning! Later on, there's after-school care, after-school sports, dinner to be made, homework to check, lunches to be packed, and more. Then it starts all over again tomorrow! Face it, being a single parent, or any parent for that matter, can be stressful. But when you don't have anyone to share the load with, things can be particularly tough. Below are five ways to help you reduce the stress of such a demanding lifestyle.

1. **Be thankful for the little things.** As the old saying goes "count your blessings." Jot down all the good things that happen each day or each week. Put them in a box or drawer and look at them when you're having a really bad day.

2. **Team up with other parents.** You don't have to do it alone! Friends and family can help. Carpooling is a wonderful way to get children to those numerous activities while giving you time to get other things accomplished. Also, taking turns watching the kids is a great way to free up some time for yourself.
3. **Renew yourself.** A stressed parent is not the best parent. It is critical for your children's well-being that your individual needs are met. Set aside time when you can be alone to do what you want to do. The break can benefit both you and your children.
4. **Get moving!** Exercise is a great stress reducer, and it's good for you too! The next time you start to feel stressed, take a brisk walk, run, or bike ride. Do something to release the stress. A little fresh air can help clear your mind.
5. **Relax with music.** Try listening to some gentle music when you are tense. Turn your bedroom into a retreat, close the door, turn off the phone, and let the soft sounds of music take you away. Explain to your children that your closed door means you want some quiet time alone, and you are not to be disturbed unless it's an emergency. That way you can get a break even with the kids at home.

**Remember . . .**

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to you and your eligible dependents. EAP counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to discuss your concerns and provide confidential assistance at no cost to you. Just call us at 1-800-6-EAP-4-CA (1-800-632-7422). If you are using a TTY, please call 1-800-542-2833. As part of your EAP, you now have access to MagellanAssist. Visit today at http://www.dpa.ca.gov/benefits/other/eap/Assist.shtm

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