

Power of One : Single Parenting

Objective: Participants will identify resources that can be useful in helping themselves and their families.

Summary: This workshop addresses the challenges of single parenting and provides support for parents by providing them with strategies and resources to help them succeed.

Aim: *How can I utilize the resources available to me to be the best parent I can be?*

Quote: “You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.” - *Jon Kabat-Zinn*
 “Before I got married, I had six theories about bringing up children. Now I have six children and no theories.” – *John Wilmot*

Materials: newsprint, red and black markers, index cards, pens, copies of **Your Resource Web** and **Self-Care Assessment worksheets**, **Self-Care Strategies** handout, and **Single Parent Resource Guide**

Warm-Up: Ice Breaker

- Introduce yourself.
- Ask each person to say their name and the number and age of their children.
- Ask, by a show of hands, how many single parents are present.
- Ask how many were raised by single parents.
- Ask each participant to answer the following statement: My name is _____ and one thing I enjoy about being a parent is _____ (*ex: that I get to say “because I said so”*).
- Ask participants to follow each participant’s introduction by saying, “Hi _____, (Name of person)” and then begin their segment.

Discussion Questions:

- *What was it like to hear from fellow parents?*
- *Which responses spoke to you or surprised you?*
- *What is society’s view of single parents?*
- *How has it changed over time?*

Main Activity: Team Problem-Solving

Part One: Challenges and Rewards of Parenting

- On a piece of newsprint draw a line down the center and title one side “Rewards” and the other side “Challenges”
- Ask the participants to think of the challenges of being a parent.
- Ask the participants to think of the challenges of being a single parent, specifically.
- Record their answers in the appropriate column on the newsprint.
- Ask the participants to think about some of the rewards of being a single parent.
- Record their answers in the appropriate column on newsprint.
- Ask participants to be as specific as possible in their responses (*i.e. I can’t get to the Laundromat before it closes, etc.*).
- Now have the group vote on which items from the Challenges are the top 3 or 5 depending on the group size and total number of responses.

Discussion Questions:

- ☉ *How did it feel to list the challenges and rewards?*
- ☉ *How can we be support for each other with our top listed challenges?*

Part Two: Self-Care Assessment

- Distribute the **Self-Care Assessment** worksheet.
- Tell participants that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers.
- Give the group 5 minutes to complete the worksheet.

Processing Questions:

- ☉ *How did it feel to fill this out?*
- ☉ *What did you learn about your self-care through this worksheet?*
- ☉ *Why is it important to assess how well we are taking care of ourselves as parents?*

Part Three: Self-Care Strategies

- Distribute **Self-Care Strategies** handout and read aloud together.
- Get suggestions from the group for the 3 or 4 remaining free spaces.
- Encourage them to continue to add onto this list as they develop strategies in the future.

Part Four: Resources

- Distribute the **Your Resource Web** worksheet to participants.
- Ask the group to write in the center circle one of the top 5 challenges from the brainstorm list earlier or one that they are currently experiencing.
- Read the worksheet instructions aloud.
- Allow the group 5 minutes to complete the worksheet.
- Divide participants into groups of 3 to 5, depending on the number of participants.
- Ask the groups to take turns reading the issues on their worksheets. Encourage them to listen to suggestions from the other group members on how each resource or strategy already listed can help solve the issue.
- Remind participants that while the group is offering suggestions, the person listening should be open and receptive to new ideas.
- Have the group members offer 1 or 2 new resources or strategies to each participant that may help solve their issue.
- Have each participant write the additional resources and strategies in 1 or 2 of the shaded circles on their worksheet.
- Have each group pick a spokesperson and present the strategies that they have come up with to overcome the given challenges.
- After their presentation, ask other groups if they have additional suggestions.
- Distribute the **Single Parent Resource Guide** for participants to take home.

Processing Questions:

- ☉ *How did it feel to share your challenges?*
- ☉ *What did you learn about potential resources and strategies?*
- ☉ *How can we use our connections to other single parents as a resource?*

Closing: Whip-Around

- Ask each participant to contribute one resource or strategy they are taking away to support the challenges they are experiencing.
- Thank participants for their involvement in this workshop.

Self Care Strategies

- Visualize yourself in your comfort place
- Mentally re-live a favorite moment
- Listen to your favorite songs
- Surround yourself with photos of people you love
- Plan for the future, even if that future is tomorrow
- Learn yoga
- Read a book or magazine
- Write your life story
- Determine specific small steps you can take to reach one of your goals
- Write a letter to a friend
- Smile
- Close your eyes and breathe deeply for 5 minutes
- Delegate
- Get up 15 minutes earlier than anyone else and have some relaxation time for yourself
- Write in a journal
- Find a personal mantra
- Give yourself permission to say NO
- Say YES to something you'd really like to do
- Swap kids with someone for an afternoon
- Go to a park and sit outside
- Express your creativity
- Lend a hand to someone in need
- Learn to do something new
- Teach your kids how to give a massage
- Watch the sunset
- Go to bed an hour early
- Grow something
- Find a venting partner
- Indulge in a favorite snack
- Stop trying to be perfect
- Prioritize carefully
- Give yourself a manicure and pedicure
- Dance wildly to your favorite music in your living room
- Call a friend who makes you laugh
- Take a bubble bath
- Meditate

Self-Care Assessment: Are you taking good care of yourself?

1. I get a babysitter:
 - a) Fairly regularly
 - b) On rare occasions when I absolutely need to be somewhere and I can't take the kids
 - c) Once in a while to go out with friends
 - d) Never, I just don't go out without the kids

2. I get _____ hours of sleep per night
 - a. Fewer than 4
 - b. 4 or 5
 - c. 6 or 7
 - d. 8 or more

3. Generally speaking, when I get a moment of free time, I
 - a. Do chores
 - b. Read a book or relax
 - c. Watch TV
 - d. Spend time thinking about what I have to do

4. How frequently do you take vacation?
 - a. Never
 - b. I haven't been on vacation since my kids were born
 - c. Once every two or three years
 - d. At least once a year, even if it's just a weekend away

5. When I have a stressful day, I
 - a. Eat a lot more
 - b. Snap at others or do something I later regret
 - c. Spend a few quiet moments alone or talk to a friend
 - d. Take a candle-lit bubble bath, listen to my favorite music, or do something relaxing

6. When I make sacrifices for others in my life, I _____
 - a. Feel good about it
 - b. Feel angry
 - c. Hope that they will return the favor
 - d. Feel resentful

7. When someone asks me what I like to do in my free time, I _____
 - a. Laugh and say "what free time?"
 - b. List a few hobbies I enjoy
 - c. Focus on unfinished tasks I need to do
 - d. Talk about work or my kids

8. During the last week, I've had_____ hours of free time to myself
- a. Zero
 - b. 1-2
 - c. 3-4
 - d. 5 or more

9. How many friends/family can you count on to help you out
- a. None. There is no one but me
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3 or more

10. If I need help, I
- a. Ask friends or family
 - b. Complain and do nothing
 - c. Use all of my resources
 - d. Have no one at all to turn to

11. If I could add 4 more hours to the day I would

12. A perfect day for me would be

- **Single Parent Support: child support, strategies for parenting etc.**
<http://singleparents.about.com/> : single parent legal issue blog, topical and seasonal tips, newsletter
- **Single Parent Organizations Information**
<http://www.publicbookshelf.com/business/single-parents/parent-organizations> : web links to organizations and resources on many topics affecting parenting, from finances to child care, from books to clothing to schools
- **Single Parent Support**
<http://singleparenting.suite101.com> : freelance writers contribute articles on many aspects of parenting, including tips on addressing seasonal and holiday issues
- **Meeting other Single Parents**
<http://www.singleparentmeet.com/>
- **Single Mother Resources**
<http://www.singlemom.com/> : information resources for single moms based on submissions and research from freelance contributors, volunteers and visitors to the website
- **How-to Resources**
<http://www.howtodothings.com> : problem-solving info about crafts, household chores, etc.
- **Grants**
<http://www.educationconnection.com> : online degrees and career programs, guide to grants & scholarships
<http://igrantcash.com>
- **Resources for Newly Single Parents**
<http://www.divorcecentral.com/resource/organization.html> : Legal, social and child care resources for divorced parents
- **Single Parent Resource Center**
<http://www.singleparentsusa.com/> : "A Social Club & Meeting Place For Single Parents Coast-2-Coast!"
- **Online Resources for Parenting**
<http://www.onetoughjob.org/> : Tips on parenting children from babies through young adults from the Massachusetts Children's Trust Fund
- **Online Child Development Resource Center**
<http://www.zerotothree.org> : information and resources on early childhood
- **WIC (Women, Infant, Children) Nutritional Resources**
www.fns.usda.gov/wic