

## Single Parent Struggle

For many years, children growing up in a single parent family have been viewed as different. Being raised by only one parent seems impossible to many yet over the decades it has become more prevalent. In today's society many children have grown up to become emotionally stable and successful whether they had one or two parents to show them the rocky path that life bestows upon all human beings. The problem lies in the difference of children raised by single parents versus children raised by both a mother and a father. Does a child need both parents? Does a young boy need a father figure around? Does the government provide help for single parents? What role do step-parents and step-siblings play? With much speculation, this topic has become a very intriguing argument. What people must understand is that properly raising a child does not rely on the structure of a family but should be more focused on the process or values that are taught to these children as they learn to mature. Children of single parents can be just as progressive with emotional, social and behavioral skills as those with two parents. People claim that the only way for children to gain full emotional and behavioral skills is to be raised by both a mother and a father. When a topic such as this one has a broad number of variables it is impossible to simply link these problems to only having one parent. In the article, "Single-parent families cause juvenile crime", author Robert L. Maginnis states, "Children from single-parent families are more likely to have behavior problems because they tend to lack economic security and adequate time with parents". The simple statement that raw criminals are products of single-parent adolescence is absurd. What this writer must understand is that it can be extremely difficult for one

parent to raise a child by themselves for many reasons. A single-parent must work full time to be able to afford to provide for themselves and their child. They must also be able to still have time to offer an exuberant amount of emotional time for the well-being of their child. However, even though this may seem impossible, it can be done.

As this subject continues to be looked down on people must realize that single parents are becoming more common in today's world. Since 1995 the American family structure for children ages fourteen to eighteen consists of forty-two percent living in a first marriage family with both parents, twenty-two percent living in a second marriage step-family, twenty-one percent living in a single parent, divorced or separated family, six percent living in a single parent never married family and three percent living in a single parent widowed family. This is an extremely scary statistic considering that fifty-eight percent of children in America are living in a single parent family. This is a chilling percentage because it shows how little faith is put into a relationship before actually deciding to have children. Unfortunately, not all single-parents take the time to perform the vital tasks needed to raise their children. Parents who think they would never be able to provide emotional stability for their children by themselves should have taken the time to think this through before deciding to become parents. Accidents may happen once in a while but in most cases, adults know what is at stake when planning to have a child. Plain and simple, if you're not ready, then don't do it. If you do decide to have this child and you love this child, then you can be a good parent. There are many ways to enhance the well-being of your child if you simply apply yourselves as parents.

Magginnis later states that, "Boys who do not have fathers as male role models suffer especially". While it is extremely important for a male child to have his father

around, there are other ways of teaching a young boy the lessons he needs to become a man. I know from personal experience that what the author of this article is trying to convey is wrong. I never had my father around while growing up and I did in fact have many positive male role models. My Grandfather was always there to help guide me as I slowly blossomed into a young man. Anytime my mother had to work to support us, my grandparents, aunt's, uncles and cousins would step up and provide the time and attention I needed. Therefore, I had the best support group I could have had as a young man. Being a child with a single mother had its benefits. Although I came to find how hard it really was for her to always meet the needs of her child, she did the best job that she possibly could and gave me the knowledge that I needed to become a successful man without the guidance of my father.

I did however have the experience of dealing with a step-parent. Today, twenty-five percent of all-American children will spend at least some time of their growing-up years in a stepfamily. This seems fine for single parents because they feel like they can start over in a new relationship and receive help from their spouse both emotionally and financially. A step-parent can cause confusion and emotional stress on the child since they have just had to adjust to only one parent and now have to adjust to a new parental figure stepping into the family role. Another factor of bringing a step-parent into a single family's life is new step-siblings to get along with. It might not be justified for a stepparent to punish their step-child like they would their own flesh and blood. As long as both parents have an understanding that their family comes first and that it is important to communicate between themselves and with the children, a step-family could survive.

Children who are raised with both a mother and a father have more attention from both parents therefore they get the emotional time they need to progress in life. This could be true but not in all circumstances. It would not be beneficial at all to grow up in a two-parent family who did nothing but argue and put each-other down. Naturally, a child who sees this from a very young age until they are ready to be out on their own would only follow in the footsteps of all that they have ever known. Children who are raised by one parent who devotes their time and emotion into their child would benefit much more than a child who has both parents showing them that fighting and arguing is acceptable.

Not all families are lucky enough to have a healthy structure. It is important for society and government aids to notice these structural differences and take action. There should be government funded programs to help assist single-parent families with childcare and finances for parents who must work and still have time for their children.

Whether it's a mother and a father, a single mother, or a single father, children need guidance. They will only become a product of what they are taught from a young age and these children are deeply affected emotionally by the amount of love and compassion that is put into raising them. Whichever family structure is implied it must be one of respect and strong moral values that they can someday pass on to their family.