



SINGLE PARENTING THAT WORKS

Six keys to raising happy, healthy children in a single-parent home

DR. KEVIN LEMAN



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Introduction

You Can Do It!

No one needs to tell you that single parenting is tough. After all, you're right in the trenches.

You're the one who has been up countless nights with babies and toddlers, with no one to spell off the diaper, bottle, or sippy-cup sessions. You've spent other sleepless nights wondering how you'll scrape together the money for rent this month.

You're the one who has wiped away tears when a first grader asks, "How come I don't have a daddy?"

You're the one who has been caught off guard when your fifth grader asks, "Why don't you and Mom love each other anymore? Will you stop loving me, too?"

You're the one who has stood, speechless and worried, watching your all-of-a-sudden teenage daughter getting ready for a date. As a dad, you've tried your best to explain the male side of things about sex and dating, but you wish she had a female to talk to. You wish her mother could have lived to see this moment.

You're the one who has felt like the odd shoe with no match in sight.

You're the one who has felt "different"—even ostracized—at church or by "religious folks," just because of your lack of a wedding ring. You wonder if others are eyeing you suspiciously or steering clear of you because they assume you're "out to get a spouse" (even if it means stealing theirs).

You're the one who has felt truly alone when your children are with your ex. Even if you've looked forward to a break from them—and the

rejuvenation of having a minute to yourself—you can't wait until they come home to you again.

Does anyone else feel this way? you wonder.

Did you know

- there are currently 12 million single-parent family groups in the United States, and 10 million of those are maintained by women?¹
- 20 million of all children in the United States under the age of eighteen live with only one parent?
- 84 percent of children who live with one parent live with their mother?²
- 32 percent of all births are to unmarried women?³
- the number of single mothers (9.8 million) has remained constant while the number of single fathers grew 25 percent in three years to 2.1 million in 1998? That means men now comprise one-sixth of the nation's single parents.⁴

Did you also know that, of children living with one parent,

- 38 percent live with a divorced parent?
- 35 percent live with a never-married parent?
- 19 percent live with a separated parent?
- 4 percent live with a widowed parent?
- 4 percent live with a parent whose spouse lives elsewhere because of business or some other reason?⁵

Clearly, you are not alone! Numerous single parents have walked this same road in the past, and many others are walking it with you right now. Let's say it up front: *All* parenting has its challenges—its twists, turns, and even a few roadblocks where you have to stop, think, and evaluate. And you already know that single parenting has some additional challenges. You're living through them right now, or you wouldn't have picked up this book.

But is single parenting doable? Certainly!

How do I know? Over nearly forty years, I have counseled and spo-

ken to thousands of single parents and their children as they have made their journeys through life. So many come into my office with defeat written across their faces. They struggle to put one foot in front of the other, day after day. They are, simply, exhausted—not to mention financially, emotionally, and physically stressed.

Those single parents ask complex questions, and rightfully so. No doubt that they—and you—have significant challenges going it solo while raising children.

As the statistics show, and you know firsthand, there are many ways to become a single parent.

You may be divorced—and going through either the pain of a disinterested ex or an active battle with your ex.

You may always have been a single parent—through your child’s birth or adoption.

Or you may have become a single parent when your spouse died.

No matter your “category” or whether you are female or male, it’s up to *you* to decide what to do next. And it all starts with how you view your challenges on a day-to-day basis. Do they tend to depress you and incapacitate you, or do they make you even more determined to make it work?

If you want to succeed as a single parent, keep this in mind: Challenges are simply *challenges*, not insurmountable obstacles. And what any challenge requires is an extra dose of courage and determination, along with wisdom and advice for how to best approach it.

For years, I’ve seen single parents and their children not merely survive, but *thrive* together. They have developed loving, respectful relationships that take them over the puddles of life and through the deep waters. (In this book, you’ll hear from some of them about their real-life challenges and what has happened to them long-term.) Although single parenting was not the choice for most of them, they have made single parenting work.

And you can, too.

I won’t fool you by saying the path will be easy. After all, what parent’s road is easy? And you already know better than that, so you’d know I was blowing smoke.

But just remember: Nothing that's truly valuable in life ever comes without cost.

There will be sweat. There will be tears. But with hard work and perseverance, you can do it. *Single Parenting That Works* provides six keys to help you unlock the door to a new and different way of living that will give you a balanced, healthy, loving environment where you and your children can move ahead with confidence.

KEY 1: CREATE A PLAN.

Nobody can do it all, but looking at the whole picture of your life—where you are right now and where you want to be—will give you great perspective to help you walk into the future.

KEY 2: KNOW YOURSELF, KNOW YOUR CHILD.

Do you long to be the best parent you can be? (Note that I didn't say "a perfect parent." If you're striving for perfection, you're fighting a losing battle. I should know—I've failed multiple times with my five children, yet they still love me.) Before you can figure out what makes your kid tick, you need to know what makes *you* tick. And there's a bonus, too—I'll reveal the three deadliest mistakes you can make as a single parent and show you how to sidestep them.

KEY 3: GATHER A TEAM.

When you're pressed for time and money and you need support, whom do you go to? Being a lone ranger can get lonely and exhausting, so don't be afraid to ask for help. (Surprisingly, you may just help others in the process!) Other adult role models—especially opposite-sex role models—are crucial to the well-being of your child. I'll explain why.

KEY 4: FOCUS ON THE ABCS.

Hopefully you learned them in preschool or kindergarten, so now we'll give them a new twist. All children long for **A**cceptance, **B**elonging, and **C**ompetence. We'll talk about how important this foundation is for every child, how to establish it in your home, and how to balance rules, love, and limits that will bring health to your child and to your home—and sanity to you.

KEY 5: KNOW WHAT TO SAY AND DO WHEN KIDS ASK . . .

Hard questions come up in every home—often at the most embarrassing or inopportune times. When they do, what should you say or do? This part will provide specific advice for those who are divorced, widowed, and never married, so read the chapter(s) that applies to you. (It’s okay to sneak a peek at the others, too. You or a friend might find them helpful.)

**KEY 6: REALIZE IT’S NOT ABOUT YOU,
IT’S ABOUT THE KIDS . . . FOR NOW.**

Single parenting is a lonely job, with long hours and few breaks for “you” time. When you look at how many hours you have in the day, how do you want to spend them? Are you ready to launch out onto the dating scene? Do you wonder if the time has come to marry or marry again? What kind of parent do you want to be—in the long run? Now is the time to decide.



Thousands of single parents have discovered that if they put these six keys into practice, they can meet any challenge that comes their way.

And so can you.

As a mom or dad, you are uniquely suited to make an indelible imprint on your child. But what will that imprint be?

In *Single Parenting That Works*, I’ll ask you to reflect. I’ll ask you to evaluate. I’ll ask you to dream. I’ll ask you to problem solve. And I’ll encourage you to move ahead. At the end of each chapter you’ll find three “Key Qs.” You may want to think about these questions in private, use them as a topic of conversation over coffee with a friend, or use them as discussion starters in a single-parent group.

Although you can’t see the future clearly today, I think someday you’ll look back. You’ll wonder at the children you’ve raised—children who are now confident adults, making their own way and their own impact on the world.

And you’ll be amazed and humbled at how much has truly been

accomplished. How all the love, the time, the joy, and the tears over the years have culminated in a legacy you are proud to leave behind when you exit this world.

For what better legacy could you leave the world than a child who one day will in all sincerity tell others, “I wouldn’t be where I am today without my mom/dad”?

You can do it.

One step at a time, with determination and courage.

I guarantee it.



KEY Qs . . .

- What’s your biggest fear as a single parent?
- Do you believe the statement “Nothing that’s truly valuable in life ever comes without cost”? Why or why not?
- If you could pick one character quality you’d want your child to have for a lifetime, what would it be? Explain.



KEY 1

CREATE A PLAN

If you want your kids to be happy and healthy and successful, the best place to start is by looking at the whole picture of your life and creating a plan.

You Can't Do It All, but You Can Do What Matters Most

It's a typical Monday, and everything that could possibly become complicated in your life has done exactly that. Your new boss has asked you to put in overtime hours for the next week since another employee is on vacation. He wants you to start tomorrow. You're not sure how you're going to juggle the child care or getting everything else done at night with two hours less to do it in.

You've just picked up your two kids, who are five and eighteen months, from the sitter they really love. The problem is she's only available until 4:30 on weekdays, and your boss wants you to work until 6:30 for the next week. You didn't say no, but you didn't say yes either. Somehow between tonight and tomorrow you'll have to figure out how to keep everybody in your life happy.

You zoom home, feed the kids some leftover spaghetti—their favorite dinner—as you keep your eye on the clock. Thankfully, your son's 5:30 T-ball practice is just around the corner. You have enough time to pack up some Gatorade for him, put juice in a sippy cup for your daughter, and get them both tucked back into their car seats with a couple minutes to spare. You're feeling pretty proud of yourself for keeping to your schedule.

Then you smell something rotten. You've already changed little Tara's diaper once, before dinner. Now it looks like round two. You sigh, have your son start the process of tying his shoes, and go back to the bedroom to change the baby's diaper again.

As you're wiping her bottom clean of unmentionable goo, the phone rings. You grab it without thinking. "Hello?"

“Mrs. Williams?”

“Yes,” you manage.

“This is Skye Jackson from KWOW Radio. You entered our contest back in February, and I’m happy to tell you that you’ve been selected for an all-expenses-paid trip for two to Hawaii!”

What’s your first thought?

If you’re like most single parents, before you imagine lounging in a hammock under palm trees and humming along to ukulele music, your first thought is probably, *What about the kids?!*

Whether you’ve just become a single parent, or whether you’ve been one for eleven years, this is the question that surfaces again and again: what about the kids?

When it’s just you caring for them, how can you do the best with the resources you have? How can you manage to raise healthy kids? And how can you cope with a life that wasn’t what you chose or what you thought it would be?

Great Expectations

Someone once said, “Life is a continuous process of getting used to what we hadn’t expected.” And certainly few turns in life are more unexpected than that of becoming a single parent.

Never in your wedding daydreams did you imagine that your walk together from the church altar down the aisle would one day continue on to the courthouse. As you were signing your marriage license, you weren’t thinking, *Let’s get one thing clear, sweetheart: In five years, you have your attorney call my attorney!*

You didn’t expect your husband to walk out on you for another woman, or your wife of nine years to decide she needed to go off and “find herself.”

You certainly didn’t expect the visit from the police to tell you that your wife had died in a car accident while driving home from the grocery store.

You didn’t expect to end up pregnant by your boyfriend, who now doesn’t want anything to do with you or the child.

Losing a mate through divorce, death, or separation is one of the

most heart-wrenching experiences a person can endure. You can sign up for marriage prep courses, but nothing can prepare you for these losses. One study showed that of life's most stressful experiences, the death of a spouse ranks highest, and few experiences in life rank more stressful than divorce.¹

So if you're feeling stressed as a single parent, it's no wonder! All single parents wonder at one time or another, *Can I really do this? Are my kids going to be okay? Am I going to be okay? Life is just so different than I expected. . . .*

But just because your life has taken a different direction than you planned doesn't mean that you should throw in the towel. That you should give up on helping your kids be the healthiest they can be emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Instead, you'll need to focus your energies more intensely. If you look at the whole picture of your life and create a plan for where you want to go, individually and as a family, you have a great shot at fulfilling some great *new* expectations.

Yes, you'll have to work through some issues along the way. You may be sleep deprived since your seven-year-old daughter got the flu the night before your sales presentation. Your idea of a break may be downgraded from an hour of exercising at the local gym each morning to relishing a long stoplight or a few quiet minutes in the bathroom. If the technology to be two places at once is ever released, single parents will be the first in line to buy it.

But guess what? You've got something that no two-parent families have. And you can use it to your advantage.

You've got something that no two-parent families have. And you can use it to the best of your advantage.

Singled Out

I'll let you in on a secret. As a high schooler, I was always in trouble. Throwing water balloons in class and crawling out of the classroom on my hands and knees while the teacher was up at the board earned me a reputation among my fellow students as the class clown. Others knew me as a troublemaker for such outrageous pranks as tossing a lit match into the English classroom garbage can.

In my more “mature” moments, I’d pull everyone else into my acts. I once had the whole class bring in alarm clocks, set to go off at the same time. (Now there’s a good way to frazzle a teacher!) I also organized students to crumple up newspaper and dump it in a huge pile in one of the school’s corridors. That was only the start to my brazen creativity.

To slip by the administration’s rule against water pistols at school, I once took a dictionary and, with a razor, cut a hollow out of the pages inside so I could carry mine wherever I went. I’d simply open the book, whip out the pistol, and squirt one of the teachers from across the hall. Then, before he or she knew what had hit, I’d swiftly hide the evidence. (Not that any of my teachers would have had a difficult time recognizing that Kevin Leman with a dictionary wasn’t exactly the best of disguises.)

But my antics came with a high price academically. I was back in the same class because I failed for the third year in a row.

One day my geometry teacher, Miss Eleanor Wilson, pulled me aside. “Kevin, I’ve watched your antics. I know your family. It seems to me that if you applied yourself, you could really do something in life.”

My jaw literally dropped.

It wasn’t like someone had never challenged me to get serious. (There’d certainly been plenty of opportunities to do so.) In fact, I’d had a lot of people say to me, “Come on, Kevin. You better get your act together!” But Miss Wilson’s challenge marked one of the first times I’d ever heard someone outside my family say, in essence, “Kevin, I believe you have the ability to do something significant with your life.”

While others saw a big, red F written on my forehead, she saw a mind full of potential. She believed in me, and that belief made all the difference. Without her tutoring—on her own time, I will point out—I probably never would have graduated from high school.

I will always be grateful to this one woman who believed in me, even when everybody else thought I was a complete goof, a frustrating flunky, and a total clown.

When you were young, who believed in you? Who believed that you were capable of great things, even if you hadn’t done them yet? even if you were doing the exact opposite to try to prove that person wrong?

Why did she (or he) make such an impact on you? Was it because she focused on your potential rather than your shortcomings?

Did you know that the most significant predictor of a child's development is not the opportunities you offer through education, material comforts, or even the number of hours you clock together as a family? *The most significant predictor of a child's successful development is the positive expectation you set for him or her. The belief that "you can do it," come what may.*

That puts a different spin on all the things you don't have or think you can't do, doesn't it? It means that you are in the driver's seat. And you have an even greater opportunity than two-parent families to have an impact on your child because you are *singled out* as the leader of your home.

The key to single parenting doesn't lie with your child's relationship with your own parents. You won't find it in your child's relationship with his schoolteachers, Sunday school teachers or youth leaders, coaches, or with his friends or siblings.

The answer lies with you, in *your* relationship with your son or daughter. No one matters more in the life of your child than you do. You are *singled out* to believe in

No one matters more to your child than you.

your child. That puts you very high on the scale of importance! It is through your eyes, your behavior, your words, and your thoughts that your child learns about her self-esteem, her worth in the eyes of God, and how to relate to others. And all of those things affect not only her present, but her future . . . and the generations to come.

You bear an awesome and exciting responsibility. For if you believe in your child, you give him the power to believe in himself. And that belief will be crucial to everything he does for the rest of his life.

Single-Minded Clarity

You also have another advantage that dual-parent households don't have: single-minded clarity.

One of the threats to families today is all the extra baggage that goes along with modern life—the material possessions, the endless demands

on our time and money—and dual-parent families are much more apt to attempt to juggle all these add-ons. But the clarity with which you see life will be more intense than most people because of your need to be

If you believe in your child, you give him the power to believe in himself.

focused and goal directed. After all, since most single parents are short on time and money, you have to figure out how to best use what you do have.

If you embrace that single-minded focus, you'll be amazed at how much more easily you're able to evaluate your priorities and choose what matters most from the long list of potential to-dos.

And that, over a child's lifetime, adds up to a kid who says, "My parent made all the difference in my life." Other parents may even look at your children and think, *Sarah has raised healthier kids by herself than we have with two of us.* And they'd be right!

My point is this: It's so easy to get lost in the rat race of what you think you should do, what others think you should do, etc. But if you have a single-minded perspective, life is simplified. All your choices come down to two key questions: *What is my ultimate priority, and Is this advancing that ultimate priority?*

An Olympic athlete trains twelve years for a ten-second race, but there's incredible focus that goes into those seconds. It's that single-minded purpose that enabled Lance Armstrong to come back so strongly from his bout with cancer to win the Tour de France seven times—more than any person in the history of the sport. It's that single-minded focus that enabled George Frideric Handel to compose one of the greatest musical masterpieces in human history, *Messiah*, in only three weeks.²

You, as a single parent, also have that single-minded focus. With it you can generate an energy that is like a laser, cutting through all the layers of "stuff" that surrounds you, vying for your attention, to get to the heart of what matters most. It's that single-minded purpose that gives you the tenacity to hang in there and the determination to be proactive in forming a plan for your own well-being as well as your family's.

The Thrive Plan

If you really want your family to thrive amidst all the challenges that come the way of any parent, and especially a single parent, here are some strategies that will help.

GET BACK TO BASICS.

I've heard of an old recipe for cooking rabbit that begins with this simple but necessary step: *First, catch the rabbit.* Whoever wrote that recipe knew that often the most basic steps are also the most crucial. No mathematician will get far if she forgets how to add and subtract. If a home run slugger forgets to keep his eye on the ball, pretty soon he won't be knocking any more baseballs into the outfield bleachers. And without first catching that rabbit, rabbit stew is reduced to a bunch of bland vegetables in a pot.

Likewise, if you're not taking care of yourself, how can you take care of your kids?

How available can you be to your kids if you aren't eating well enough to give you the energy to get through the day? or if all you eat is fast food? I sure learned my lesson after I ate too many hot dogs and chips and ended up with a trip to the ER—just ask me about it sometime.

And how can you expect to function if you aren't getting enough sleep? Sure, there will be times when you're up late to catch up on bills, dishes, a crash project at work, or to take care of a sick child. But if you have a late night every night (or an early morning every morning, for you early birds), you're going to crash sooner or later, and then you won't do anybody any good. The human body can only take so much before it says, "No more. I quit!"

Single mom Leanne had something else to add: "When I don't get enough sleep, I end up taking it out on my kids."

Enough said.

When it comes to exercise, I can already see you rolling your eyes. "Come on, Dr. Leman, I hardly have the energy to press the toilet lever down, let alone go pump iron over at the local gym." I'm not telling you

First, catch the rabbit.

to go join a gym. I'm not telling you that you should even do sit-ups every morning. One look at my belly, and you'll know I don't always get the exercise job done. (Well, it's either that or the whole pumpkin pie I ate, one tiny slice at a time, in the kitchen!)

The beauty of exercise is that it can be built into your life through the simple things. And you needn't go it alone. Include your child—it's a great way to get to know him or her and to spend time together without the ringing of phones or the chaos of carpooling or having to compete for attention with your child's peers.

If your child is very young, pop her in the stroller and go for a fast walk in the park. Point out the birds and the squirrels. Stop at the local 7-Eleven to get milk on the way home, so you accomplish an errand.

If your child is older, ride bikes together around the neighborhood. Shoot some hoops (who cares if the basketball ever actually goes *in* the net?) at a local church parking lot.

In other words, use your imagination, and you can come up with many creative ways to keep your body fit and give your energy a boost.

Caring for yourself is not being selfish.

Geoff, now a single dad, used to work out at a gym three times a week after work. Now he comes home instead and gives his two children—six and eight—"rides" on his legs and arms for his workout. Not only

does it keep his muscles in good working order, but it also provides a lot of emotional release and bonding time through laughter.

Often single parents feel "selfish" if they do anything for themselves. But caring for yourself is not being selfish. If you cut corners on your own health, both you and your children will suffer. If you look out for yourself, you're also looking out for your kids.

How are you doing taking care of yourself?

GAIN PERSPECTIVE.

Before you can figure out where you want to go, you have to know where you are right now. Although I know your time is very limited, I urge you to set aside fifteen minutes sometime this week, as you're reading this book, to reflect on the following questions and/or journal your thoughts:

- What are your greatest concerns right now? Are they financial? emotional? physical? a combination?
- When do things seem to be on an even keel in your life?
- What things (if any) do you specifically do to take care of yourself?
- When do you hit a level of exhaustion that is hard to overcome? (Pinpointing specific events or times helps.)
- When have you felt good about how you're doing as a parent? When have you felt as though you've failed in your mission?
- If you could do one thing to make your relationship with your child better, what would that be?

EVALUATE YOUR PRIORITIES.

If someone asked you right now what three things are at the top of your priority list, what would you say?

If you're like most of us, you'd start ticking off the hottest items on your to-do list—those things that seem to hang over your head until they're done—like, “Do the laundry so Katie has a shirt to wear to school tomorrow.” Or, “Plan Jason's sixteenth birthday party since his birthday was last week.”

But what I mean is something different. What are your top *life* priorities? When you look back on your life, what will you wish that you had done for yourself? for your kids?

It isn't until you decide those life priorities that you can choose among the many things you could do to arrive at what will matter most in the long run.

For example, let's say that you've been craving some time just for yourself, without the constant noise of the wee voices you love so much. After they are in bed, you debate with yourself. *It's the first time I've had to myself, without a sick kid or an intense project for weeks. Should I stay up to watch the late-night movie?*

You know you'll feel drowsy at the next morning's staff meeting, and you've got a big day ahead and multiple plans with the kids after work.

So is the late-night break tonight worth it? Or should you cash it in and just get some extra sleep?

If you know your life priorities, it's easier to decide what to do. If one of your priorities is to advance your career in order to gain a higher salary so you and the kids can move into your own home, you will decide that sleep is much more important than a late-night flick. Why? Because that meeting is your chance to show your supervisor that you're a good brainstormer—and then she may decide to consider you for the new position you've heard is in the works.

Let's take another example. You're asked to coordinate the end-of-the-year party for your son's class. It's at a time when all of your other commitments are very heavy, and you wonder if you should say no. But then you feel guilty. *It's important that I be involved at school*, you think. And there's that little twinge of embarrassment, too. *If I say no, they're going to think I'm not a good mom. That I don't care about my kid or what's happening at school.*

Should you say yes, or no? If one of the priorities that you've already set is to stay closely involved in your child's life, you're likely to say yes to coordinating the party. But if another one of your priorities is to carefully weigh how much of your time is being committed outside the home, then you're likely to offer this creative solution: "I'm sorry that I can't coordinate the party," you tell the head room-mom, "but I can clear my schedule to make special treats and come during the time of the party to help out." That way you and your son can make the treats together, getting a little mom/son time in the process, and you only have two hours and travel time invested in the party instead of a whole day of preplanning. Even better, you'll still have your sanity—and you'll be a much happier, relaxed mom, both at the party and at home.

TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME.

Author Anne Lamott tells a poignant story about her older brother. One day when he was ten years old, he "was trying to get a report on birds written that he'd had three months to write, which was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and

unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, 'Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.'"³

When you begin life as a single parent, the big picture can be incredibly daunting. You may make more adjustments than there are minutes in a day. But taking first things first, as President Eisenhower once said, "often reduces the most complex human problem to a manageable proportion."⁴

"Just take it bird by bird."

So take it one day at a time. One hour at a time if you need to. Focus your energy on each challenge as it comes. Evaluate your decisions based on carefully thought-out life priorities.

At times single parenting will be rewarding; at other times it will be exhausting. When you feel overwhelmed by the immensity of the task, remember the reason you're doing what you're doing.

Your children.

They're worth it.

And they are what matters most, both now and in the long term.



KEY Qs . . .

- What expectations did you have for your life? How have they been fulfilled or not fulfilled?
- What part of "The Thrive Plan" is the most tricky for you to carry out? Why?
 1. Get back to basics.
 2. Gain perspective.
 3. Evaluate your priorities.
 4. Take one day at a time.

- If someone asked you what your top three life priorities are, what would you say? In what ways do (or could) these priorities affect your daily decisions?

Your Legacy

It all comes down to one simple question: If you could fast-forward in time, what would you want your children to say is *your* legacy to them?

- That you worked hard to provide for your family?
- That you were there for them—extending them time, grace, love, and consistency?
- That you made the best of a difficult situation?
- That you always had their best interests in mind?
- That you always believed the best of them?
- That because of you, your children have fulfilled their dreams?

Sonya Carson knew. She had it rough as a single parent. She could easily have given up. Instead she stuck to her plans. She wanted her boys to make something of themselves. She wanted to leave the world a better place because she had lived. And look at the impact she and her son, Dr. Ben S. Carson, have had on innumerable lives!

If Sonya—who had everything working against her—can make single parenting work and raise healthy children, you can, too.

By taking life one step at a time, you can meet life's daily challenges. You can't do it all. Who can? But you can do what matters most. You may not make *Time* magazine's Person of the Year, but by focusing on your children, you can top their list of Most Influential Person of their lives. And isn't that what matters in the long run?

You are the one who will leave an indelible imprint on your child. What will your legacy be?



KEY Qs . . .

- If someone asked your children, “What’s the most important thing to your dad/mom?” what do you think they would say? (Even better, why not ask your children—in a nonthreatening manner, of course!)
- Compare what your child would say about you with who you want to be as a parent. What differences do you see? What similarities?
- What matters most to you in the long run? What do you want your legacy to be?

Notes

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