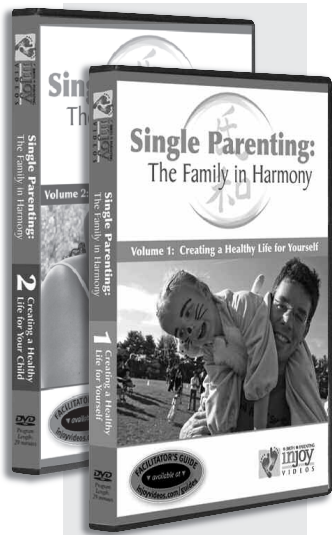


Single Parenting: The Family in Harmony

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Provided Materials

- Video
- Facilitator's Guide
- Parent Handout

Introduction

Single Parenting: The Family in Harmony is a two-volume series that covers a wide range of important topics for both solo and co-parenting families. These videos include personal accounts from single parents who have valuable advice about creating a positive, loving home environment.

Volume 1: Creating a Healthy Life for Yourself focuses on parent-specific issues such as support, stress management, budgeting, and the logistics of co-parenting.

Volume 2: Creating a Healthy Life for Your Child helps parents look at single parent homes from their child's perspective, and emphasizes the importance of healthy communication, a stable and positive home life, and tips on ways to enjoy family time on a limited budget.

Intended Use

This program is intended to be used in a wide variety of settings, including classes, group sessions, and in-home viewing. Whether you're working with teen parents, or parents who have teenaged children, there's something for viewers of all ages and backgrounds in this program. Each volume may be shown in its entirety, or by skipping chapters to customize the content for different viewers' needs. Due to the length of the program and wide variety of topics presented, it's advisable to avoid playing both volumes back-to-back. We also recommend that you save enough time to show the introduction, which explains the artistic element used throughout the program, and the conclusion, which is intended to leave viewers feeling positive and motivated.

Program Overview

Volume 1: Creating a Healthy Life for Yourself (Viewing time 29 minutes)

- Introduction (1:47)
- Chapter 1: Education (2:59)
- Chapter 2: Work & Child Care (7:05)
- Chapter 3: Finances (3:49)
- Chapter 4: The Parent as a Person (6:39)
- Chapter 5: Co-Parenting (4:56)
- Conclusion (1:21)

Volume 2: Creating a Healthy Life for Your Child (Viewing time 29 minutes)

- Introduction (1:41)
- Chapter 1: Your Toddler & Young Child (7:51)
- Chapter 2: The People in Your Child's Life (4:37)
- Chapter 3: Home Life (5:45)
- Chapter 4: Your Older Child (4:25)
- Chapter 5: Co-Parenting and Your Child (3:18)
- Conclusion (1:32)

Recommended Presentation

- Begin by reviewing the video, this facilitator’s guide, and the parent handout (located on page 9)
- Print out the facilitator’s guide and as many parent handouts as you need
- Assess how much class time you have to show the video, and whether or not you want to show every chapter
- If you prefer, plan ahead to show portions of the video over several class periods
- Easily modify the video for time or content by skipping chapters that don’t pertain to your class
- Engage parents in a follow-up discussion about topics presented in the video
- Distribute parent handout (page 9)

Audience Objectives

Upon completion of the video, viewers should be familiar with:

- stress management and getting support
- the benefits of community resources
- logistical advice on child care, living on a budget, and time management
- the importance of prioritizing children’s needs
- stability and routines in single-parenting homes
- tips for healthy, age-appropriate communication

Icebreaker Exercise



Chinese calligraphy is used as an artistic element at the beginning of every chapter to introduce complex and sometimes difficult topics in a positive, thought-provoking way (the characters to the left represent the title of the program, “The Family in Harmony”).

Sharing thoughts about the artistic theme of the program may be a good way to “break the ice” at the beginning of a class discussion. You might find it helpful to mention the artist in the video, a single parent who discovered calligraphy when she was pregnant. Ask your viewers was meaningful to them when they became parents, such as art or other therapeutic activities.

Creating a Healthy Life for Yourself

Chapter 1: Education

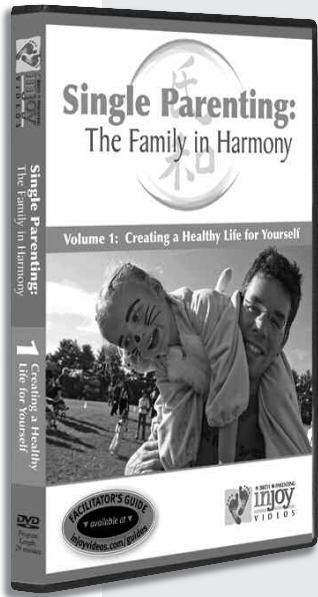
- What are the challenges of going to school and being a parent at the same time? What could help you overcome these challenges and stay motivated?
- What are the benefits for you and your family if you continue your education?
- What are some options that can help you meet your scheduling and financial needs, such as online classes, or scholarships and grants?

Chapter 2: Work & Child Care

- Which jobs have the kind of schedules that work best for you and your family?
- What kind of jobs cultivate your needs and interests? How can you obtain a job that not only fits your financial needs, but your personal needs as well?
- How can you balance work with spending quality time with your family?
- What are some challenges of child care, and how can you resolve those challenges?

Chapter 3: Finances

- Do you know how to calculate the salary range that will meet your family's needs?
- In the video, Erika talked about using a budget to stay on track. Do you use a budget? If so, how does that help you manage your money? If not, what are some benefits you might receive if you started using one?
- If you lose your job, will you be able to get unemployment compensation? Do you have enough savings to support your family until you find another job?
- What are some long-term investments that you should consider saving money for?
- What unexpected expenses could you face in the future? How can you try to be prepared for those situations?
- Has anyone ever given you financial advice that inspired you, or helped you manage your finances better? What was their advice?



Viewing Time:

29 Minutes

Chapter 4: The Parent as a Person

- Keith and his son Logan combined family time with chores by making a game out of folding the laundry. What ways could you combine chores with family time to help get things done?
- Carrie suggested trading services with others. What services or hobbies could you trade or get paid for, such as cooking meals or doing computer maintenance?
- What community resources are available to you where you live, such as social services and counseling centers? How can you find these resources?
- What's the importance of support groups for single parents? Why is it important for single parents to avoid becoming isolated?
- Barry, the family therapist, suggested taking deep breaths or counting to yourself as a temporary way to relieve stress. What do you do to manage your stress, both "in the moment" and long-term? Do you feel like you have enough resources and support to meet the challenges in your life?

Chapter 5: Co-Parenting

- What are some of the things that you and your child's other parent tend to have a difficult time talking about?
- What are some things that help you communicate well with the other parent? What have you and the other parent done to try to improve your communication?
- In the video, Barry (the family therapist) suggested treating your child's other parent like a business partner to help keep communication open and respectful. What do you think it means to be "businesslike" with the other parent?
- Why is it important to keep anger or tension between parents out of your child's life? What are some ways that you could avoid having angry conversations in front of your child?
- When you and your child's other parent encounter challenges, how can you speak and act in a way that's in the best interest of your child?

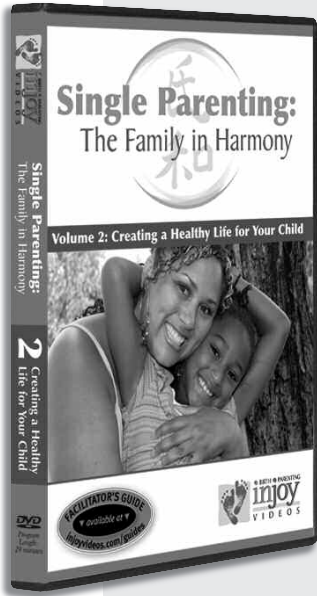
Creating a Healthy Life for Your Child

Chapter 1: Your Toddler and Young Child

- In the video, we learned that young children can express anxiety in many different ways, ranging from physical symptoms to behavioral changes. Have you ever seen your child exhibit signs of anxiety? If so, how did you react?
- Why can it be challenging sometimes to recognize signs of anxiety in children? (For example, if a child starts consistently sucking his thumb again after going for a year without sucking his thumb, is it obvious that this could be a reaction to stressful conditions at home?)
- What should you do if you notice physical or behavioral changes in your child that are concerning to you? Who can help you and your child?

Chapter 2: The People in Your Child's Life

- Why is it important to have healthy, honest, and age-appropriate communication with your child?
- What are some challenging questions that your child has asked you? How did you answer those questions, and how did your child react?
- How you can try to answer these questions in a way that will reassure your child and not burden them with information that they're too young for?
- What people have had a significant positive influence in your life? As a parent, why do you think mentors are important to children? What are the characteristics of people who you want to influence your child?
- If you've dated as a single parent, what has that been like for you and your family? What kind of boundaries have you set between your personal life and your children?
- When can dating be dangerous for single parenting families? What can you do to keep yourself and your children safe when it comes to dating and allowing others into your child's life?
- Why is it important to be educated about the risks and possible signs of sexual abuse?



Viewing

Time:

29 Minutes

Chapter 3: Home Life

- The video discussed why it's important to avoid burdening your child with family stress, such as arguments with the other parent, financial challenges, and health problems. How can you deal with stressful issues in your life and still keep them private from your child?
- Why do parents need to teach their children that emotions are natural and that there are safe, healthy ways to express how you feel?
- Barry, the family therapist, suggested helping your child express feelings such as sadness or anger by drawing a picture or shouting into a pillow. What are some other ways that you could help your child express his or her emotions?
- In the video, Danielle talked about the importance of encouraging her five-year-old son to use his words to express himself. What do you do to help your child when he or she is struggling to communicate with you?
- What can you and your child do together that doesn't involve watching television or video games? What's valuable to you about doing things with your child like playing, taking a walk, or drawing a picture?

Chapter 4: Your Older Child

- If you've established positive, open communication with your child from a young age, how can this help your relationship as your child gets older?
- Children can feel left out if their parent is spending a lot of time at work or with a significant other. How can you set aside time that's just for you and your child?
- Why are meals an important part of quality family time? Why should television and cell phones be turned off during family meals?
- Carrie talked about inexpensive ways to enjoy time with her son as he got older, such as free days at the zoo, taking a bus ride just for fun, and going for hikes together. What are some inexpensive ways that you can have fun with your family?
- As your child nears adolescence, what are some ways to help him or her learn about the changes they're going through? If they're shy approaching you for any information, how can you help direct them to another source?

Chapter 5: Co-Parenting and Your Child

- What kind of co-parenting arrangement does your family have? How do you think co-parenting has affected your child?
- D.K. said that she and her ex-husband tried going back-and-forth between homes before they had their children live in two family homes. What would it be like if you lived in two homes, such as packing all the clothes you'd need during the week or having two different beds to sleep in?
- What's challenging for your child about living in two homes? What are some of the things that you and your child's other parent have done to help them feel stable and balanced in both homes?
- What's challenging for you and the other parent about keeping consistent rules and routines for your child? How have you tried to solve these challenges?

Additional Suggestions



- Ask parents which families they related to the most from the video. Did those families offer any advice that was helpful? Was it reassuring to see someone else in a similar situation?
- Open up a class discussion about how parents feel after watching the video. Do they feel less anxious about anything? Inspired by anything they saw? Were any topics presented that they hadn't thought about before? Do they need additional support and resources concerning issues that weren't covered in the program?
- Ask the parents to write a letter, either in class or as a homework assignment. Ask them to address the letter to their child and explain things such as:
 - what they love about their child's personality and accomplishments, and why they're proud to be a parent
 - what their experience has been like as a single parent – including the challenges and the joys
 - what they wish for their child's future and their own future
 - the importance of their relationship and what they plan to do to keep that relationship strong and healthy
 - why they think it's valuable for a family to be in harmony, and what topics were presented in this video that they want to see in their own home

Parents can keep the letter on hand to remind themselves how special their family is, or keep it to show their child when he or she grows up.



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7107 La Vista Place
Longmont, CO 80503
1-800-326-2082 x2
injoyvideos.com

Parent Resources

Support for Single Parents

- Parents Without Partners, a national organization that promotes educational, social, and recreational family activities: www.parentswithoutpartners.org
- Parenting website and hotline (sponsored by Boys Town, a national nonprofit for children and families): www.parenting.org

Child Abuse Prevention

- Prevent Child Abuse of America: www.preventchildabuse.org
- American Psychology Association: www.apa.org/releases/sexabuse/protect.html

Resources for Children

- Physician-approved articles and games for parents, children and teens about a wide variety of health topics (a good resource for children about issues such as puberty, staying healthy, and emotions): <http://www.kidshealth.org>
- D.K. Simoneau (one of the parents featured in this video) wrote a book called *We're Having a Tuesday*, which is about children in single parent families who are living in two homes. For more information, her book can be found on www.Amazon.com

Tips From Families Featured in the Video

Each of the parents in *Single Parenting: The Family in Harmony* offered stories and advice from their personal experiences raising children in a single parent family. Here are some of their suggestions:

- Take classes online
- Take care of yourself and make time to do things you enjoy
- Exercise and eat right – it will help your whole family stay healthy and happy
- Make chores into a game
- Turn off the television and find other ways to spend time with your child
- Use a weekly or monthly budget
- Trade services with others, or use your hobbies to make a little extra money on the side
- Enlist the help of social services
- Connect with other parents at support groups or recreational activities in your community
- Get support from friends and family and avoid becoming isolated
- For co-parents, try to have a business-like relationship with each other
- Remind yourself to keep a “moving forward” mentality
- Keep information age-appropriate for your child, and give reassuring answers to their questions
- When dating, create boundaries about your partner’s involvement with your family
- Learn about the risks and signs of sexual abuse to keep your children safe
- Create a calm home environment with consistent rules and routines
- Put yourself in your child’s shoes to understand how they feel about things like going between two homes