

Sharing From a Mum...

What is the single most difficult aspect of single parenting?

I think it varies from person to person. Being a mother with sole custody of my three children, I feel my difficult tasks are to discipline the children, help them in the healing process and keep this “special” family together.

At the time of my divorce, my three children were in their teens. Teens and adolescent years are by far the most difficult time for the parents and I had to do it all alone, as my ex-spouse was not keen in co-parenting. It has been almost three years since my divorce. I tried my best to make my children feel that we are still a family and we continue to do the things we used to do before the divorce.

To keep the family together I joined the Single Parent Support Group in my church called “HOPE”. We did the RAINBOWS programme together, at the same time my children got to interact with the other children from single parent families and they realised that they were not alone. We had many activities together with the support group such as ice-cream treats for the children, organising trips to the movies and arranging picnics and potluck parties during the festive season. My children “gel” very well with the other children, and we parents also became good friends supporting one another in our journey.

Letting my children know my whereabouts is also very important for me. I call them each time when I am late or have to detour to run some errands on my way home. I let them know in advance if I have to be out with my friends and remind them to take care of themselves. I call this phone management. I call very often to check if they have had their meals and done their homework. I teach my children that wherever they are and whatever they are doing, I have to be informed. I will then inform the other siblings so that they are aware of what is happening and thus, we will be able to plan activities around each other's time.

I can proudly say that during the week, we spend almost every night eating dinner and preparing the meals together. It allows us to talk about work, school and friends. They do the washing up. This instills in them a sense of responsibility, independence and teamwork.

One way of scheduling special family time is by implementing family outing during the weekend, going to church, movies, plays or some public events together. I would give them a simple treat of chicken rice, *dim sum* or a fast food meal, which is what most children love to have. Sometimes they get a special supper!

Grocery shopping is another way we stay together as a family. We do it together. The children not only help to carry the shopping items, it also gives them a chance to buy their favourite tidbits and decide what meals they would like to have the following week.



My children care for one another. They are very willing to be involved in one another's activities. When my eldest daughter performs in plays or dramas, we will all be there to support her. We will also attend school fun fairs or sports day as a family.

Sometimes I have to be a cool and hip mum by going to places they like to go and doing things they like to do like watching children movies, "The Incredibles", going to the "Ballet under the Stars" or even to the disco. Like they say, if you cannot win them, join them!

I include physical exercise into my routine and my children join me for walks, cycling and swimming. My children are also involved in family birthdays, weddings and festive occasions as a form of re-affirming our culture. We still visit their paternal uncles and aunties as a family.

A family that prays together stays together. Every night we will say a little prayer together before going to bed. We are generous with our hugs and kisses among ourselves and we do that before we leave the house and when we get home.

As parents we must pass on the hope. With our children, we can beat the odds. We can raise healthy, confident children in a supportive and loving family environment. We can be a successful family!

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