

You Can't be Both, So Quit Trying!

One of the most difficult issues to cope with as a single parent is this overwhelming feeling that you have to be both mother and father to your children. This feeling becomes even more intense if the other parent is not playing an active role with the children. Usually we combat this one of two ways; we try to compensate by playing both roles, or we go on a safari hunting expedition to find a mate to fill the other role. I tried both and neither one works.

Its much easier said than done however. As a single parent, we are often faced with this feeling of guilt because our kids don't have the other parent. It doesn't matter whether we actually had anything to do with them not being there. So what do we do? I first became a single father with three children all under the age of six. This was further complicated because two of the three were girls and I felt like I had to either be Mom or find Mom. Scared to death about the first proposition I went on an expedition to fill the second. I remarried within a year of my first divorce. This was not the answer and ultimately I was back to being a single parent. Actually, I don't think I was ever anything else even when I was married the second time. The moral to this story is you can't replace Mom or Dad. This isn't to say people don't remarry and find wonderful people who want to be a part of both your life and your children's. I'm just saying this can't be the focus of your reason for the relationship. Rather than feeling like you have to replace your spouse for the sake of your children, concentrate on what you have to offer them. There is no reason to feel guilty because of your single parenthood. Be proud that your children have you. Once I realized that my children recognized that I loved them and wasn't going anywhere, I began to understand that I didn't have to have a mate to make them happy.

Next to finding a mate to fill the shoes of the parent left behind, we are empowered to fill both sets of shoes ourselves. This again is fueled by the feeling of guilt for putting our children in this position in the first place. You need to get past this feeling as quickly as you can. None of us are superhuman, at least most of us aren't. You can't do everything alone and shouldn't feel second best because of it. Our children don't always help here either. Most kids are graduates of the Ferris Bueller school of parent manipulation and can make us feel about one inch tall because we can't do everything or give them everything they want. Kids aren't evil or anything, they are just being kids. It's what they do, and it works for them...a lot! We have to learn to work with our children within our own resources and not to feel less than adequate because we can't do something. Ultimately, you will win the respect of your children if do this. No matter how much you want, you can't be both Mom and Dad, so quit trying!

This topic area will focus on the myriad of issues facing single fathers today. It is my desire for it to be not only a resource for information, but an open forum for people to share ideas. I don't have all the answers but together perhaps we will find another piece in this complicated puzzle. I also will share web sites that I have found that are sources of information for single parents. Granted, I have to figure out how to embed links in my articles, but I can do that... I think! No, no, I'm sure I can or find someone to show me how. Until next time....

Author: Mike Gowen at mikee@writedad.com