

TIPS FOR PARENTS

As a parent, you will find from time to time that your child care needs will change, whether temporarily or permanently. By knowing how to take care of your needs during this time, you will be able to give your child better care.

SINGLE PARENTS

In New Jersey, many households with children are headed by one parent. Because, as a single parent, you may have no one with whom to share parenting responsibilities, you must pay extra attention to taking care of your needs as well as those of your children. Some tips for single parents:

1. **Make sure your children have adequate supervision.** Because most single parents are also working, it is important that you make arrangements for adequate child care while you are at work. The Child Care helpline (800-332-9227) can help you locate child care resources in your area. Also make sure your children are prepared for unexpected times alone. (See article on School Age Children.) Knowing your child is safe will give you tremendous peace of mind.
2. **Develop sources of support by maintaining contact with other single parents.** Set up a system in which you babysit for each other or call each other when you're at your wits' end. There are also many organizations that provide similar services to single parents. Check with local community groups to see if there is one near you.
3. **Expect to feel tired and frustrated.** Single parents have twice the child care responsibilities, twice the demand on their time and energies, and half the earning power. This can all add up to a sense of frustration. Learn to recognize these problems before they get out of hand. Talk to someone about your feelings. Seek professional counsel if necessary.
4. **Manage home responsibilities sensibly.** Realize that time spent with your children is more important than a sparkling clean house. Get your children to help you with simple chores. You can even make a game of housecleaning, rewarding your children for a job well done.
5. **Remember that your child is not an adult.** Don't make unreasonable demands on him, but assign household chores and responsibilities that your child is capable of completing.
6. **Don't try to do everything yourself.** Learn to recognize problems when they are small, and don't hesitate to ask for help from family and friends. Trying to do everything yourself is next to impossible. Family, neighbors, school personnel, clergy, community and government agencies and informal organizations for single parents are just some of the sources of help available.
7. **Don't neglect your social life.** Make it clear to your children that you love them very much, but that you also need time alone with other adults. Involve your child in a structured social activity if at all possible. This will provide good social skills for your child, as well as a break for you.