

The Seasons of Single Parenting



When you first become a single parent, life can be overwhelming. The way one approaches parenting alone can make a big difference. This article will help change your perspective and make your single parenting journey a little easier.

by Linda Ranson Jacobs

Parenting During Life's Storms

As we think about the four seasons, we think about the changes the earth experiences. It's hot in the summer, cold in the winter. Plants blossom and bloom in the spring; they die or go dormant in the fall. In order for the earth to survive the changes from one season to the next, there are processes that have to take place. Isn't that a lot like single parenting? In order for our homes to survive the transition from what was, to what is, to what is to become, changes have to take place.

Have you noticed the weather forecasters don't have control over the weather? They can study weather patterns, fronts and jet streams, but they cannot guarantee the weather for tomorrow. As single parents we don't have total control over our children's lives either. We may have to share our child with the other parent. If we work full-time, we have to share our child with caregivers. But unlike the weathermen who can't promise it's going to rain or the sun will shine tomorrow, we can make a commitment to take control of our feelings, actions and attitudes.

Parenting children involves many seasons, but the difference in single parenting is we experience each season so intensely because we are going it alone. When I became a single parent, I lived in Oklahoma right in the middle of tornado alley. One month after I became a single parent, my children and I experienced a tornado. I will always remember the awesome responsibility and the fear that I felt during that storm. How could I parent two children all by myself? How could I keep them safe? How was I going to protect them? How were we going to survive this tornado?

When the tornado finally was over I made sure my children were safe at school. Then I discovered some damage due to the high winds. At first all I could do was fume and spout and sputter. But this didn't repair the damage. Only when I changed my attitude and looked at things differently did things change. Tornadoes can do some weird things. This tornado had stripped the bark off of one side of all the trees. Several days later as I was picking up the bark that was spread all over, I realized this bark could be used for something. For several months children in a school-age child care used the bark for nature and art projects. We got things fixed,

and eventually life returned to a “new normal.” I say “new normal” because we were entering into another season in our family.

Parenting in Each New Season

During each new season we encounter different types of weather. Take a moment to think about how people talk about the weather during a particular season. Think about their attitudes. Some people approach the middle of summer focusing on the dryness and heat of a sweltering hot day, when they could just as likely contemplate a walk on the beach, a swim at the local pool or the squeal of laughter as children run through a sprinkler. We could think about the seasons of dryness in raising children alone; we can liken it to the fall and the dying grass, the wilting flowers and the leaves falling off the trees, or we could think of the beauty in the fall colors, the pumpkins and the traditions that lead us into winter.

Winter can chill you to the bone, but there’s beauty there also. Think of a cold crisp morning when you walk out and feel exhilarated or when you take a moment to snuggle up in a blanket on a snowy day and read a book to your children. As the Word of God says, “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). As you go through the seasons in parenting children alone, stop and create new activities in the form of rituals and new traditions to fit the new season, the new normal.

Whatever the season—summer, fall, winter or spring—one can find beauty, serenity, exhilaration and new growth. As with the seasons of single parenting, you may be screaming and saying, “I can’t do this. That jerk left me with these kids. It’s not fair.” You are so right about it not being fair. It’s

not fair, so what are you going to do about it? You can step back, change your attitude and enjoy the moment—seize the season.

“Because of the LORD’S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22–23). Even when you are a single parent, you are never alone. God is faithful, and His mercies are new every single morning, no matter what the season.

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Linda Ranson Jacobs is the DC4K creator and developer. For more information, email info@dc4k.org. To discover more about DivorceCare for Kids or to find a DC4K group near you, go to www.dc4k.org.