



The Single Father: A Dad's Guide to Parenting Without a Partner (New Father Series)

By Armin A. Brott

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In this ground-breaking volume author Armin Brott gives single dads the knowledge, skills, and support they need to become-and remain-actively involved fathers. With the same thoroughness, accessibility, and humor that have made the books in his critically acclaimed New Father series the best and most popular fatherhood guides in the country, Brott steers divorced, separated, gay, widowed, and never-married men through every aspect of fathering without a partner. Incorporating the advice of top psychologists, lawyers, and other experts, *The Single Father* offers a wealth of essential information and practical tips.

Illustrated with cartoons that underscore the challenges and, yes, even the satisfactions of single parenting, and complete with an extensive list of resources for divorced, widowed, and gay dads, *The Single Father* is one book no single dad can afford to do without.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The latest in the New Father series by Brott, *The Single Father* helps dads who are divorced, widowed, gay, or never-married to deal with the special issues of parenting alone. By combining personal experiences of solo dads with advice from psychologists, lawyers, and other experts, Brott provides insight that is both practical and reassuring. A 1999 Parents' Choice® Approval." —From Parents' Choice®

About the Author

Armin Brott, author of *The New Father Series* and a contributing writer to *BabyTalk* magazine, has written on fatherhood for the *New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, *American Baby* magazine, *Parenting* magazine, and many other periodicals. His weekly radio show on parenting is carried by one of the largest radio stations in the San Francisco Bay area. He and his family live in Oakland, California.

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Introduction

Every year a million fathers get divorced. And every year a million men who aren't married become fathers. There are also about a million gay fathers out there, as well as hundreds of thousands of widowers who have children under eighteen. Although each of these categories of fathers is quite different, they share a common bond. They are all single fathers.

Some people might argue that the phrase *single father* should apply only to men who are raising their children on their own, without help from the children's mother. I disagree. As far as I'm concerned, any man who has a child is a father—no exceptions. And any man who isn't living with his child's mother is a single father.

It doesn't matter whether you were once married or never married, whether you are widowed, gay, or in the process of ending a relationship. Nor does it matter whether you have full-time custody of your children, share it equally with your former partner, or hardly get to see your kids at all. What matters is that you want to be—and stay—actively involved in your children's lives any way you can. In that case, this book is for you.

As you may have already found out, though, being and staying involved with your kids is usually a lot harder for single fathers than it sounds. In divorce cases, mothers are given sole custody more than 85 percent of the time, and most fathers are left with every other weekend, alternate holds, and a couple of weeks in the summer. Never-married men have even fewer legal rights to see their children, and gay fathers suffer widespread social and judicial discrimination. Legally speaking, widowers are the best off, but like almost all other single fathers, they endure the societal suspicion that they aren't capable of taking care of their children by themselves.

In addition to these legal and societal impediments, too many single fathers who are faced with the

seemingly daunting task of setting up and running a new household lack the necessary skills, experience, or social support to be involved with their children as they'd like to be.

What This Book Is...and Is Not

The Single Father: A Dad's Guide to Parenting Without a Partner is not anti-woman. It's also not about how to win a child-custody battle or how to hurt your children's mother. Those attitudes help no one and end up taking a terrible toll on the children. If you're looking for that kind of information, you'll have to try someplace else.

Instead, *The Single Father* is designed to help you recognize the legal, social, and practical obstacles to being an involved single father and find ways to overcome them. It will also educate you—whether you're divorced, separated, or widowed—about the emotional, psychological, practical, and social aspects of single fatherhood. Finally, it will give you the knowledge, skills, support, and other tools you'll need to preserve and develop your father-child relationship and to make a difference in your children's lives.

The time to start is now. Researchers have found that fathers who don't have much meaningful contact with their children in their first two years as single fathers probably won't have much contact at all. Being an actively involved single dad isn't going to be easy. You may feel lost, alone, helpless, and confused along the way. But it will also be joyous, educational, and uplifting. Guaranteed.

How This Book Is Organized

Although each single father's experience is different, there are many common characteristics. I've organized the book in a way that makes sense for most men, but feel free to skip around. The book is divided into the following major parts:

You

Losing a partner, whether you wanted to or not, is hard. It brings up more feelings and emotions than you could possibly imagine. In this part we'll take an in-depth look at the emotional side of becoming a single father, with a focus on understanding and coping with your feelings. You'll be a far better parent to your children if you've got a grip on your own emotions first.

We'll also talk about some of the practical steps, such as hiring a lawyer and/or finding a mediator, that you'll need to take right away in order to ensure that you and your children have the opportunity to develop and nurture the kind of relationship that's best for all of you.

You and the System

In this part we'll discuss the various obstacles (including your ex) that sometimes make it hard for single fathers to be involved with their kids as they'd like to be. We'll examine child-custody arrangements, child support, alimony, and access (visitation), all with an emphasis on preserving your mental well-being and your relationship with your children.

You and the Kids

Although becoming a single father will undoubtedly take its toll on you, it will have longer-lasting, more profound effects on your children. And if you're going to be able to help them, you'll need a solid understanding of what they're going through. That's what you'll get in this part. We'll examine the wide range of emotions they'll be experiencing and take a serious look at how you can help them cope.

This part also includes valuable, age-appropriate information and tips on how to stay actively involved with your kids, whether you see them every day, every week, every month, or only once a year.

You and Your Ex

If you aren't a widower, in all likelihood you're going to have an ongoing relationship with the mother of your child(ren), possibly for the rest of your life. The very idea may make you sick, but you'd better start getting used to it. Remember, one of the biggest predictors of how kids fare psychologically and emotionally after their parents break up is how well the parents get along. In this part we'll talk about the importance of getting along with your ex and we'll take a look at some easy (and important) ways to keep your relationship civil.

Unfortunately, your ex might not be as open-minded as you. For that reason, this part also includes a serious discussion and plenty of hard-hitting advice on what to do if she interferes with your relationship with your kids.

Practical Matters

In this part we'll concentrate on the nuts and bolts (and shopping lists) of setting up your new home and your new kitchen. We'll go over some of the finances of fatherhood, such as saving for college, reducing your expenses, saving for retirement, and estate planning. We'll also discuss the ins and outs of finding quality child care.

Starting Over

It may be the farthest thing from your mind right now, but sooner or later you'll want to rekindle your love life. In this part we'll talk about getting back into dating, about how your new relationship(s) will impact you, your kids, and even your new partner. And since she may have kids of her own, we'll get you ready for yet another role: stepfather. Finally, we'll discuss your ex's love life and how it—and her new partner(s)—might affect you and the kids.

A Note on Terminology

He/She/Child/Children

Because you might have a son or a daughter or one (or more than one) of each, I've tried to alternate fairly regularly between "he" and "she," "your child" and "your children," and "your kids." Except where it's obvious, most of these phrases are interchangeable.

Your Ex

Whether the mother of your child has passed away or was your wife, your girlfriend, your lover, your fiancee, on a one-night stand doesn't matter. She's still your child's mother and occupies a special place in your child's heart and mind. Given the number of possible appellations, I decided, in most cases, to go for the most generic term: your ex.

A Small but Important Disclaimer

I'm not a pediatrician, lawyer, financial planner, or accountant, nor do I play one on TV (I do have a radio show, though). I'm also not gay or widowed, although I am single. And even though every sentence you're going to read in this book has been reviewed by real live single (or formerly single) fathers and by experts in the appropriate fields and has been pronounced sound, accurate, and reasonable, each single father's situation is unique. So please check with a professional whenever you're unsure about whether the steps you are taking are in your best interests and in those of your family.

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From reader reviews:

Ruth Jones:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite book and reading a book. Beside you can solve your problem; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled The Single Father: A Dad's Guide to Parenting Without a Partner (New Father Series). Try to stumble through book The Single Father: A Dad's Guide to Parenting Without a Partner (New Father Series) as your friend. It means that it can be your friend when you feel alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortunate for you personally. The book makes you far more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So, let us make new experience and also knowledge with this book.

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