Teacher's Guide/Exploring Childhood

Raising a Family Alone

Family and Society

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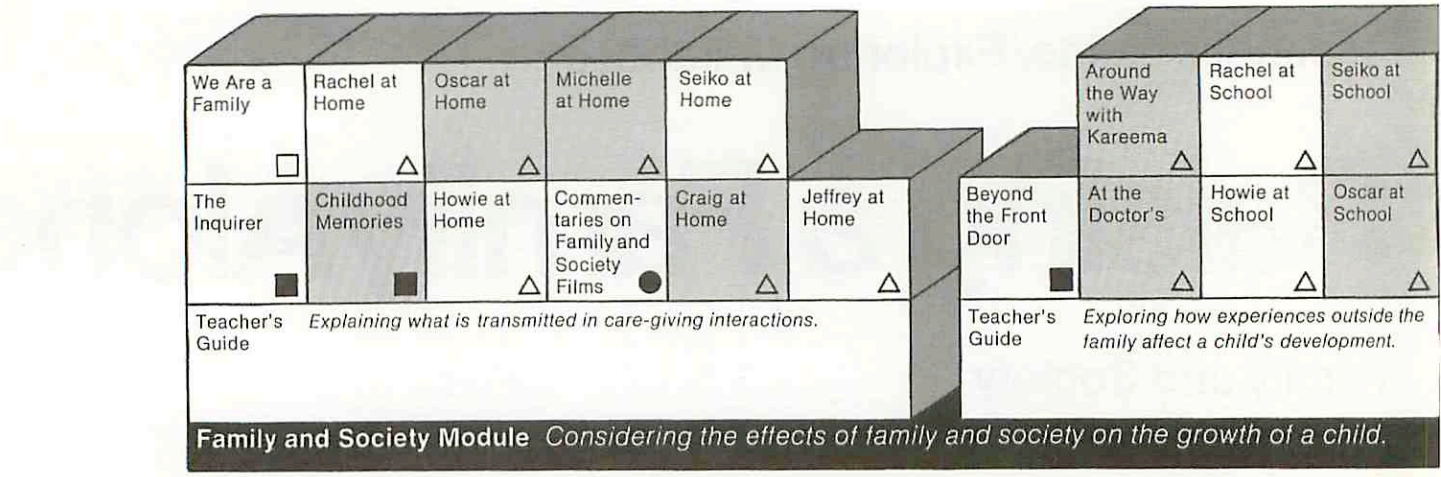
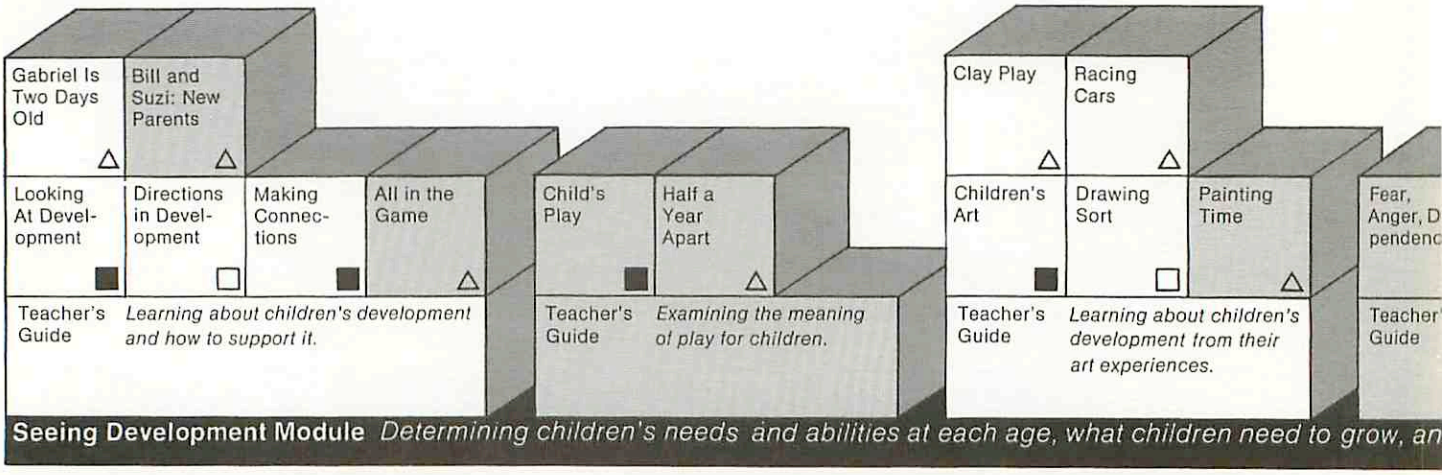
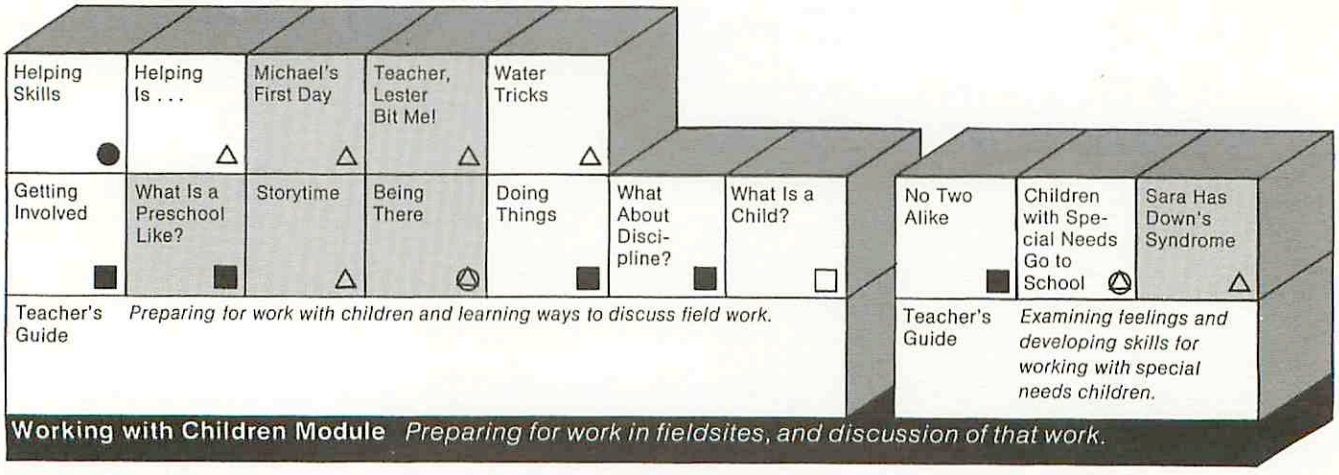
EDC School and Society Programs
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02160



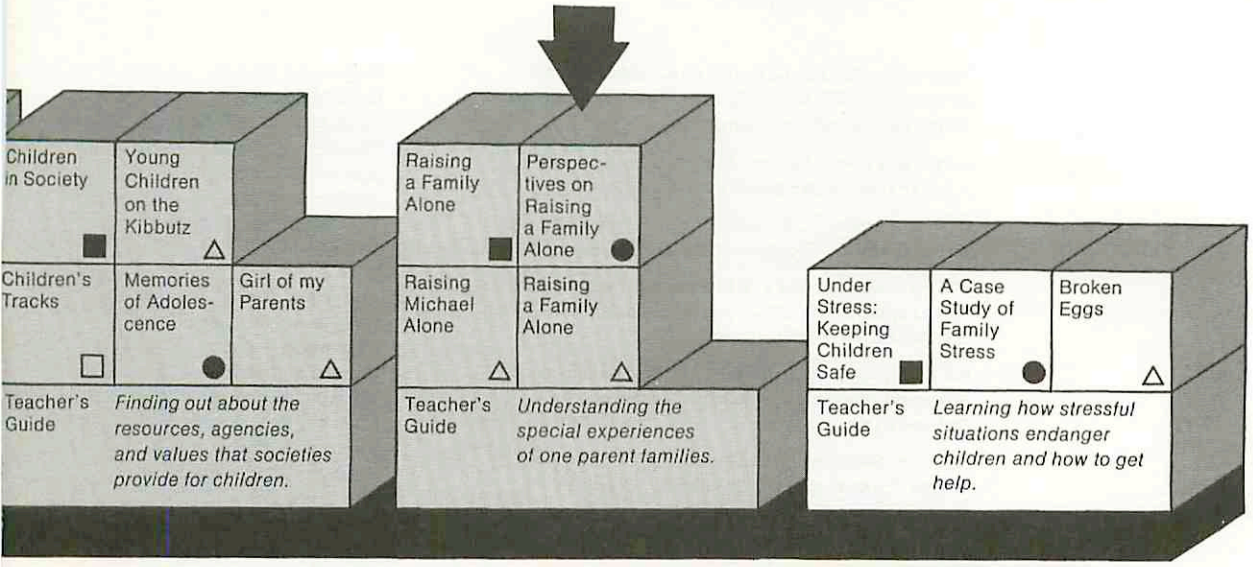


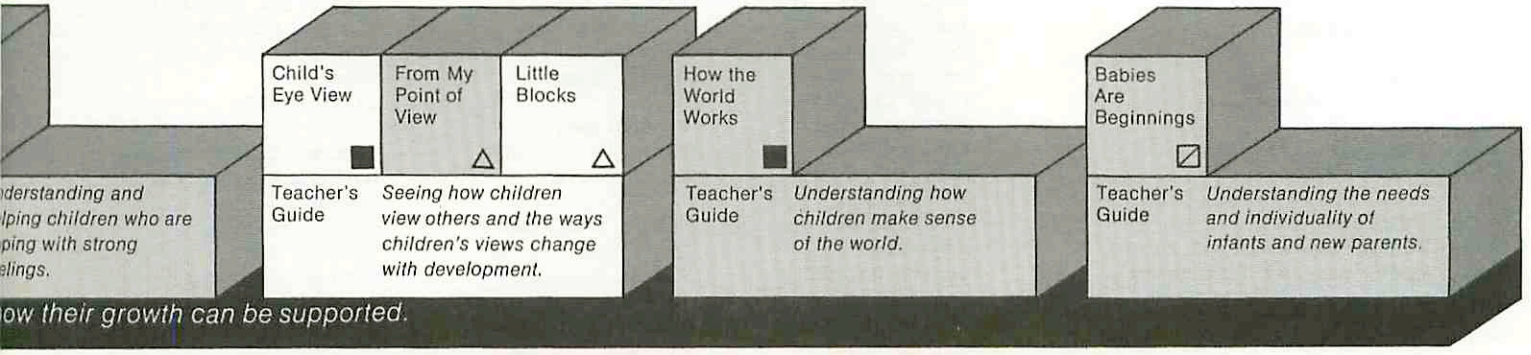


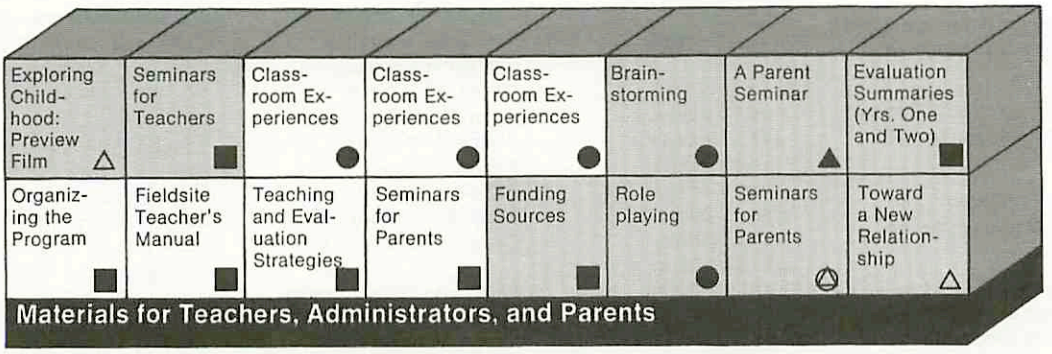
Exploring Childhood

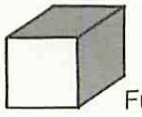
Key

- ■ Booklet
- △ Film
- ⌀ Filmstrip and Record
- □ Poster
- ● Record
- ▲ Cassette
- ⧄ Cards





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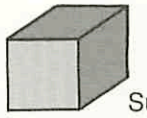
Supplementary Materials

CREDITS

Developer Coordinator:
Marjorie Jones

Developer:
Norma Arnow

Consultants:
Elaine Blechman
John Herzog

Contributors:
Priscilla Claman
Ruth N. MacDonald
William MacDonald
Freda Rebelsky

Editor:
Anne Cleaves

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Director:
Marilyn Clayton Felt

Curriculum Coordinator:
Ruth N. MacDonald

Module Head:
Susan Christie Thomas

Project Manager:
Kathleen Maurer Horani

Senior Scholars:
Jerome Kagan, Professor of Human Development, Harvard University

James Jones, Assistant Professor of Social Psychology, Harvard University

Freda Rebelsky, Professor of Psychology, Boston University

Consultants:
Elaine A. Blechman, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Yale School of Medicine, Yale University

T. Berry Brazelton, Pediatrician and Clinical Assistant Professor, Harvard University

Urie Bronfenbrenner, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, Cornell University

Jerome S. Bruner, Watts Professor of Psychology, Department of Experimental Psychology, Oxford University

Betty H. Bryant, Nursery School Director, Center for Child Care Research, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey

Courtney Cazden, Professor of Education, Harvard University

Joan Goldsmith, Co-Director, The Institute of Open Education/Antioch Graduate Center

Patricia Marks Greenfield, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of California at Los Angeles

John Herzog, Associate Professor of Education, Northeastern University

David Kantor, Director of Research and Development, Boston Family Institute

Eli H. Newberger, Director, Family Development Study, The Children's Hospital Medical Center

Ed Tronick, Associate in Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School, Harvard University

Robert Selman, Clinical Psychologist, Judge Baker Child Guidance Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Beatrice Blyth Whiting, Professor of Education and Anthropology, Harvard University

Developers:
Norma Arnow
Wendy Johnson Barnes
Ellen Grant
Rogier Gregoire
Toby Grover
Patricia Hourihan
Margaret Janey
Peggy Lippitt
Ronald Lippitt
Karlen Lyons
Lucy Lyons
Pamela Matz
Jim McMahon
John Nove
Judith Salzman
Jeanette Stone
Ianthe Thomas
Juliet Vogel
Sandra Warren
Dennie Wolf

Filmmakers:
Henry Felt
John Friedman
Mark Harris
Lynn Smith
David Vogt

Film Staff:
David Barnett
David Berenson
Frank Cantor
Elvin Carini
Edward Joyce
Allegra May
David Nelson
Charles Scott
Dan Seeger
Charles White, Jr.

Editors:
Anne Cleaves
Anne Glickman
Marcia Mitchell
Marjorie Waters
Nancy Witting

Design:
Myra Lee Conway
Roz Gerstein
Diana Ritter
Michael Sand
Karen Shipley
Judy Spock
Alison Wampler

Production:
Patricia A. Jones
Scott Paris

Parent Education:
Louis Grant Bond
Naarah Thornell

Teacher Education:
Michael J. Cohen
Rita Dixon
Marjorie Jones
Edward Martin
Barbara S. Powell
Emma Wood Rous

Evaluation:
Geraldine Brookins
Martin Chong
Catherine Cobb
Karen C. Cohen
Joan Costley
Sherryl Graves
Aisha Jones
Eileen Peters
Toby Schneider
Caren von Hippel

Regional Evaluators:
John R. Brown
Karen M. Cohen
Judith McMurray
Mark Walker
Kaffie Weaver

Regional Field Coordinators:
Florence J. Cherry
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Support Staff:
Marylene Altiere
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Barbara Connolly Sweeney
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Distribution Coordinator:
Steve Westlund

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER/EDC SCHOOL AND SOCIETY PROGRAMS

Director:
Janet Whitla

Central Staff:
Marilyn Clayton Felt
Vivian Guilfoy
Cheryl Healer
Earle Lomon
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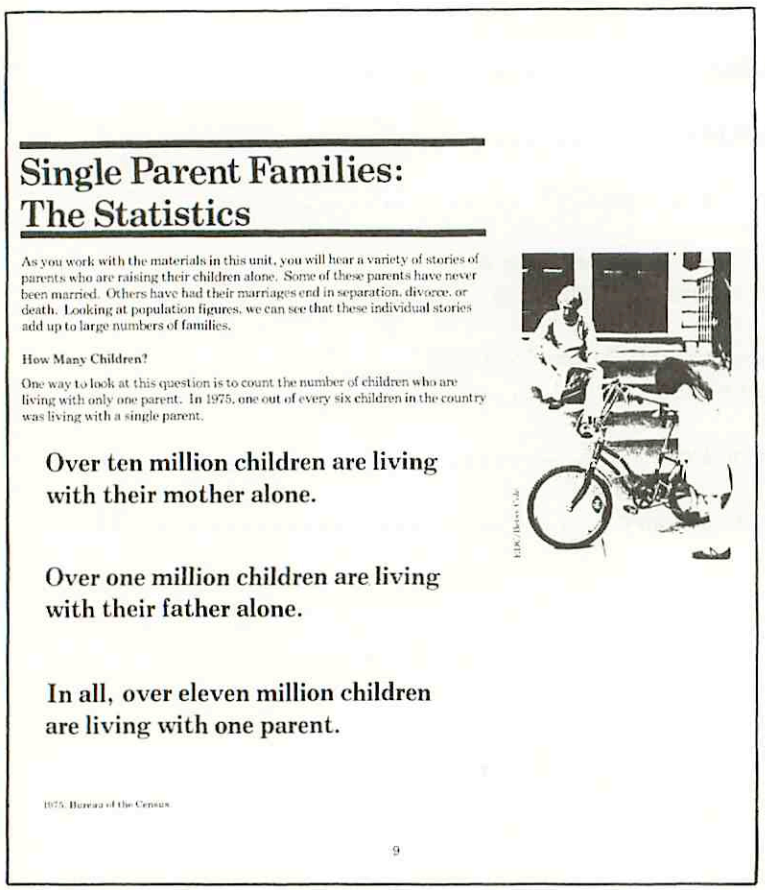
Susan Christie Thomas

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD has been developed by the School and Society Programs of Education Development Center under grants from the Office of Child Development and the National Institute of Mental Health, and with the support of the Office of Education.

Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) is a publicly supported, nonprofit corporation engaged in educational research and development.

Contents

Preface



Single Parent Families: The Statistics

As you work with the materials in this unit, you will hear a variety of stories of parents who are raising their children alone. Some of these parents have never been married. Others have had their marriages end in separation, divorce, or death. Looking at population figures, we can see that these individual stories add up to large numbers of families.

How Many Children?

One way to look at this question is to count the number of children who are living with only one parent. In 1975, one out of every six children in the country was living with a single parent.

Over ten million children are living with their mother alone.

Over one million children are living with their father alone.

In all, over eleven million children are living with one parent.

1975, Bureau of the Census

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Population studies show that an increasing number of families in America are headed by one parent. Whether a one-parent family comes about through death, divorce, unmarried pregnancy, or adoption by a single person, the fact remains that in every community there are one-parent families. Too often these families are viewed as incomplete, deficient, or somehow lacking in one way or another, and this in itself puts a particular stress on such families.

Since the first EXPLORING CHILDHOOD materials were published, the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare has received many requests for some special recognition of the problems and strengths of the single parent family. These requests themselves reflect the real increase in the numbers of children living in single parent families today, and thus it has seemed appropriate to add materials on this subject to the EXPLORING CHILDHOOD program.

In their fieldsite experience students may work with young children who are members of single parent families. Study of this unit should help students realize that while these families differ in structure from two-parent families, they have the same essential capacity for giving love, guidance, support, and self-esteem to their members.

Overview

The focus of this unit is on how single parent families, and the children in them, function. Thus, the circumstances under which the families in the cases became single parent families are not emphasized and, in some cases, are not mentioned at all. While your students, like many in our field test sites, might find it interesting to know why a particular family has only one adult present, we have chosen to cast this unit in the mode of "Where do we go from here?" and have taken the family's single parent status as a given. You will need to make it explicit that the ways a family may have become a single parent family are various (death, separation, divorce, adoption), and that seeking to place blame and passing judgments on people's lives is not appropriate material for discussion in a classroom and distracts students from their caregiving role.

In becoming aware of the special stresses and strengths of single parent families, students can be sensitive to the needs of children, give them support when they need support, and build upon their strengths as they do with any other child at the fieldsite. But while they are focusing on the needs of children from single parent families, it is important that students realize how similar these needs are to the needs of other children. It is also important that adolescents working with children from single parent families learn to stereotype neither the children nor their families.

As the poster "We Are a Family" acknowledges, many different family structures exist in our society; single parent families are not rare or set apart. The intent of this unit is not to advocate this family structure in particular, but to provide a vantage point from which students can look at factors that affect the lives of children and adults who are part of this type of family structure. Thus these materials add another dimension to the family structures studied in Module Three, Family and Society.

Materials

The student materials of this unit are divided into three sections:

1. "What Is a Family?" asks students to consider ways in which one might describe a family structure. Students look again at the "We Are a Family" poster and begin to consider single parent families as another family structure in the society.

2. "What It Means to Be a Single Parent Family" presents case studies in which adults and children in single parent families discuss some of their family experiences, and presents articles which give students some background in the needs and capacities of young children in dealing with major change.

3. "Strengthening the Single Parent Family" includes discussions and activities on coping, listening, problem solving, and community resources. The case studies generally focus on how these families have coped with becoming single parent families, and where they have found personal and family support through the period of adjustment and on into the establishment of their new family structure.

Using the Record "Raising a Family Alone"

This record, suggested for use in Sections 2 and 3, contains four interviews:

Side 1 Band 1: "Making It On My Own"

Side 1 Band 2: "The Widower"

Side 2 Band 1: "Little by Little You Pull Yourself Up"

Side 2 Band 2: "Rabbi Grollman"

Underlying these interviews is the general theme of coping with the problems of single parents. Students should be given one or two themes to focus on before any excerpts from the record are played, or have them listen with one or two questions in mind. Some issues to listen for might be: reallocation of family responsibilities; sense of isolation; finding family support systems, such as help with child care, transportation, or financial emergencies.

Relation to Other Exploring Childhood Materials

This unit may be introduced any time the issue of single parenting comes up, or in response to particular student concerns; the issue might be raised by the students' fieldsite experience and could be used as a resource like *Under Stress* or *No Two Alike*.

Raising a Family Alone can also be used following the "Children at Home" portion of Module Three. *Raising a Family Alone* focuses on the fourth and seventh goals of the Family and Society module:

- to develop sensitivity for other families' lifestyles and values,
- to consider what outside resources families need for raising children and to look at how a society provides these resources.

In addition to the poster "We Are a Family," this unit also uses the film "Jeffrey at Home" from "Children at Home."

Raising a Family Alone looks forward to some of the themes in *Beyond the Front Door*, but in relation to the single parent family. For instance:

> What messages does society give children in a single parent family?
>
> How can one support the sense of self-worth of a child who is part of such a family?
>
> What expectations do parents and children have of each other in single parent families?

A Special Concern

It is to be expected that within EXPLORING CHILDHOOD classes a number of families will be single parent families--the students' own families, the teacher's own family, families of fieldsite teachers, families of children with whom the students are working. Students will also know of single parent families among their neighbors, friends, or relatives.

A teacher using this unit should handle discussions and sharing information in ways that feel most comfortable. A teacher may be willing to share his or her experience as a single parent with the class, and this might be helpful to students who are trying to deal with similar experiences. If a teacher is relaxed about sharing experiences in class, the students might be more relaxed, too, but no class member should ever be pressured to share personal information.

Course teachers need to be sensitive to the needs of students in their classes who belong to single parent families. Fieldsite teachers need to be sensitive to the needs of the young children and of the high school students as well. All adults should be aware of what children say and do, and what people around the children say and do, so that the fact of a child's belonging to a single parent family never hurts the child's sense of worth. Teachers will need to help adolescents understand that unacceptable behavior from a young child is not necessarily attributable to the fact that the child lives with one parent and not two. (See discussion of developmental stages in Module Two, Seeing Development.)

At the Fieldsite

The fieldsite teacher is an invaluable resource in preparing students to deal with the issues this unit raises and is in a position to pair the adolescent with a young child according to the strengths of the adolescent and the needs of the child. A young child who has recently experienced a divorce in his or her family may be feeling a need for consistency, and the regular companionship of an adolescent could be one way to give the child a supportive structure.

This material raises the issue of confidentiality, to which students will have already been introduced in relation to their fieldsite work. It will be important to state this idea again.

How Students Feel About This Material

Students interviewed during the pilot test of these materials said:

> I liked studying this unit because you never know what is going to happen in the future. This isn't a great big unit, but at least it prepares you.
>
> You learn how to help another person, like your girl friend, and what you can do for another person.

Students appeared to understand the relevance of developing skills which would be helpful for someone faced with the responsibilities of a single parent, and liked making an inventory of community resources available to single parent families.

As they observed other families through the case materials, students wanted to talk about feelings that had come up in their own lives when they experienced loss or were called upon to shoulder a heavy responsibility alone. The number and range of case materials in this unit means that students need not draw on their own experiences, but many students do volunteer information about themselves and their families. Remind students to consult with their families before they share anything that might be considered confidential.

INVOLVING PARENTS

The teacher may find it necessary to consider the feelings of the community in presenting this unit. These materials acknowledge that our society includes family structures in which one adult has primary responsibility for raising the children and providing for their needs. Beginning from this position, the intent of the material is to present case studies relating a variety of experiences encountered by single parent families and then to provide strategies enabling families to deal with family situations that might come up because there is only one adult living in the home.

One way to involve the community in considering themes and issues in these materials is to invite parents to review them. How this review of materials is done depends on what parent time and teacher time is available. The form letter included at the end of this Overview may be used to issue the invitation.

Arrange to have parents read some of the student materials, listen to excerpts of the record, and read the Preface and Overview of this teacher's guide. They might

be asked to write about any concerns they feel at this point, or the group of participating parents might get together for a general discussion. Teachers may want to tape this parent feedback and listen to it later.

In leading the session, the following agenda could be used:

- Begin with an overview of Module Three, Family and Society, focusing on the "We Are a Family" poster.

- Give an overview of *Raising a Family Alone*--how the unit is organized and what range of family structures is presented.

- Play one or more excerpts from the record.

- Show one of the films.

- Parents can look at the student materials during a break.

- Ask parents to respond to what they've seen.

Comments and questions may be taken after each activity, or parents can take notes for a general discussion at the end of the session.

If the teacher or parent seminar leader is not available to work with parents, one of the parents may lead the group in this review session. If this is the case, it may be suggested that the leader of the group refer to the introduction to the Parent Seminar on *Raising a Family Alone*. The school's guidance counselor may be able to help coordinate this session.

Dear Parents of EXPLORING CHILDHOOD Students:

Within the next few weeks, we will be working with a unit in the EXPLORING CHILDHOOD program called *Raising a Family Alone*. The purposes of *Raising a Family Alone* are:

- to make students aware of the needs and strengths of single parent families
- to make students aware of the skills and resources single parents draw upon.

You are invited to _____
on _____ at _____ o'clock
to look at the student materials.

Your questions and comments will be helpful to us in making this material most meaningful to the students.

Sincerely,

_____
EXPLORING CHILDHOOD Teacher

What Is a Family?

Purposes:	To extend students' concept of what a family is. To make students aware of the stresses on parents--whether they live in a one-parent or a two-parent household. To inform students of the significant presence in society of single parent families.
Time:	2-3 classes.
Materials:	"Some Thoughts About the Modern Family," page 6, *Raising a Family Alone* student booklet. Poster: "We Are a Family." Background reading for teachers: "Who Cares for America's Children?" by Urie Bronfenbrenner, at the back of this guide.

"What Is a Family?" is an important question for this society to answer. In the student materials for this unit, several activities and short articles help students make a beginning at answering this question. In studying Module Three, Family and Society, some classes may have done activities or had discussions which involved the "We Are a Family" poster. For these classes, this activity will just be an extension of that experience. For those students who did not discuss the "We Are a Family" poster previously, it will be a time to begin to look at the variety of ways in which a family can be described. Depending on the class time available and the interests of students, additional activities from page 12 of this guide may be chosen.

Families Are Always Changing

By considering various events that mark the continuation of life within the family, students will be able to put the process of becoming a single parent family into perspective as one more such milestone.

When talking with their parents about changes in the parents' lives, students might want to think about "concentric circles" (*Beyond the Front Door* teacher's guide, p. 7). The "concentric circles" exercise will help the person being questioned to recall specific experiences in his or her life. Mentioning the person's age, grade in school, or where he or she lived, can trigger the recollection of many specific experiences.

Thinking About Families

From their experiences in Module Three, Family and Society, students will recall that families were represented by many different groupings of people. There were therefore many different definitions for the nuclear family and the extended family.

In "Some Thoughts About the Modern Family" child psychologist Freda Rebelsky reflects on how the particular structure of modern families puts stress on parents and children in isolating them from informal systems of support and intensifying the adult/child relationship. This article can lay groundwork for student consideration of the further stress facing the single parent of a modern nuclear family.

FAMILY STRUCTURES

When students look at the "We Are a Family" poster they may recall their thoughts about it in Module Three and might also want to draw upon its visual images to hypothesize about the life situations they present. Some pictures may represent the students' image of what a single parent family is.

> What do students think a family is?
>
> Would they define the family in terms of its members? In terms of the jobs that are being done?

They may be able to perceive or, if not, it can be suggested, that what is important in a family is the quality of the family relationships and the nature of the care given to the children.

Students may wish to form small groups to do the fieldsite activity which asks that they make collages with the children. The resulting displays of children's work will probably reflect the statistics described in the article which ends the first section of the *Raising a Family Alone* student booklet.

Single Parent Families: The Statistics

After students have read the statistical material on single parent families, this exercise can be done to relate the statistics to the students' own experience. Ask students to add up in their own minds the number of single parent families they know. By totaling the students' numbers, some indication should be given of the number of single parent families in the students' face-to-face community. Students may point out that some families might be counted more than once if students know the same family, so to account for the overlap the number may be revised downward by a third. In any case, this exercise will give students the idea that single parent families are part of every community.

What Is a Single Parent Family?

In concluding this section, have students look at pages 6 and 7 of the student materials. Then, drawing on their discussions of family structures and functions, and of their own images and ideas of families and where these images come from, guide students toward a consideration of what it means to be a single parent family.

The class might begin this discussion by spending a few minutes collecting names that have been used to describe single parent families. Words like "broken," "incomplete," "fatherless," will probably come up, along with terms that are less negative. Ask students to think of names for such families that are accurate and more humane for the people in them than "broken" would be. For instance, students might suggest "single parent," or they might suggest some word constructions that are less commonly used, such as "parents without partners," or "one parent" families.

Ask students to consider the impact negative words applied to their families might have on children from single parent families. What might be the consequences for a child's sense of self-worth to know that he or she is part of what society calls a "broken home"?

The direction of any change in students' perspective is by no means to be away from viewing two-parent families in positive terms, but toward seeing other family structures, too, as strong, loving institutions within which to raise children.

Additional Activities

These activities are designed to be used, as time permits, to supplement activities suggested in the student material.

1. Family Structures: To help students consider families from a more global perspective, ask them to recall the cultures presented in Module Three, Family and Society. Ask them to think of other cultures with which they are familiar as they attempt to respond to the following questions:

How do other cultures define a family?

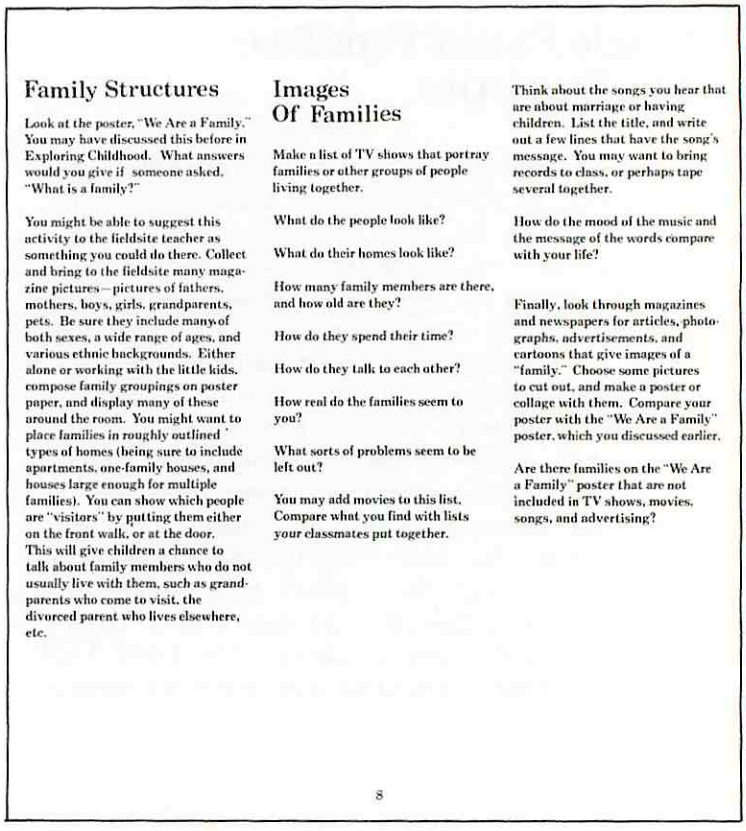
Think back to the film you saw about life on a kibbutz. What changes does the kibbutz living situation bring about in the relationship within a family?

Think back to the material on the Ibo culture. Recalling that that society does not support the idea of orphanages, what kinds of supports might be offered to single parent families?

2. Images of Families: To heighten students' perceptions of the stereotypes used to describe families, one or both of the following activities may be assigned:

Assign the boys in the class to read two or three women's magazines (e.g., *McCall's*, *Family Circle*, *Redbook*, *Essence*) and the girls in the class to read two or three magazines that might seem to interest men more than women (e.g., *Popular Mechanics*, or *Sports Illustrated*). Ask them what kind of ideal of the opposite sex they see presented. What ideal of the family is presented? What are men supposed to be like? What are women supposed to be like? How do these images resemble or differ from what they see and experience in their daily lives?

Assign members of the class to cut out from magazines or newspapers ads that show families. What is the image of families presented? It may be possible to tape some television commercials or ask the students to listen to some. What is the view of the family presented? What does the father do? What does the mother do? What do the children do? Is the situation realistic?



Family Structures

Look at the poster, "We Are a Family." You may have discussed this before in Exploring Childhood. What answers would you give if someone asked, "What is a family?"

You might be able to suggest this activity to the fieldsite teacher as something you could do there. Collect and bring to the fieldsite many magazine pictures—pictures of fathers, mothers, boys, girls, grandparents, pets. Be sure they include many of both sexes, a wide range of ages, and various ethnic backgrounds. Either alone or working with the little kids, compose family groupings on poster paper, and display many of these around the room. You might want to place families in roughly outlined types of homes (being sure to include apartments, one-family houses, and houses large enough for multiple families). You can show which people are "visitors" by putting them either on the front walk, or at the door. This will give children a chance to talk about family members who do not usually live with them, such as grandparents who come to visit, the divorced parent who lives elsewhere, etc.

Images Of Families

Make a list of TV shows that portray families or other groups of people living together.

What do the people look like?

What do their homes look like?

How many family members are there, and how old are they?

How do they spend their time?

How do they talk to each other?

How real do the families seem to you?

What sorts of problems seem to be left out?

You may add movies to this list. Compare what you find with lists your classmates put together.

Think about the songs you hear that are about marriage or having children. List the title, and write out a few lines that have the song's message. You may want to bring records to class, or perhaps tape several together.

How do the mood of the music and the message of the words compare with your life?

Finally, look through magazines and newspapers for articles, photographs, advertisements, and cartoons that give images of a "family." Choose some pictures to cut out, and make a poster or collage with them. Compare your poster with the "We Are a Family" poster, which you discussed earlier.

Are there families on the "We Are a Family" poster that are not included in TV shows, movies, songs, and advertising?

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What It Means to Be a Single Parent Family

Purposes:	To make students sensitive to the impact of the loss or absence of a parent on the remaining family members. To begin considering the "new" family structure created by the one-parent status of the family, and the new roles and/or additional responsibilities this new family structure might bring.
Time:	5-6 classes.
Materials:	Eleven case studies in the student material, of which seven are family case studies; three are case studies from the point of view of children; and one is a case study from the record "Raising a Family Alone." Films: "Jeffrey at Home" and "Raising Michael Alone." Background reading for teachers: "Guilt and the Single Parent," by Lee Salk, M.D., included in the appendix to this guide.

This section of *Raising a Family Alone* is built upon a group of articles and case materials which represent a wide spectrum of single parent experiences, and which are told from the viewpoint of parents, children, and community support people. The articles and case studies describe stresses these families and the people in them have encountered, and ways in which these families are groping toward a new sense of themselves as families.

The first case, "Lizzie: Fifteen-Year-Old Mother," raises the themes evident in the other material. These might be simply stated:

- Adults and children react in different ways to stress. (Consider Lizzie's reaction as a child and as an adult.)
- The community may increase stress on single parent families.
- Adults, even under stress, can assess the needs and capabilities of their children.
- When adults and children are able to have a positive sense of themselves as a family, they can take steps to help themselves as a family.

What It Means to Be A Single Parent Family

Lizzie: Fifteen - Year - Old Mother

I have seven children. Lizzie is my sixth child. She is now 18. At the time of her pregnancy and delivery, she was only 15, only in ninth grade. I was completely shocked when she came and told me she was six months pregnant. I just couldn't believe it.

The first thing I said to her was, "Is it John's child?" (John was her boyfriend.) But she had broken up with him and I had just thought it was kid's stuff. She said, "Yes," and I said, "Well, I don't know what we're going to do, but one thing you're not going to do is get married." She said that was all right, she didn't want to marry him anyway, and he was in the service in Germany. I asked her if she wanted an abortion or if she wanted to give up the child. When I mentioned adoption, she said, "No way, absolutely no way," and I said, "Better give this a lot of thought, because you're 15 and that baby is going to be with you for maybe 18, 19 years, and he's going to be your responsibility. You have to do everything for him." She said that's what she wanted to do, so we proceeded from there, took her to a doctor.

Her younger sister was 14 then. I said, "How do you feel about Liz bringing home a baby?" She said, "Beautiful, we'll have another baby in the house." Lizzie's grandmother took it the hardest. When I went over to tell her, she just cried and cried and said, "Don't tell anybody." But now she's the baby's biggest champion. She just loves him.

My husband didn't know. We were separated then. We're divorced now. And I was really sort of afraid that he might call the house, that he might upset her. So we just didn't tell him until the baby was born. When we did, he said, "Don't you think the baby's father should support the baby," and all that. And I said, "No."

I was really afraid that Liz might get caught up in the romance of, "Oh, he's the father of my baby, we're going to get married." And I just didn't want to hear that. Not at that age. By the time he got home from Germany the baby'd be two years old and Liz would be 18. Then, if she still wanted to take up with him, see him, whatever. ... He knew about the baby, though. She wrote and told him.

She delivered her child in December. By then it was *our* baby. At home I had five children and everybody was really looking forward to his birth. We fixed up a room for him. One of the boys went out and bought a new crib and we had everything for him. I was working the day that she went to the hospital. She called me, we took her to the hospital, and then we all proceeded to wait. And he arrived. Beautiful little boy, and we just brought him home and dug in.

She didn't go back to school until after her six week checkup; this is the policy. When she went back she just took up where she left off. The school was very good. They put her on what they call a work-study program. She had all her courses in the morning and then went home and took care of Matthew. So, every morning we drove him to the baby sitter, picked him up and pushed him home in his baby carriage. That's been going on for three years, and now she's a senior. It's worked out well.

But Liz's life has changed a lot. She hasn't had the giddy times that the average high school kid has. She just naturally matured more quickly. She has to come home. She has to do laundry. She had to make formulas and change diapers and all the things that the average 15-year-old doesn't have to do, but

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Introduction to the Cases

The case materials in Part II of the student booklet describe early adjustments through which families pass when they become single parent families. All the families must make such adjustments, whether the cause of the family's changed circumstances is death, separation, divorce, or the birth of a baby to a single woman. When they first find themselves in their new circumstances, family members are more conscious of their problems than their strengths; the case materials in "What It Means to Be a Single Parent Family" reflect the shock, trauma, fear, and grief that accompany the loss of a family member.

In the crisis of first finding themselves left to raise a family alone, parents may often blame themselves for any difficulties and be hard put to think of themselves in any but negative terms. At this point it is crucial for the family to take stock of its present situation, and to focus on its strengths.

Recent research has shown that a family goes through identifiable stages in becoming a single parent family. The first stage is characterized by a sense of loss and a groping toward a new sense of family. This is followed by acceptance of the new family unit, and people take steps to cope with their new situations.

> The dynamic aspects of the situation are also important, as pointed out by Hugh Heclo, et al., in a working paper prepared for HEW Office of Child Development.... The authors also distinguish a transitional period of entry into female-headed status, lasting from two to four years...and they stress the role of uncertainty and expectation as to the duration of single parenthood in the adjustment of both mothers and children. All of these dynamic aspects are essentially unresearched.*

The families in the cases in "Strengthening the Single Parent Family" have all had time to adjust to the single parent family structure in terms of practical measures, and to appreciate (to varying degrees) some history of success as single parent families. These cases generally focus on arrangements families have made (within the family and with the community) to meet their needs and to support their growth as individuals and as families.

*Ross, Heather L., and Sawhill, Isabel V., *Time of Transition*, p. 151. © 1975, The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C.

Cases in WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SINGLE PARENT FAMILY

If scheduling does not permit all students to read all the cases, the following brief case descriptions will give students an idea of what types of cases are available in the student booklet for them to choose among. The list should either be reproduced or read aloud, especially if each student does not have a booklet. Some students will express great interest in these cases, and those students should have the opportunity, if at all possible, to read all the cases.

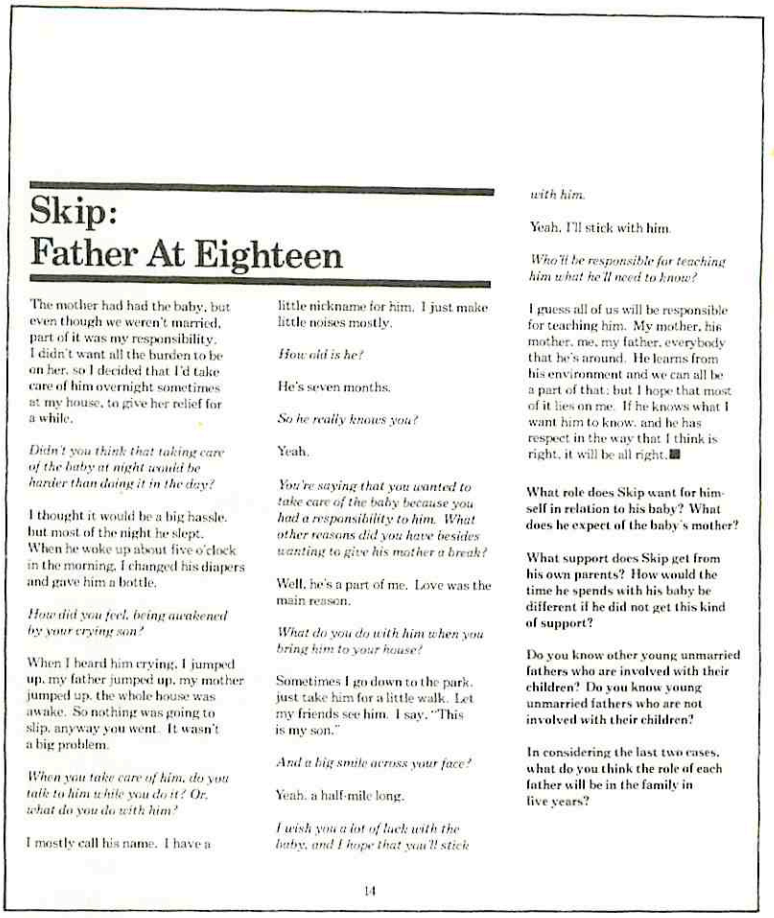
"Lizzie: Fifteen-Year-Old Mother." The divorced mother of an unmarried teenage mother talks about the choices she and her daughter made and how the family copes with its new member.

"Skip: Father at Eighteen." An unmarried teenager talks about occasionally caring for his son and his hopes for the child's future.

"Donna: My Daughter Took the Wheel." A newly divorced mother takes her children on a special trip to Disneyland and confronts for the first time her new responsibilities.

"Heidi: Is Daddy Going to Be Home?" A young mother separated from her husband expresses her own and her daughter's sense of anxiety and bewilderment.

"Chris: It Didn't End With the Plane Crash." This case relates how a mother and her six children have survived as a family through their grief over the death of the father. Particular emphasis is placed on how the oldest child has been affected by the death of the father.



Skip:
Father At Eighteen

The mother had had the baby, but even though we weren't married, part of it was my responsibility. I didn't want all the burden to be on her, so I decided that I'd take care of him overnight sometimes at my house, to give her relief for a while.

Didn't you think that taking care of the baby at night would be harder than doing it in the day?

I thought it would be a big hassle, but most of the night he slept. When he woke up about five o'clock in the morning, I changed his diapers and gave him a bottle.

How did you feel, being awakened by your crying son?

When I heard him crying, I jumped up, my father jumped up, my mother jumped up, the whole house was awake. So nothing was going to slip, anyway you went. It wasn't a big problem.

When you take care of him, do you talk to him while you do it? Or, what do you do with him?

I mostly call his name. I have a little nickname for him. I just make little noises mostly.

How old is he?

He's seven months.

So he really knows you?

Yeah.

You're saying that you wanted to take care of the baby because you had a responsibility to him. What other reasons did you have besides wanting to give his mother a break?

Well, he's a part of me. Love was the main reason.

What do you do with him when you bring him to your house?

Sometimes I go down to the park, just take him for a little walk. Let my friends see him. I say, "This is my son."

And a big smile across your face?

Yeah, a half-mile long.

I wish you a lot of luck with the baby, and I hope that you'll stick with him.

Yeah, I'll stick with him.

Who'll be responsible for teaching him what he'll need to know?

I guess all of us will be responsible for teaching him. My mother, his mother, me, my father, everybody that he's around. He learns from his environment and we can all be a part of that; but I hope that most of it lies on me. If he knows what I want him to know, and he has respect in the way that I think is right, it will be all right. ■

What role does Skip want for himself in relation to his baby? What does he expect of the baby's mother?

What support does Skip get from his own parents? How would the time he spends with his baby be different if he did not get this kind of support?

Do you know other young unmarried fathers who are involved with their children? Do you know young unmarried fathers who are not involved with their children?

In considering the last two cases, what do you think the role of each father will be in the family in five years?

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"Children Are Different From Adults." In a Mother's Day letter to her newly divorced mother, a ten-year-old girl expresses her love and her concern for their family.

"Children Talk About Divorce...and Death." A series of quotations from children describing events and feelings in their experience.

"Ben: A Mother's Journal." Through the first two years of his parents' separation, this young child expresses his sorrow and the wish that he could influence his parents to want to live together again.

"Eve: I Lost My Best Friend." This mother talks about bringing her children through the shock of their father's sudden death, some continuing reverberations, and measures she took to adjust her own life to her changed circumstances.

"Sandra: Getting Married Again When You Have Teenage Children." This mother remarried and finds that her husband and children do not combine around her into a new two-parent family.

Using the Case Materials

Have students form small groups to discuss cases. Allow them time to consider what cases interest them and what other students they would like to work with. Some may choose to read *all* of the case materials, but some may read only the one or two they choose to do in depth with a small group.

It is not essential that every case be chosen by one of these small groups; however, those that are not discussed in groups should be given attention by the class as a whole.

Each group should direct its discussion to these questions for each case:

> Why is this a single parent family (death, divorce of parent, birth, adoption of child by a single person)?
>
> What stresses and pressures do the family members describe?
>
> How do the various people in the family respond to the stresses described?
>
> Do friends, neighbors, and relatives add to the stress felt by members of the single parent family? If so, how?
>
> How do the parents respond to the needs and capabilities of their children?
>
> What factors contribute to each member's sense of being a family?
>
> How do you feel as you read and/or listen to this material?
>
> What is particularly important/significant/interesting to you in this case? Why?

When the groups have had time to read, discuss, and perhaps make notes on their conclusions, the class can come together and discuss any cases which may not have been considered already in small groups. For variety, students might like to read some cases aloud or role play some of the cases.

Role play of a range of cases can be organized around the small groups that read them, and students might prepare the dialogue in advance. For instance, student materials for "Donna: My Daughter Took the Wheel" suggest three scenes: the family's departure from San Francisco; the mother's tearful realization of her responsibilities as a single parent; and Donna's taking the wheel. One teacher asked the students what they would think about this particular situation if the remaining parent had been the father.

As they go along, students might look for differences or similarities in the ways families deal with their single parent status according to what event (adoption, birth, death, divorce) generated that status.

Answering Children, Children Talk About Divorce...and Death

Has your fieldsite teacher had to deal with a child who has experienced death or divorce in the family? How has she handled these events?

Answering Children

In "Heidi: Is Daddy Going to Be Home?" the mother describes the scene that she must face each morning at the child's nursery school. Also, in the tape, "Making It On My Own," the mother remembers a time when her son cried and clung to her as she left him for the day. Nursery school and day care teachers have agreed that it is hard for the children of single parents—as it is for many other children—to say goodbye in the morning. But perhaps, like the child who lost her father, these children worry about where the mother is and if she's all right. Perhaps they need to be reassured, like Chris in the tape, "Making It On My Own," that they will not be abandoned.

Nursery school teachers have said that most preschool children don't talk much about their family situation or their loss. When they do, they seem to put their feelings in terms of denial and/or fantasy.

One nursery school teacher said: "I knew the parents were divorced and that the father hadn't come to visit in years. Jerry told me that his father took him to the ball game last week, and that they were going to Disneyland next summer."

Another teacher talked of a four-year-old whose father had died the year before she came to the nursery school. "She told the other children, 'Mommy and Daddy and I are going to the beach for a week, and my Daddy will build a big sand fort for me.' When she said things like that to me, I would say, 'You mean that you and your Mommy are going somewhere.'"

Most teachers of young children feel the most helpful thing they can do is tell the child they are sorry the child has had this loss, while making sure that anything they say is based on what the situation actually is. It really seems to help a child when the teacher or the student at the fieldsite puts an arm around him or her and says, "I am sorry your father died." It is important for the children's sake to use the words themselves, like "death," "divorce," or whatever the painful situation is. The point is not to insist that the child face facts right then and there, but that having adults speak about the situation in a matter-of-fact way helps a child learn to accept it. ■

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Children Talk About Divorce...

"One day my father came to visit while I was at a friend's. My mother asked him to stay till I got home, but he left anyway."

✡✡✡✡

"At first my mom wouldn't stay in the house when my father came, but that made us sad. So now they're friends, and she stays in the house when he visits. But they're not going to get married. I don't want her to get married again because I'm afraid they'll have more fights."

✡✡✡✡

"My father used to yell at us a lot; now that they're divorced, he doesn't yell anymore. Now most of the time my mother yells, because she's the only one around."

✡✡✡✡

"Yesterday was my mother's birthday. We found some flowers in the dumpster and we sold them, and people bought them, and we bought her salt and pepper shakers and a pin and a necklace. My father came. He left because he was angry at Mama."

✡✡✡✡

"Some days everything goes wrong, since my parents got divorced. A gallon of milk spilled and the washing machine broke, and all our clothes got wet and soggy—even my sneakers. And I had to tell the gym teacher (he's mean, he's a grouch). We had a lot of fights that day." ■

Often in cases of divorce, young children appear to forget things that they have been told by both parents. They ask questions again and again of their parents, brothers and sisters, and their preschool teachers.

...and Death

"My father died when I was a sophomore in high school. After a couple of years I lost the sense of having a father. I mean, I could remember doing things with him and everything. We were very close. But I had lost the feeling of having a father. I just couldn't picture it anymore."

✡✡✡✡

"When I came in the room, I was frightened because the firemen were near Daddy, and then I looked and I said to myself, 'That's really not my father, because the light has gone out of his eyes.' " ■

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Students may want to discuss these issues with their fieldsite teachers, after they read these comments by teachers about children and by children about their situations in single parent families.

Personal information about children's lives falls within the realm of confidentiality, and students should not expect the fieldsite teacher to share specific information about particular children.

However, confidentiality would not hamper a discussion about what efforts are made to help children at the fieldsite as they are going through family changes.

When students share information--and their own observations--with the rest of the class, the group might consider together what message the child would get from the ways various situations have been handled.

Children Are Different From Adults, Seeing Children Through the Change

The points made by Anna Freud and Judith Wallerstein in the two articles, "Children Are Different From Adults" and "Seeing Children Through the Change," can serve as a framework for helping students to look again at the case studies. This time they should examine the differences in the ways that adults and children deal with the fact that they are members of single parent families. Students can look at some of the cases to examine the children's perception of the process of grief and separation. They might look for things the children say and do that show that they perceive the situation differently from the adults in their family.

The case studies in "What It Means to Be a Single Parent Family" can be used to illustrate this discussion.

- What might Donna be thinking when she takes over the wheel from her mother?
- Heidi's confusion is related to her age and developmental stage, but is also increased by her mother's distraction.

Anna Freud worked with children for many years. One of her associates, Joseph Goldstein, reported some of their perceptions in the book *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*. Some of their perceptions are described here.

Victor Cicovan

Children Are Different From Adults

Anna Freud and her associates, in their book *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*, talk about the differences between the way children and adults react to important events in their lives. Children are not "adults in miniature."

Children are different from adults. Their needs for care, their need for independence, ways they have to understand what is happening around them, their ability to tolerate frustration—all these change as the children grow and change from one developmental stage to another.

Children have a different sense of time than adults. They have a harder time waiting, and separations seem longer.

Children tend to think that their behavior is the reason why things happen. "The illness of a parent is rejection; the death of a parent is intentional abandonment." They think that they have somehow caused their parents to divorce, that they have caused the death of a parent or other loved one.

Adults are more able to reason and plan their way out of problems. Children are more at the mercy of their own feelings and less able to cope with major changes in their lives.

Finally, children tend to see people as either "bad guys or good guys" and have a hard time keeping up a sense of loyalty to both sides when people are in conflict with each other. ■

Joseph Goldstein, *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child* (New York: Free Press, Macmillan Co., 1973).

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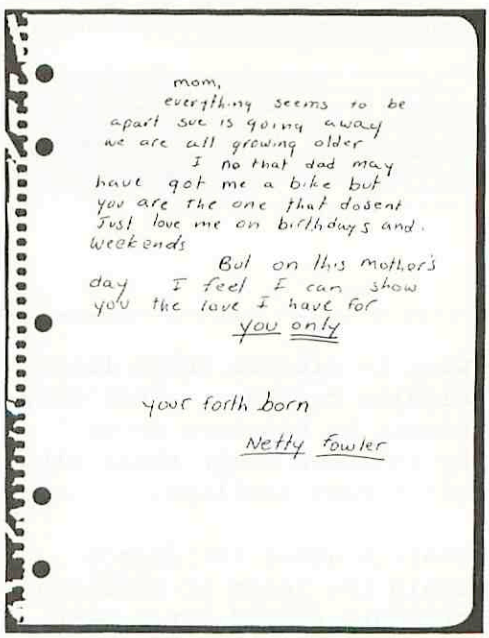

mom,
everything seems to be apart sue is going away we are all growing older I no that dad may have got me a bike but you are the one that dosent just love me on birthdays and weekends But on this mothers day I feel I can show you the love I have for you only

your forth born
Netty fowler

How would you feel, as this little girl's mother, when you opened this?

How would you feel, if you were this father, if you happened to pick this up?

How can separated fathers show love, not just on weekends and birthdays?

Why are holidays particularly hard times for children after a divorce? What do presents mean to little children? How do you think this child felt about receiving a bike from her father? What do you think she feels about choosing a Mother's Day gift?

How can a child be helped to build a new relationship with each parent after a divorce?

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- Chris, the oldest of six children, cannot have some of his needs as a child answered because of the loss of his father.

- Ben, though his parents have worked out a system of giving him clear access to both of them in two separate homes, still wishes to have them together in one home with him.

If desired, the cases in "Strengthening the Single Parent Family" can also be used to show how children's perceptions differ from adults'.

- Lee sees her family as disorganized, while her mother has established routines and work arrangements to promote an "organized" family structure.

- Maureen's daughter felt sad initially, but after six or seven years has established a solid relationship with her father.

- Tracy's son David seems troubled and acts out his frustration. Though he has his uncles as male figures they don't fulfill the male image he seems to desire.

EDC/Jill Arthur

Judith Wallerstein is a child psychologist who has worked for a number of years with children whose parents are separated or divorced. Her articles and books include *The Effects of Separation and Divorce on Children*, with Joan B. Kelly (New York: Basic Books, in press). We asked her what thoughts she might have for students preparing to work with such children at their fieldsites.

Seeing Children Through the Change

There's a lot of individual difference in the ways children act out their feelings about their parents' separation. But in children between two and a half and four years old, say, you will generally see a lot more irritability during the first few months after the separation. The children show this by hitting their baby brothers and sisters or other kids. There's also a lot of whimpering and a lot of anxiety about saying goodbye when they're dropped off at school or when the parent goes out at night. Many children at that age ask a lot of questions about things they already know. They'll say, "What is that?" and "Who is that?" about people and objects they know perfectly well.

Much of their play has to do with looking, searching, and trying to figure out connections. It's almost as if the world was coming apart for them and they are trying to find out what they can count on. Children this age also go back to security blankets and other things connected with security—like thumb sucking and teddy bears—which they'd given up before.

You ask what a teenager at their fieldsite might do to make contact with a child this age and to be of best service. Well, how children come through it depends really on what the parents do, and the children have to do most of the working out for themselves. It's nice when they have pleasant people who play with them and like them. But the kinds of anxieties they are struggling with are deeper than that.

It's very good for these young children to have things to count on. In working with them, it's particularly important to be absolutely reliable, and to let them know ahead of time if you're not going to be there and explain why not. Seeing the same high school student every week and having a good time could do them some good, to a point. But the teenagers should know that there's not much responsibility they need to take—or can take—for what the child is going through. The regression, the whimpering, and the rise in irritability are to be expected, and children are going to show it.

Children who are around five or six may deal with the new situation through denial and fantasy. If a youngster is denying what has happened, I would leave it alone. I have a lot of respect for children's needs and their own ways of dealing with their own problems. Many of the children we see who were denying any unhappiness at the time of the divorce really come to grips with what it was all about during the first year and do very well.

If children say that they are fine and that they have two daddies now or three mommies, and that's fine with them, or if they say they see a father who isn't around, it would be enough to say something like, "You really wish it were that way." I certainly wouldn't address it more strongly. It is important to respect the child's need to deny. There may be a very grieving child underneath, and denial is one way children that age handle sadness.

Many children have fantasies about their parents getting back together, even after parents have remarried. Again, I would deal with it gently, with understanding. You could say things like, "You really wish that were so," or "You really miss your daddy," or "You really miss your mother." I would not take on saying, "It really isn't so," in any way. It would just drive the child away from the relationship with you and would not affect the child, anyway.

Mostly, the easier it is for the children to get to the absent parent, the better they get along. They can miss a parent who isn't so loving as much as they miss a loving parent. In our experience, the children who do the best are the ones who can keep up the relationship with both parents and whose parents let them do so.

People work out all sorts of solutions. The visit doesn't have to be a big deal: the other parent can come twice a week and put the child to bed. But keeping up the relationship with both parents is very important for preschool children. They get terribly sad otherwise.

The unresolved issues in the children's lives seem to have a direct impact on their early learning experiences. We have found that some of these children have trouble learning when they begin school. It might be extremely useful to them—especially at the beginning—to have more individual attention. Working with a student at the fieldsite might make learning easier and pleasant enough to offset the difficulties which we definitely are finding. A student could make a real contribution in a one-to-one relationship that gives the child support and continuity. ■

Rearrangements

After the class has read several cases, the teacher may point out that a number of adults express, either directly or indirectly, a sense of isolation. This perception of isolation is a significant factor in the life of a single parent household. Here students may think back to "Some Thoughts About the Modern Family" to consider the increased pressures on the single parent in the already-isolated nuclear family.

The following comment by John Herzog, Associate Professor of Education at Northeastern University, suggests alternatives to the strategy of "going it alone" that many single parents follow.

> What can be done about the present system that effectively casts out the single parent family--along with the aged, teenagers, the physically handicapped, and other "imperfect" specimens? Are there not strategies of coping alternative to those chosen by most of the parents in the cases (essentially, to forge ahead autonomously), that deal more effectively with the isolation problem? How about establishing an extended unit with one's own parents, or even with one's former spouse's parents? How about a symbiotic relationship with another household or two, such as one's brother or sister, or even that of a good friend? There are perfectly "respectable" ways in which both one- and two-parent families can live close to each other (in a two-decker, a duplex, or the same floor of an apartment building), and be very supportive of one another.

"Making It on My Own"

Side 1, band 1, of the record should be played for students. If the class is large a few cassettes may be made in advance and listening stations set up around the room for small groups of students.

Ask students to be alert, as they listen, for different times when this woman makes decisions that affect her and her child.

This young woman was accustomed to having babies around; she had no illusions about the care that a baby she brought into the world would need. She was also accustomed to working; she had been on welfare at one time and had found the experience very unpleasant. She has experimented with a number of different living arrangements since her son's birth.

After playing the excerpt, the following questions may be used for discussion:

> What stresses did this mother have to contend with?
>
> What choices were open to her? What values did she bring to bear on each choice?
>
> She says she wishes there were someone to call to ask questions. What other resources do you think she might want?
>
> What does her perception of her future depend on?
>
> Contrast this mother with the young mother in "Lizzie: Fifteen-Year-Old Mother." This woman, who is "making it on her own," is now 25. What part does age play in the difference between these two mothers? Are there other differences?

"Jeffrey at Home"

The film "Jeffrey at Home" is suggested for use with this unit and a transcript is included in this guide. Before showing it, remind students that they have seen it before when they watched films of children at breakfast in Module Three of the course, Family and Society. In that context the students discussed such issues as children's developmental stages, and how children related to their parents, with some suggestions of the different child-rearing styles which can and do exist among different families. Of the four families shown, Jeffrey's was the only single parent family. For this viewing, the issues for discussion will revolve around the single parent aspects of the film. For instance, how does this mother organize her time in order to get both children ready to leave on time? What is the quality of the interaction among the mother and the children, and the expectations of both the mother and Jeffrey?

Ask the following questions before this viewing of the film:

> What pressures might Jeffrey's mother feel? What are some of the ways you can see that she has arranged to cope with them? How does her established routine relieve the time pressure on her?
>
> What kind of responsibilities can Jeffrey handle? When does his mother step in?
>
> How does Jeffrey's mother reinforce Jeffrey's sense of self-worth?

After the film, ask the students to imagine that Jeffrey is a child at their fieldsite. How would their knowledge of Jeffrey's home influence what they do at the fieldsite? One teacher who saw the film commented that Jeffrey's only sibling is much younger; she wondered if Jeffrey might welcome opportunities for rough play and sharing activities with children his own age and older.

> What activities do students think might be good to encourage along these lines?
>
> What other activities could build upon Jeffrey's capabilities and his independence?

The students could then think about how their knowledge of the developmental stages of all children influences their choice of activities for Jeffrey; for children with only older siblings; for children whose mothers work outside the home.

"Raising Michael Alone"

This film shows 11-year-old Michael and his mother as they talk and plan for their daily activities and for their life in the future. A transcript of the film is included with this guide so that teachers may make notations to use later in helping students recall specific incidents in the film.

Michael's mother works at a job that involves frequent travel. She often takes an 8 a.m. flight, leaving the house before Michael is awake. She telephones him from the airport to be sure he's getting ready for school. Invariably, he has gotten himself up, dressed, had his breakfast, and is ready for the school bus--without any assistance from her. Students could be told this after they see the film, and they can be asked what they think accounts for the fact that Michael can do this on his own, even though he doesn't do it when his mother is at home.

COMPARING SITUATIONS

If they have seen "Jeffrey at Home" students might want to compare the two family situations. Suggest that before they begin, students construct a general profile of the families (mother, number of children, ages of children, place of residence, work outside the home, stresses on the family).

This might also be an opportunity to encourage students to be aware of the range of experiences and circumstances that influence the styles in which parents raise a child and cope in a single parent family setting. For instance: age of parent;

number and ages of children; position of the particular child in the family; the lifestyle the family appears to be able to afford; outside obligations (school, work); type of community the family lives in; the parent's own upbringing; the parent's personality and temperament; the parent's values for home, self, and children.

When comparing the two families, students should focus on similar activities whenever possible. For instance, ask students to consider what the two mothers do during breakfast and why students think there are differences in the ways these two families prepare for the day's activities. Some factors they might recognize are: a one-child home vs. a more-than-one-child home, the presence of a baby, the child's previous experiences.

The process of leaving for work/school in the morning is another activity in which both families are shown. While all the members of Jeffrey's family left the house

together, Michael's mother remained at home while he left for school and Michael wanted to know if his mother would be there when he got home. Students might want to talk about the importance of family routines for children, in terms of helping them know what to expect.

Ask students to comment in terms of Michael's and Jeffrey's different ages, on how parents can encourage their children to learn independence--and dependence, when appropriate.

Michael's mother is very conscious of social pressures on the single parent. As she says, "I think he has to be super well-mannered...because if he's not, then you haven't done your job." In identifying her own needs, Michael's mother was glad to have someone who would listen to her--her grandmother--but wishes for a second adult in the home with whom she could talk about parenting concerns. She clearly feels a need for some relief from the tension caused by the very close interaction of one adult and one child living together.

What other pressures does this mother experience in raising her son alone? How has she arranged to cope with them?

What community supports might this family make use of to respond to some of their needs?

What new stresses might this mother anticipate as Michael grows older and more independent?

Strengthening the Single Parent Family

Purposes: To discuss the transitions that occur in becoming a single parent family.

To examine the various ways in which the single parent family can deal with needs that arise.

To discuss ways in which each family member can build a positive self-image.

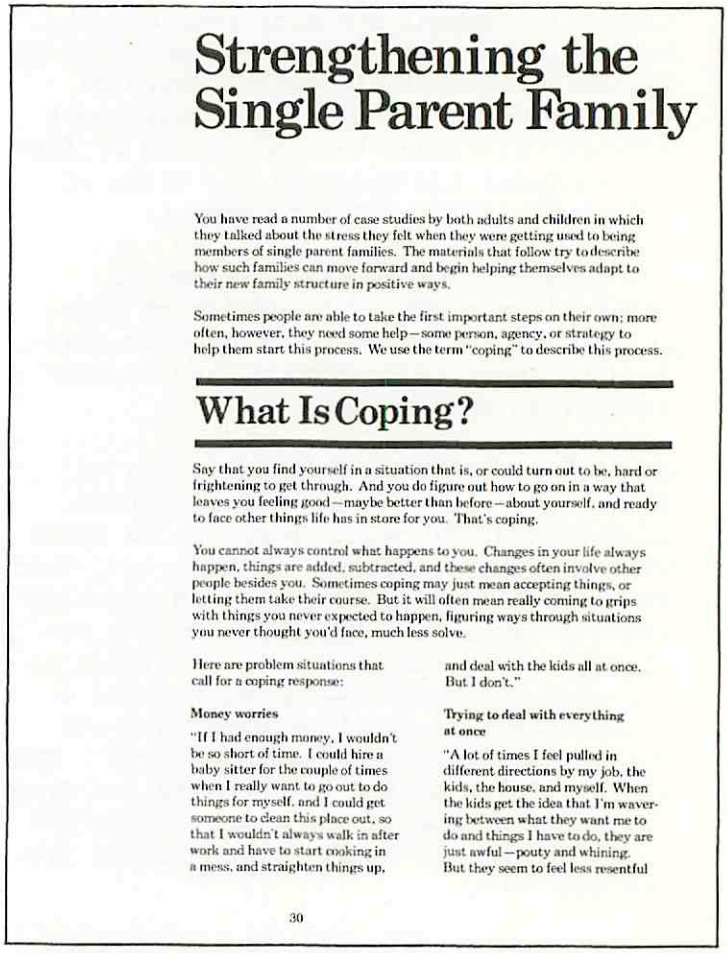
To give students a sense of the formal and informal ways single parent families have for strengthening their families.

To develop an inventory of community resources available to single parent families.

Time: 4-6 classes.

Materials: Eleven case studies, of which five are family case studies; one is a case study from the point of view of a child; two are case studies from community support persons; and three are case studies from the record, "Raising a Family Alone."

Film: "Raising a Family Alone."



Strengthening the Single Parent Family

You have read a number of case studies by both adults and children in which they talked about the stress they felt when they were getting used to being members of single parent families. The materials that follow try to describe how such families can move forward and begin helping themselves adapt to their new family structure in positive ways.

Sometimes people are able to take the first important steps on their own; more often, however, they need some help—some person, agency, or strategy to help them start this process. We use the term "coping" to describe this process.

What Is Coping?

Say that you find yourself in a situation that is, or could turn out to be, hard or frightening to get through. And you do figure out how to go on in a way that leaves you feeling good—maybe better than before—about yourself, and ready to face other things life has in store for you. That's coping.

You cannot always control what happens to you. Changes in your life always happen, things are added, subtracted, and these changes often involve other people besides you. Sometimes coping may just mean accepting things, or letting them take their course. But it will often mean really coming to grips with things you never expected to happen, figuring ways through situations you never thought you'd face, much less solve.

Here are problem situations that call for a coping response:

Money worries

"If I had enough money, I wouldn't be so short of time. I could hire a baby sitter for the couple of times when I really want to go out to do things for myself, and I could get someone to clean this place out, so that I wouldn't always walk in after work and have to start cooking in a mess, and straighten things up, and deal with the kids all at once. But I don't."

Trying to deal with everything at once

"A lot of times I feel pulled in different directions by my job, the kids, the house, and myself. When the kids get the idea that I'm wavering between what they want me to do and things I have to do, they are just awful—pouty and whining. But they seem to feel less resentful

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In this section, the written and recorded materials and the film, "Raising a Family Alone," illustrate how families actively cope with the problems inherent in their situation, and how community support services can be used to help families identify needs and find useful resources.

Cases in STRENGTHENING THE SINGLE PARENT FAMILY

"Lee: Mom Is At Work." A teenage girl talks about her family and her new responsibilities because her mother works.

"Father Henry: We Listen." A priest talks about counseling as a community service and describes elements he finds important in helping people solve problems well.

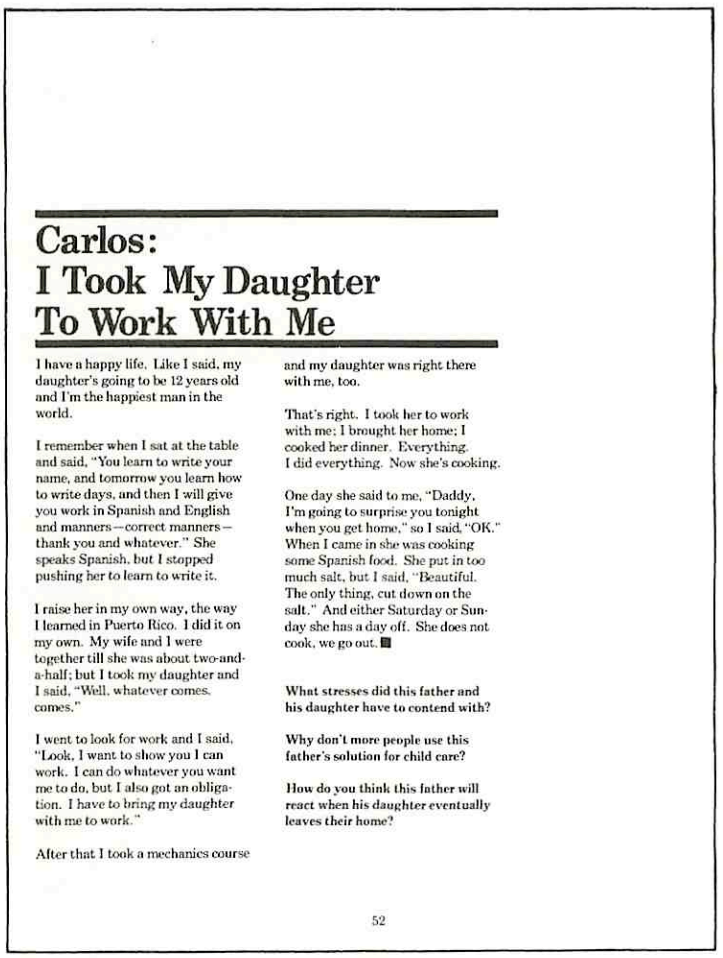
"Maureen: My Daughter Wants to Be an Orthodontist." This mother identifies her religion as her deepest source of strength and values the strong relationship between her daughter and her former husband.

"Reverend Taylor: Someone Who Shows Up." This minister talks about how he responds to the needs of parents and children who are adjusting to death or divorce, and briefly discusses a mutual support group of divorced people in the community.

"Harry: One Big Family." A single man talks about his community's response to his adoption of two little boys.

"Tracy: I Was Always Within Arm's Reach." Tracy was eight months pregnant and had two young children when she moved away from her husband. Eight years later she reflects on the experience and talks about her concerns for her children's emotional growth.

"Rachel: Day Care For Teddy." A description of the work, school, and day care arrangements a mother has made to establish a family routine appropriate to the family's needs.



Carlos:
I Took My Daughter To Work With Me

I have a happy life. Like I said, my daughter's going to be 12 years old and I'm the happiest man in the world.

I remember when I sat at the table and said, "You learn to write your name, and tomorrow you learn how to write days, and then I will give you work in Spanish and English and manners—correct manners—thank you and whatever." She speaks Spanish, but I stopped pushing her to learn to write it.

I raise her in my own way, the way I learned in Puerto Rico. I did it on my own. My wife and I were together till she was about two-and-a-half; but I took my daughter and I said, "Well, whatever comes, comes."

I went to look for work and I said, "Look, I want to show you I can work. I can do whatever you want me to do, but I also got an obligation. I have to bring my daughter with me to work."

After that I took a mechanics course and my daughter was right there with me, too.

That's right. I took her to work with me; I brought her home; I cooked her dinner. Everything. I did everything. Now she's cooking.

One day she said to me, "Daddy, I'm going to surprise you tonight when you get home," so I said, "OK." When I came in she was cooking some Spanish food. She put in too much salt, but I said, "Beautiful. The only thing, cut down on the salt." And either Saturday or Sunday she has a day off. She does not cook, we go out. ■

What stresses did this father and his daughter have to contend with?

Why don't more people use this father's solution for child care?

How do you think this father will react when his daughter eventually leaves their home?

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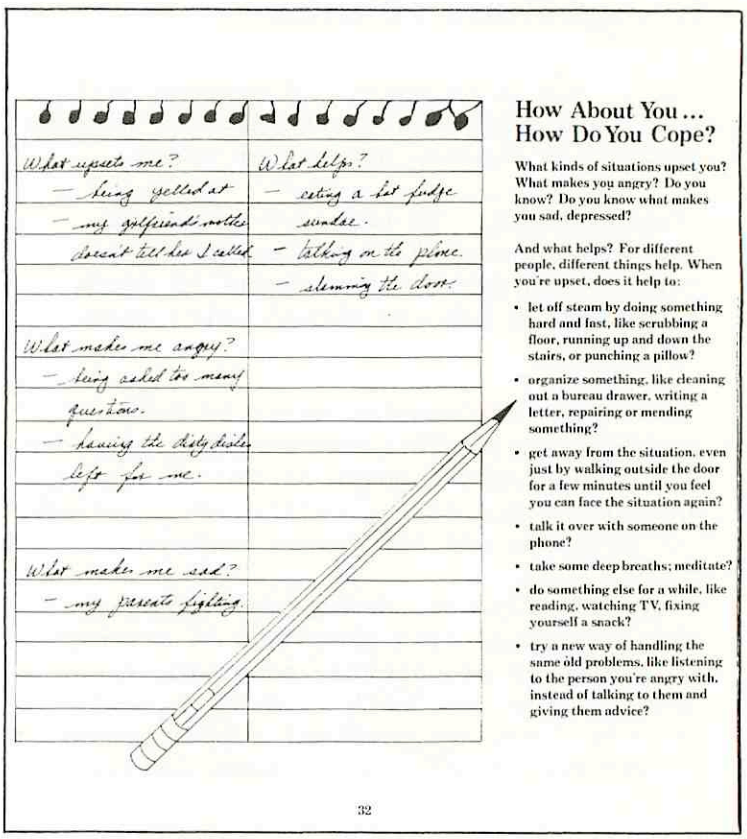
"Carlos: I Took My Daughter to Work With Me." This father talks about family and work arrangements he has made in raising his daughter.

ASSIGNING THE CASES

If, for one reason or another, the entire class will not be reading all the cases, consider grouping the cases as follows:

Case	Central Topic
Lee: Mom Is At Work	Work and family responsibilities
Lee's Mother	
Father Henry: We Listen	
Maureen: My Daughter Wants to Be an Orthodontist	How the clergy can help; and community resources
Reverend Taylor: Someone Who Shows Up	
Harry: One Big Family	Flexible work situations; working fathers with young children; and community response
Carlos: I Took My Daughter to Work With Me	
Tracy: I Was Always Within Arm's Reach	Working mothers with young children; flexible work situations; and community response
Rachel: Day Care For Teddy	

Coping



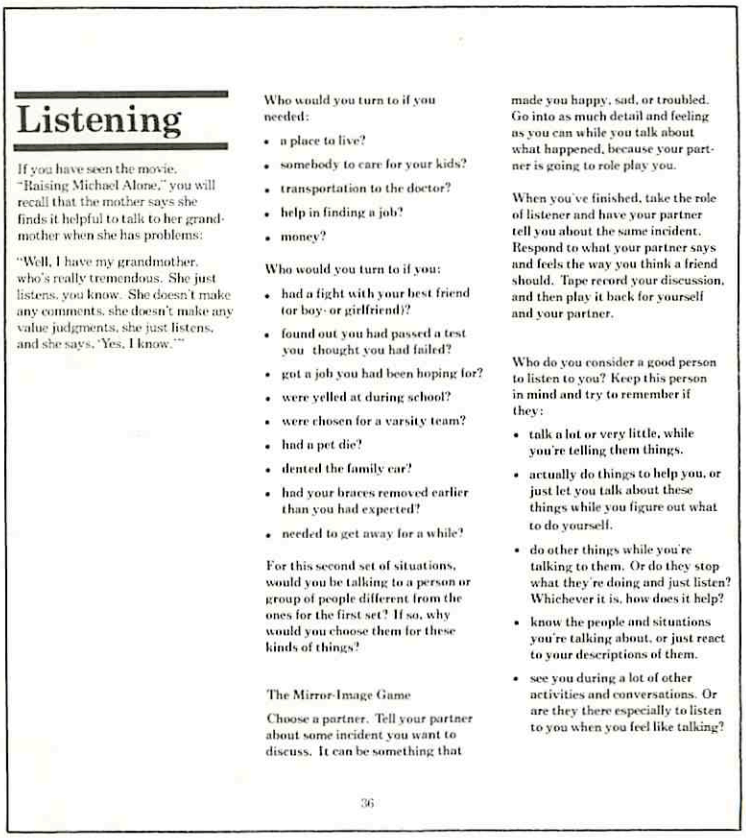
By this time the class will have read a number of cases and will have seen at least one film. Students will recognize that people respond in different ways to sudden or unexpected changes, but that all people need to find ways to cope with changes and problems they encounter. The term "coping" is used to mean the various competent ways in which people deal with changes and problems in their lives, so that they can feel good about themselves and prepare to face the future.

"The Widower"

After students have read the presentation of situations that call for a coping response, play the second case on the record, "The Widower" (side 1, band 2). Since students may find the story very distressing when they first hear it, it may be a good idea to play the excerpt twice. This is so that students can be more objective the second time through, having already experienced the emotional response the first time the record was played. The first time through, ask them to note the stresses on the family. The second time through, have them look for the special parenting decisions the father makes, even though he is under stress.

Again in this case we hear that children can handle difficult situations if they are told the truth and given support by understanding adults.

Listening



Listening

If you have seen the movie, "Raising Michael Alone," you will recall that the mother says she finds it helpful to talk to her grandmother when she has problems:

"Well, I have my grandmother, who's really tremendous. She just listens, you know. She doesn't make any comments, she doesn't make any value judgments, she just listens, and she says, 'Yes, I know.'"

Who would you turn to if you needed:

- a place to live?
- somebody to care for your kids?
- transportation to the doctor?
- help in finding a job?
- money?

Who would you turn to if you:

- had a fight with your best friend (or boy- or girlfriend)?
- found out you had passed a test you thought you had failed?
- got a job you had been hoping for?
- were yelled at during school?
- were chosen for a varsity team?
- had a pet die?
- dented the family car?
- had your braces removed earlier than you had expected?
- needed to get away for a while?

For this second set of situations, would you be talking to a person or group of people different from the ones for the first set? If so, why would you choose them for these kinds of things?

The Mirror-Image Game

Choose a partner. Tell your partner about some incident you want to discuss. It can be something that made you happy, sad, or troubled. Go into as much detail and feeling as you can while you talk about what happened, because your partner is going to role play you.

When you've finished, take the role of listener and have your partner tell you about the same incident. Respond to what your partner says and feels the way you think a friend should. Tape record your discussion, and then play it back for yourself and your partner.

Who do you consider a good person to listen to you? Keep this person in mind and try to remember if they:

- talk a lot or very little, while you're telling them things.
- actually do things to help you, or just let you talk about these things while you figure out what to do yourself.
- do other things while you're talking to them. Or do they stop what they're doing and just listen? Whichever it is, how does it help?
- know the people and situations you're talking about, or just react to your descriptions of them.
- see you during a lot of other activities and conversations. Or are they there especially to listen to you when you feel like talking?

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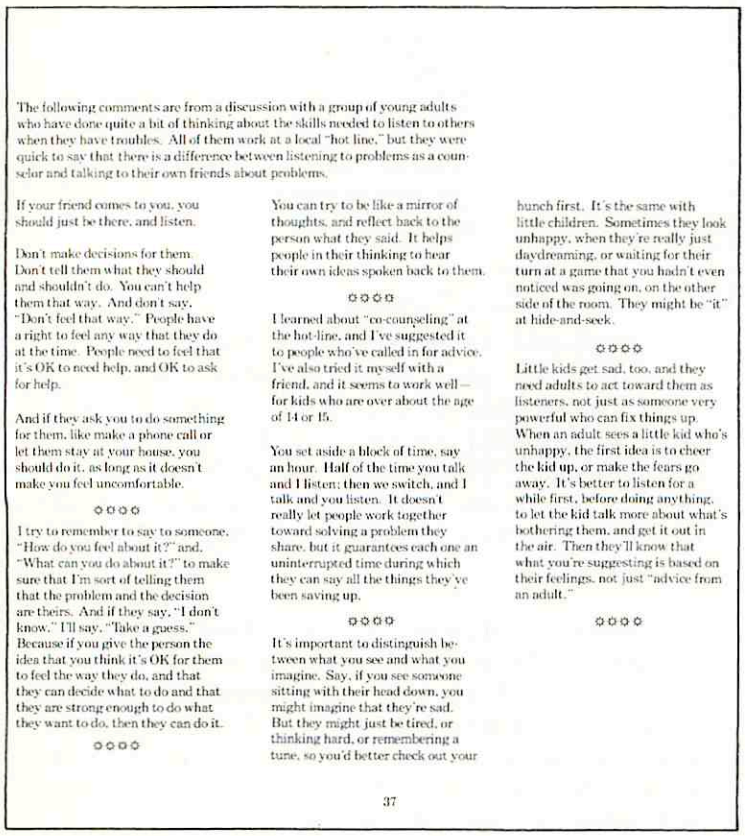
Ask students to be aware of the role of the listener when they consider the situations given here, and think about people they would want to talk to in particular situations. The Mirror-Image Game gives each student an opportunity to play "talker" and "listener" with the same subject of concern.

In "Raising Michael Alone," the mother speaks of finding support from her grandmother's ability and willingness to listen. When her grandmother says, "I know," she must be using a special tone of voice that really helps. Ask students to try different ways of saying the same words, "I

know." Some tones might really be saying:

> I know more about your problem than you do, so don't tell me.
>
> I really don't know as much about your problem as you do, so tell me more.
>
> I know you, so I feel sad when you feel sad, but tell me the details.

Ask students to think of people in the class who "listen." What is the role of the listener in each case: to give advice? to be a nonparticipating sounding board? to help focus the ideas of the one talking? anything else?



The following comments are from a discussion with a group of young adults who have done quite a bit of thinking about the skills needed to listen to others when they have troubles. All of them work at a local "hot line," but they were quick to say that there is a difference between listening to problems as a counselor and talking to their own friends about problems.

If your friend comes to you, you should just be there, and listen.

Don't make decisions for them. Don't tell them what they should and shouldn't do. You can't help them that way. And don't say, "Don't feel that way." People have a right to feel any way that they do at the time. People need to feel that it's OK to need help, and OK to ask for help.

And if they ask you to do something for them, like make a phone call or let them stay at your house, you should do it, as long as it doesn't make you feel uncomfortable.

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I try to remember to say to someone, "How do you feel about it?" and, "What can you do about it?" to make sure that I'm sort of telling them that the problem and the decision are theirs. And if they say, "I don't know," I'll say, "Take a guess." Because if you give the person the idea that you think it's OK for them to feel the way they do, and that they can decide what to do and that they are strong enough to do what they want to do, then they can do it.

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You can try to be like a mirror of thoughts, and reflect back to the person what they said. It helps people in their thinking to hear their own ideas spoken back to them.

✿✿✿✿

I learned about "co-counseling" at the hot-line, and I've suggested it to people who've called in for advice. I've also tried it myself with a friend, and it seems to work well—for kids who are over about the age of 14 or 15.

You set aside a block of time, say an hour. Half of the time you talk and I listen; then we switch, and I talk and you listen. It doesn't really let people work together toward solving a problem they share, but it guarantees each one an uninterrupted time during which they can say all the things they've been saving up.

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It's important to distinguish between what you see and what you imagine. Say, if you see someone sitting with their head down, you might imagine that they're sad. But they might just be tired, or thinking hard, or remembering a tune, so you'd better check out your hunch first. It's the same with little children. Sometimes they look unhappy, when they're really just daydreaming, or waiting for their turn at a game that you hadn't even noticed was going on, on the other side of the room. They might be "it" at hide-and-seek.

✿✿✿✿

Little kids get sad, too, and they need adults to act toward them as listeners, not just as someone very powerful who can fix things up. When an adult sees a little kid who's unhappy, the first idea is to cheer the kid up, or make the fears go away. It's better to listen for a while first, before doing anything, to let the kid talk more about what's bothering them, and get it out in the air. Then they'll know that what you're suggesting is based on their feelings, not just "advice from an adult."

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In the Community

The cases "Father Henry: We Listen," "Maureen: My Daughter Wants to Be an Orthodontist," and "Reverend Taylor: Someone Who Shows Up" deal with clergy as a community support and ways in which people talk to the clergy. Both members of the clergy refer to themselves as people "who listen to the problems of others." Maureen recalls that along with her wonderful friends, she also had a clergyman with whom she could speak.

In "Harry: One Big Family," Harry emphasizes the importance of having "somebody else to talk to on a regular basis," and he himself is part of a network of mutual supports with other single parents. This case highlights both formal and informal community support systems. By way of contrast, you might ask those students who read "Heidi: Is Daddy Going to Be Home?" to recall what the mother says about her relationships with neighbors.

Students might compare how these people perceive themselves as "talker" and "listener."

At the Fieldsite

After discussing listening in the case materials, students could brainstorm a list of common fieldsite situations in which young children are looking for someone who will listen to them. (These situations need not relate to any aspect of single parent families.) Then students could consider ways in which they can be listeners for the children.

"Little by Little You Pull Yourself Up"

This record excerpt (side 2, band 1) can best be used at about the same time as the article, "Problem Solving for Single Parents," and may help in thinking about the questions and activities suggested in that article.

The mother talks about how her life has changed as the result of a divorce. She discusses her financial situation, jobs she has taken, housing changes, the children's reactions, and community supports she has sought.

The most striking feature about this woman's discussion is the way she describes her adjustment to her new way of life, her optimism, the strengths she has found within herself, the way she has rid herself of bitterness, her new-found appreciation of time spent alone. When the children speak, they appear to share their mother's optimistic tone; they don't see their financial situation as less than that of their friends. Their relationship with their mother is very open, and the contact with their father seems to be positive, too.

"Rabbi Grollman"

After students have read Dr. James Levine's article and list of support services for single parents, play the last selection on the record.

Students will notice the similarities between what Rabbi Grollman says and what the other two clergymen say. While they function as counselors and friends, the clergymen are also links to other support services a community can offer a family in trouble--money, child care, medical help.

Before they listen to this excerpt, students might be asked to look for what the rabbi thinks he can do to help single parents and what he actually does to help these families. All the clergymen talk about how to listen to people in distress. The rabbi also talks about how he helps parents deal with their children's concerns.

Rabbi Grollman is the author of *Talking About Divorce* and *Talking About Death*.* These books are designed to help parents find, in accurate but gentle terms, words to explain death and divorce to children. Each book includes some explanatory notes for parents, suggestions for locating resources, and two bibliographies; one for children's books and one for adult books on the topic.

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*Earl A. Grollman, *Talking About Divorce*. © Beacon Press, Boston, 1975.

Earl A. Grollman, *Talking About Death*. © Beacon Press, Boston, 1976.

These questions may be discussed after listening to the record:

How can parents explain what is occurring in their family (death or divorce) to children in terms that are both realistic and reassuring?

What role can a clergyman take in helping single parents?

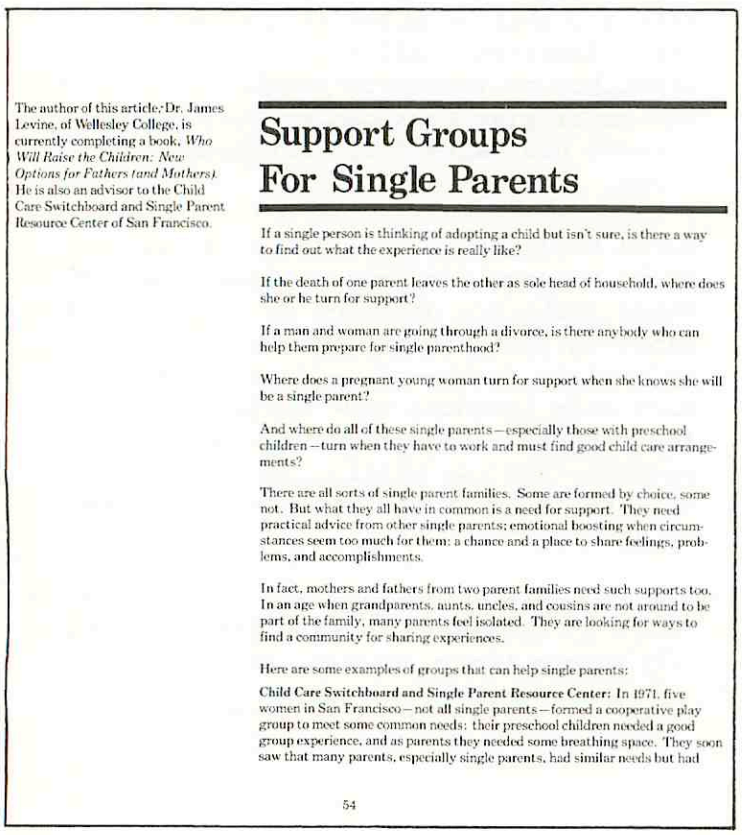
What does this clergyman think his job is?

What does he do? Whom does he help?

What other social agencies can give similar help?

Support Groups for Single Parents

When students move on to the list of questions which concludes their activities for this unit, encourage them to compile their answers in a notebook. The booklet could be given to someone who might need to know about the community support networks students discover in their research, or it may be given to the school library or the local library. (*The Inquirer*, p. 21, gives some methods that students might use when doing research on community resources.)



The author of this article, Dr. James Levine, of Wellesley College, is currently completing a book, *Who Will Raise the Children: New Options for Fathers (and Mothers)*. He is also an advisor to the Child Care Switchboard and Single Parent Resource Center of San Francisco.

Support Groups For Single Parents

If a single person is thinking of adopting a child but isn't sure, is there a way to find out what the experience is really like?

If the death of one parent leaves the other as sole head of household, where does she or he turn for support?

If a man and woman are going through a divorce, is there anybody who can help them prepare for single parenthood?

Where does a pregnant young woman turn for support when she knows she will be a single parent?

And where do all of these single parents—especially those with preschool children—turn when they have to work and must find good child care arrangements?

There are all sorts of single parent families. Some are formed by choice, some not. But what they all have in common is a need for support. They need practical advice from other single parents; emotional boosting when circumstances seem too much for them; a chance and a place to share feelings, problems, and accomplishments.

In fact, mothers and fathers from two parent families need such supports too. In an age when grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins are not around to be part of the family, many parents feel isolated. They are looking for ways to find a community for sharing experiences.

Here are some examples of groups that can help single parents:

Child Care Switchboard and Single Parent Resource Center: In 1971, five women in San Francisco—not all single parents—formed a cooperative play group to meet some common needs: their preschool children needed a good group experience, and as parents they needed some breathing space. They soon saw that many parents, especially single parents, had similar needs but had

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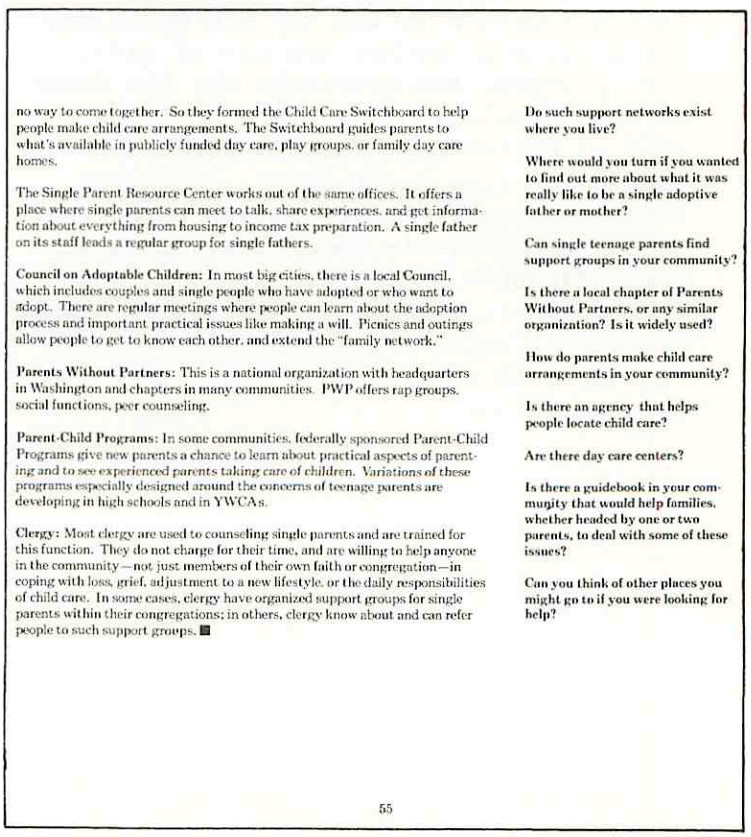

no way to come together. So they formed the Child Care Switchboard to help people make child care arrangements. The Switchboard guides parents to what's available in publicly funded day care, play groups, or family day care homes.

The Single Parent Resource Center works out of the same offices. It offers a place where single parents can meet to talk, share experiences, and get information about everything from housing to income tax preparation. A single father on its staff leads a regular group for single fathers.

Council on Adoptable Children: In most big cities, there is a local Council, which includes couples and single people who have adopted or who want to adopt. There are regular meetings where people can learn about the adoption process and important practical issues like making a will. Picnics and outings allow people to get to know each other, and extend the "family network."

Parents Without Partners: This is a national organization with headquarters in Washington and chapters in many communities. PWP offers rap groups, social functions, peer counseling.

Parent-Child Programs: In some communities, federally sponsored Parent-Child Programs give new parents a chance to learn about practical aspects of parenting and to see experienced parents taking care of children. Variations of these programs especially designed around the concerns of teenage parents are developing in high schools and in YWCAs.

Clergy: Most clergy are used to counseling single parents and are trained for this function. They do not charge for their time, and are willing to help anyone in the community—not just members of their own faith or congregation—in coping with loss, grief, adjustment to a new lifestyle, or the daily responsibilities of child care. In some cases, clergy have organized support groups for single parents within their congregations; in others, clergy know about and can refer people to such support groups. ■

Do such support networks exist where you live?

Where would you turn if you wanted to find out more about what it was really like to be a single adoptive father or mother?

Can single teenage parents find support groups in your community?

Is there a local chapter of Parents Without Partners, or any similar organization? Is it widely used?

How do parents make child care arrangements in your community?

Is there an agency that helps people locate child care?

Are there day care centers?

Is there a guidebook in your community that would help families, whether headed by one or two parents, to deal with some of these issues?

Can you think of other places you might go to if you were looking for help?

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"Raising a Family Alone"

This film gives a sense of how community supports can be used to help a single parent family establish routines and arrangements that give support to the family structure.

Besides having to establish a new family structure in a new neighborhood, Daniel did not share a common language with the larger community. Daniel talks of the things he was always able to do for his family and those skills which both he and the boys had to develop. As students watch the film they should identify:

- the stresses the father faced in establishing a new family structure in a new community
- the responsibilities of each of the family members
- the community's response to the family's needs
- the steps in problem solving the family used

Since the boys gained the ability to speak both Spanish and English, they played a significant role in dealing with community agencies. Each family member recognizes the special skill/role he must play.

How might this recognition support their shared sense of family?

This family, newly established in a culture different from their own, tried different ways to become familiar with the new community and its resources. The children played a significant role in making the community aware of the family's needs. The father tried living with a family, and when that living arrangement did not work, he set up a home for himself and his sons. While talking with the nun, one of his sons, Alfredo, gives us a sense of some of the roles he has assumed both as child and as adult. He seeks his father's opinion when a friend suggests they play hookey, and he is the one who does the shopping with his father most of the time and takes care of his younger brother.

What factors might account for Alfredo's ability to handle his new responsibilities?

How does the father support Alfredo's dependence? his independence?

Appendix

Transcript of "Jeffrey at Home"

Mother: Jeff, I'm going to spank you. Is that okay? Huh? Jeff? (Jeffrey is lying on the bed and getting dressed at the same time.)

How about putting your T-shirt on the right way?

Jeffrey: I'm putting my pants on first. (Mother helps Jeffrey put on his T-shirt and laughs with him.)

Mother: Take that one off. Put this one on. Then put your boots on. Zip up your pants, too. (Mother goes into the kitchen and feeds the baby, Brad. Jeffrey comes in, reaches out, holds the baby's hand on the highchair.)

Didn't get enough sleep, ah? (Jeffrey climbs up to the cabinet, chooses a box of cereal, looks at the label, climbs down with the cereal. Sits at the table.)

You're going to get a spoon, aren't you? (Mother pours the milk. Jeffrey gets a spoon from the drawer.)

Do you want any toast?

(Jeffrey pours milk on his cereal. He and his mother eat their breakfast.)

You're going on a picnic Friday. It's going to be fun, huh? Who's leaving Friday? You don't know? Okay. Who's going to be four? Jeff!

(Mother is at the sink. Jeffrey takes his bread crumbs to the garbage by the sink and shows them to his mother.)

Jeffrey: I don't like this crust.

Mother: Okay, throw it away.

Jeffrey: I'm going to brush my teeth.

(Jeffrey climbs on the bathroom sink to get his toothbrush. He brushes his teeth, and washes his mouth. He climbs on the sink again, sits on the edge, and watches the water go down the drain. He stands in the sink, replaces his toothbrush, and climbs down.)

(Mother comes into the bathroom and brushes her teeth. Jeffrey shows her a cut or scrape.)

See what I did?

Mother: I saw it a long time ago. It's old.

(Jeffrey gets the baby's diaper bag.)

We're not going yet. Are you ready? (He hugs his mother. Plays on the rug with the baby, turns on the radio. The baby follows. Jeffrey puts the baby on the couch and chooses another station. Mother comes in and picks up the baby. When mother is changing Brad's diaper, Jeffrey hugs the baby on his mother's lap. Mother dresses the baby and Jeffrey carries the diaper bag to the door.)

Straighten the rug. (Jeffrey straightens rug with diaper bag around his neck.) Hurry up.

(Mother straightens another rug just before leaving.)

Transcript of "Raising Michael Alone"

Mother: Do you remember a time when Daddy was with us?

Michael: Yeah, once, when I was...I remember a long time ago I used to wake up and I used to come in to my mother's room and I used to say, "I'm tired," and he used to grab me and squeeze me to sleep. We used to live in Queens then.

. . . . .

Mother: One day it just dawned on me. "This is it, lady. You know, it's the two of you and nobody else. You've got to get up on your hind legs and you've got to make it for the two of you and that is it. And maybe that'll change, but maybe it won't, and if it doesn't, so what? You know, the two of you can make it." And we are.

Michael: The fuel catch is open.

Mother: Well, it's okay. What we're doing is attaching pieces of string right now.

Michael: They got me.

Mother: Sorry about that.

Michael: They got me in the heart twice.

Mother: I can't remember a Girl Scout knot. All that knot-tying has gone totally to waste.

Michael: You used to be a Girl Scout... I never knew that.

Mother: Yeah, well...

Michael: Well, you got the Girl Scout badges, but that doesn't prove anything.

Mother: Well, where do you think they came from?

Michael: That doesn't prove it.

Mother: All right, now how do you get the other one out?

Michael: Oh, no.

Mother: Come on, what are you saying, "Oh, no," for?

Michael: You forgot to...

. . . . .

Mother: So much of me is wrapped up in Michael. We've been alone a long time and we, we're a team, we're a twosome, and somebody would be almost an intrusion.

All right, why don't you let me try to do this and you get that?

Michael: You turn it with one finger.

Mother: All right, take the battery off. Come on, look what you're doing. I'll take care of that. All the way. Come on, come on. You can't be afraid of it, big time airline pilot.

Michael: Ah, shoot, the battery...

Mother: Come on, don't be afraid of it, Michael.

Michael: You want me to get my hands cut off?

Mother: Well, I know that you should worry about your fingers, but if you're gonna be too afraid of it, you're never gonna get it started.

Michael: I'm not allowed to do it on my own.

Mother: Yeah, well, the next time we have her come over here, you'll be able to do it. We may not be as lucky as to meet somebody who's willing to stop on the way to somewhere...to fly an airplane.

. . . . .

Michael: Is Tony there...Michael, is Tony there? Cherry, is Tony there?

. . . . .

Mother: I have a lot of friends who are single parents and some who are...both parents are there, and we do talk about our children a great deal. And we do talk about the problems that parents, period, have in raising their children. And so you do get that kind of feedback.

Female Interviewer: But I wonder if there was any special pressure on you as a single parent that you feel you have to do everything in a super way in order to...

Mother: I think he has to be super well-mannered and I think he has to be super healthy and super rested, because if he's not, then you haven't done your job. You're somehow neglecting him in some way, and I don't know how you can make up the difference; you get pressures either way. If you're not a working mother, you're getting pressure for taking from the state, and if you are a working mother, then you're neglecting your child....

. . . . .

Mother: Michael, it's time...be easy. Yes. Come on, let's go. Let's go. Take off your...all those clothes go in the dirty clothes...the shirt, the pants, the underwear. And put on clean pajamas and wash.

Michael: Okay, wash up?

Mother: Yeah, before you put on your pajama top, go in the bathroom and wash, your face, your neck. Didn't I say don't put the top on until you've washed?

Michael: You didn't say that.

Mother: I said before you put your top on....

Michael: Oh.

Mother: How are you gonna wash all those things if you've got that top on?

Michael: What did you say for me to wash?

Mother: Wash your face, your neck, your hands and arms, okay? That's enough. If I get that much done, I'll be lucky. Okay? Have you started?

Michael: Yep.

Mother: I didn't hear the toilet flush. Thank you. Okay? Oh, don't forget to brush your teeth. Come on, Michael, please. Come on.

Male Interviewer: It doesn't go easily?

Mother: No, this is normal. You know... he's gonna draw the process out.

Michael: I'm washing up.

Mother: Yeah, I don't need a blow-by-

blow, just do it. And I want to hear the toothbrush.

Male Interviewer: Why does he draw the process out so much?

Mother: Well, I think that he's...he's always had a fantasy of what happens around here when I go to bed, and how come you get to say up so late, and what is it that you're doing when you're up late?

. . . . .

Mother: There was nothing in my everyday work-a-whirl that led me to believe that this was going to happen. And so when it actually did happen, the world just sorta fell apart. I think the only thing that saved me is that fact that I had a job. And I had somewhere that I had to be every day. There was a routine that had to be followed: I had to get up in the morning, I had to get this baby out to this nursery school, I had to then leave and go to work, I then had to do a day's work and come home, and pick him up at the sitter's where the school brought him and bring him home and fix his dinner. But it was a numbness; it was just going through a routine.

Female Interviewer: Do you have any supportive people at all in your life?

Mother: Well, I have my grandmother who's really tremendous. She just listens, you know. She doesn't make any comments, she doesn't make any value judgments, she just listens, and she says, "Yes, I know."

. . . . .

Mother: Come on, let's go. It's time. It's time. Come on. It's time to get up. Do you want to have hot cereal or cold cereal? Hot or cold?

Michael: It's gonna snow.

Mother: Not yet, but it'll be snowing by the time you start home. And so that means it's cold outside now. What are you gonna do? You think about it while you're getting ready. You have to wear shoes, no suedes.

Michael: All right.

Mother: Ah, now you're picking up. All right, I'm going in the kitchen. You get up and get in the bathroom. Okay?

He's pretty much aware of it's me in terms of what he's got, and I wonder if he's afraid of what's going to happen to me, how will he make it, if I'm not around.

You never decide what you're having, right? Hot, cold? Jesus Christ, you'd think you were making the major decisions of the world--hot, cold, whatever. Michael, are you gonna have hot chocolate or milk with your breakfast?

Michael: Hot chocolate.

Mother: All right now. Better hurry up, because it's getting ready.

Michael: Ma, what am I having for lunch?

Mother: What would you like? What do you usually have, Michael?

Michael: Jelly and peanut butter.

Mother: Well.

Michael: Is there any tuna fish?

Mother: Do you want tuna fish? Are you gonna have jelly and peanut butter today?

Michael: Why?

Mother: Well, that's what I'm going to fix.... Having a hard time? Don't forget to tie your tie. Can I help find your belt? I didn't hear you.

Michael: Yes.

Mother: All right, I'll help you find your belt while you, uh...

I think the greatest problem is that you become acutely aware you don't have that second person there or somebody to say, you know, "You should have cooled it, you should have left it alone, it was an unimportant kind of thing." And I think you have a tendency to get nitpicking.

Well, I'm not gonna let you put the dirty spoon in.

Michael: Can I pour?

Mother: Na, na, na, that's enough....

Michael: Can I pour?

Mother: Sure, you can pour it.

I went to a shrink and I stayed with him until I could walk around, like most of the other people. And I think during that period of time, I began to see that there was this human being that I, *I*, *I*, *me*, was totally, absolutely responsible for. And no more of this horsing around, numbness, feeling sorry for self, you know. Just get off your ass and take care of your responsibility, and forget all the rest of that stuff.

Sing it again for the West Coast.

Good, that's beautiful, that's beautiful, that's beautiful. All right, have a good day, all right? I'll be here when you get back.

Michael: You sure you'll be here when I get back?

Mother: I'm positive, Michael. I'll be here when you get back. I only have one thing to do and I'm gonna do that first thing. There's your elevator.... Hurry up, Michael! There's people in there.

Michael: Bye!

Mother: Well, I'm our sole support, and I make all the money. And I have this fear that I'm going to get sick. And not flu sick, or laid up for a week, but laid up for a long time in the hospital, and the flow of money may stop. And what would we do, how would we manage, how would we survive that kind of thing?

We always fumble around and fall and bump heads, and we pick ourselves up and keep moving. I don't think we have any other choice at this point. We can't undo what's already been done. So we just keep going. That's my perception. I'm pretty pleased with myself, most of the time. There are days when I don't do anything right, but I think everybody has those days. But at this point, I'm pleased. I've done a good job in eight years of growing up, of being a person, and I think that's kind of good. I think Michael's going to benefit from that in the long run because I think he's aware of it, he sees it, he knows it.

Transcript of "Raising a Family Alone"

(English dialogue only)

Father: I was alone with my children in Puerto Rico for three years. Then I came to Boston. I came to live in a friend's house with the boys. At that time I didn't have an apartment of my own to go to. There were other people living in the apartment besides my children and I didn't feel at ease. Then, when I left my friend's house I got an apartment and there I cooked for the boys. A major difficulty was that I'd have to cook for them, but since I'd always had to cook for them I'm used to it. It's no longer a problem. You know, you always have to keep the apartment clean, wash the floors, and make the beds. Now the boys make them. They're bigger now. But when they were smaller I would prepare everything. I couldn't have done more but now there's no longer any problem. They're bigger now.

At the Nun's House

Sister Carol: I am a Sister of the Sacred Heart and I came here in the summer of 1971 with a group of sisters to share the life of the neighborhood. The first year, what was so hard about the first year when you were here?

Ferdinand: We couldn't find a school, you know....

Sister Carol: You went to a bilingual school the first year?

Ferdinand: Yeah. The first year, the second year. The third year. The fourth year is now. I'm in English school.

Sister Carol: In English.

Father: When they get sick, I take them to the hospital, like when Alfredo broke his arm. Also, all my friends have helped us. Plus the boys are grown up and they help me too.

Ferdinand: One of my friends told me one day, you want to go play hookey? And I went and asked my father, and I told him that the Cuban was inviting me, and he told me never to do it.

Sister Carol: He trusts you, too. He gives you the key to the house, when he's away....

Ferdinand: Yeah. And he'll let me go to a theater with...he let me do a lot of things.... You know, he trusts me and Alfredo.

Sister Carol: Yes, he trusts you all to take care of the house if he's not there, keep the key, and you do shopping, don't you?

Ferdinand: Yeah. Or sometimes I do shopping just with my brother, sometimes I do it with my father. Almost every time with my father.

Sister Carol: Who takes care of your little brother? You?

Ferdinand: That's me. We love each other. We used to have a team together, a team just our brothers against brothers,

you know, the twins? They had a team, so we said, let's make a team of ourselves. Sometimes we go to the movies together, sometimes we go to, um, to shop in the store together, sometimes. Almost every time it's me and my father. (Laughs.) Sometimes we go to the restaurant together, like, let me see, I think last week, we went to this Chinese restaurant.

Sister Carol: Do you sing together?

Ferdinand: Sometimes we do.

Sister Carol: They came across the street all the time, the boys were much littler and they were full of energy, and of course came hunting for bananas, and ran around the table and looked at everything to make sure that there were or were not bananas.

They also came for health services, whatever we could do to help them. Usually it was a scratch. They came for band-aids and cookies. It was always something else and cookies. We did their laundry and their mending and we went to the schools with them and to the clinic, to the welfare office with the father and we shared as much as we could.

Father: So far, I've been raising them by myself for five years and with God's help I have brought them up. The hardest thing was getting the laundry and the ironing done but now the kids themselves help. When I was a child my mother always had our clothes washed and ironed ready for us so that I never really paid attention to how it got accomplished and didn't concern myself with it. I learned to do laundry and even to cook, which I considered to have been much harder. I taught myself to cook. I did it myself. I was very sad this fall when Orlando, my oldest son, ran away from home. But he returned after Christmas and I feel much better about this and I'm glad to have him home. Orlando has been looking for work since he returned and has found it difficult to find a job. He and his next oldest brother have been looking for about two months.

Guilt and the Single Parent

Lee Salk, M.D.

A sense of guilt in a parent sometimes can be a warning that there is something wrong in the relationship between the parent and the child. The question of primary concern is not "How can I deal with *my* feeling of guilt?" but "Am I meeting *my child's* needs?" Many parents are not. Even when there are two parents to share the tremendous responsibilities of parenthood, raising children successfully is difficult and time-consuming. It is all the more difficult for a person who is alone. So it is no wonder that single parents are often overwhelmed and sometimes develop a sense of guilt about their child or children.

And there are an increasing number of single parents. Divorce has long been on the rise, and although the transition can be hard on children it is generally better for them than having their parents continue a worthless marriage. Also, many single people are moving into child-rearing without a spouse through adoption or by having a child out of wedlock. A great deal of soul searching should precede this step. I am inclined to discourage this kind of single parenthood unless there is a clear understanding of the emotional commitment that parenthood involves. I always wonder if people who deliberately choose to be single parents are thinking of the child or are trying to satisfy some hidden self-interest. It is very easy to have a child but extremely difficult to be a parent.

Lee Salk, M. D.
Guilt and the Single Parent,
Harper's Bazaar, March 1976

GUILT OR HARASSMENT?

What does a sense of guilt generally point to? Not to something beyond your control. If a child badgers you for a toy, and you cannot afford it, that is no reason to feel guilty. You should just say, "Look, I can't afford it." The real sense of guilt occurs when you are not doing something you can and should do and are thereby depriving your child of something he or she deeply needs. Nine times out of ten that something is yourself. It is the parents who are all wrapped up in themselves and bent on doing their own thing who should be alerted by a sense of guilt.

These parents often spend most of their time earning the money which they then use to buy *things* for their children. They would be far better off if they spent some of that time with their children instead. Nothing can take the place of meaningful time spent with a child. Parents, especially single parents, should search their souls and look at their schedules to see how they can bring their children more into their lives. A child wants a meaningful relationship with a parent. It is not the toys that matter--it is using them with their parent that is important. Children want to do things, make things, paint things, go places, together with their parents.

But most single parents have to do an enormous amount of work, and time is short. There is that feeling of harassment many women have described to me--the feeling of "I've got so much to do I don't know where to begin." One day just leads into the next day, and it is a thankless job. There is an unending routine of

chores that many single women do not anticipate--to say nothing of actual jobs. All these things take away from time with children.

DIVORCE--ILLUSION AND REALITY

Many women who have divorced because they did not like the ritual of conventional family life and wanted to get out into the "interesting world" find they end up with more domestic responsibilities than before. And often they have less time with their children. They spend a greater amount of time at work, and a lot of what they earn has to go into household help. Exhausted and frustrated, and with few hours for themselves, they may feel their children are a burden to them. And this creates a sense of guilt. The fleeting moments of, "I wish I'd never had children in the first place," are not uncommon. Some mothers repress these feelings immediately and then cover up their sense of guilt with impulsive outbursts of affection--and they don't even know why they are compensating this way.

It is better to be more open and direct in one's feelings. Some parents can say, "Look, I love you but there are some times you really bother me," and if the children feel the trust and love of the parent, they can tolerate the parent's frustration. I have seen a number of children who said, "Well, I try to help my mother as much as I can because I know how hard she has to work, and how difficult it is, and she never has enough time for herself."

You see, children can be very understanding and helpful. This, however, is something that goes back to a parent's earliest relationship with children when they were infants. If you pick a baby up when he cries, if you let that baby know you really care about him and love him, you will find that later on, whatever the stresses and difficulties are, that child will have resources he can mobilize.

Some single parents have been very successful, and free of guilt feelings, when they have good and meaningful relationships with their children. They will say, "I've got so many things to do today that it would be a big help if you could set the table when you come home from school. And maybe you could also go around to the store and get some tomatoes and eggs and a loaf of bread--that would certainly make things a lot easier for me when I get home." Children love that sort of thing. It makes them feel important. They gain a great feeling of self-esteem from doing something that makes their parent's life a little easier, and from being appreciated for it.

BRINGING YOUR CHILDREN INTO YOUR LIFE

No matter how busy you are, there are ways to bring a child into your life. Most people have just not given enough thought to them. We all know men who run off to a gym in the later afternoon. What stops them from taking their children along? Or to the park for jogging or biking? Think of how many business or social lunches you may have. Why can't you have lunch with your child every other week or so, perhaps on a day when school gets out early? Kids love it. As far as I'm concerned, there is nothing more delightful for me than having lunch with one of my children alone, just having that private one-to-one con-

versation. And if there are friends over for dinner, I believe in having children present at the table. It makes them feel part of things. And they are also a big help in serving. They enjoy that.

Shopping is an excellent way to bring children into your life. My daughter loves to go to the supermarket with me. She knows perfectly well that it would probably take less time for me to go alone, but she loves the idea. It is "Dad, look at this," and "Dad, look at that," and "Don't we need some of this?" and "Don't we need some of that?" She is delighted when she finds that she is picking out things we, in fact, do need and that I had never thought of. So even daily tasks can bring children into your life, and when the children are there, the tasks are not humdrum.

Children should be included as much as possible in a single parent's social life. And I think that if more parents would take a fresh look at the way they live, they would find it is not that hard to do. I must admit there are some people who look a little askance at you if you take your child--or children--with you wherever you go. They may feel you are being rather foolish--assuming as they do that you have to get away from your children to do anything fun or interesting.

If you say you can't come to dinner because of your children, they are likely to reply, "Oh, couldn't you find someone to take care of them?" They would understand that. But if you say you can't come because you *want* to be with your children, they may take offense and feel you do not like *them* well enough. It is an interesting symptom. Many people have not yet accepted the fact that parenthood is a day-in-day-out commitment and also a great pleasure.

WORKING SINGLE PARENT--IT CAN WORK

I believe it is possible for a single parent to raise children and also work without compromising their emotional health, but it does require a tremendous amount of dedication and great flexibility. Then I think everything else falls into place. I can't say that money is the answer. It certainly helps to have someone else do some of the daily chores for you, but then you can always make these into an activity you can share with your children.

As to finding someone reliable to take care of a child while you are away from home, this is always a problem. There is no certification, no licensing. Most people are careless in selecting a person to take charge of their children. Sometimes I think they are more particular about choosing a car mechanic or a hairdresser. A devoted grandparent can be the ideal answer, but with the fragmentation of the American family and the trend towards segregation by age groups, grandparents are too often not at hand.

For all these reasons, a flexible working schedule for the single parent is essential. I know architects, designers, writers who work on their own and can organize their time to meet their children's needs. Many people have to carry work home anyway, and they can do it after their children are asleep.

If we ever get to cutting down the work week, I hope we make it five six-hour

days, not three or four eight-hour days. If people can work from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., they can see their children off to school in the morning and be home before the children are back in the afternoon. That would be an ideal arrangement. It is what I have done with my life. I don't schedule anything in the office beyond the time my children get home from school. I do my homework while they are doing theirs, or after they are in bed.

ADOPTION

A single person who has never been married and decides to adopt a child is often overwhelmed by the responsibilities and develops a sense of guilt, and even outright rejection, of the child. These would-be adoptive parents tend to think of all the wonderful things about having a child--the companionship, the love--without anticipating the problems. Many of them would do better not to take on the tremendous commitment of parenthood and, instead, devote what time they may have to nephews and nieces, or children of friends, or to the many children of poor, broken families who need help.

THE SINGLE PARENT AND REMARRIAGE

A woman who is divorced or widowed and anxious to get married again may feel that her children are a hindrance, and she may have a sense of guilt about these feelings. She may want her responsibilities toward her children to come before a life of her own and then unconsciously blame the children for this restriction. But if she is honest with her children and makes them understand that nothing is more important to her than them, no matter what happens, these problems can most often be worked out over a period of time.

Children want stability and permanence. They can be frightened if a single parent bounces from one deep relationship to another. On the other hand, they often pester a single parent to get married again so they can have the feeling of being in a family. Children like to have family around to share all the joys and other emotions of life.

There are many kinds of problems single parents face and about which they may feel guilty in one way or another, but there are very few that cannot be dealt with by realizing a child has first claim on one's time. The gift of self is the best cure for a sense of guilt.

Who Cares for America's Children?*

Urie Bronfenbrenner, Ph.D.

The American family has been undergoing rapid and radical change. Today, in 1975, it is significantly different from what it was only a quarter of a century ago....

More Working Mothers

Our first and most familiar trend is the increase in working mothers. There are several points to be made about these data:

1. Once their children are old enough to go to school, the majority of American mothers now enter the labor force. As of March, 1974, 51% of married women with children from 6 to 17 were engaged in or seeking work; in 1948, the rate was about half as high, 26%.

2. Since the early 1950s mothers of school-age children have been more likely to work than married women without children.

3. The most recent and most rapid increase has been occurring for mothers of young children. One-third of all married women with children under 6 were in the labor force in 1974, three times as high as in 1948. Mothers of infants were not far behind; three of ten married women with children under 3 were in the work force last year.

4. Whether their children were infants or teen-agers, the great majority (two-thirds) of the mothers who had jobs were working full time.

5. These figures apply only to families in which the husband was present. As we shall see, for the rapidly growing numbers of single parent families, the proportions in the labor force are much higher.

Fewer Adults in the Home

As more mothers have gone to work, the number of adults in the home who could care for the child has decreased. Whereas the number of children per family now is about the same as it was 20 to 30 years ago, the number of adults in the household has dropped steadily to a 1974 average of two....

Over the past quarter century the percentage of such "extended" families has decreased appreciably. Although parents with children under 6 are more likely to be living with a relative than parents with older children (6-17), the decline over the years has been greatest for families with young children.

More Single Parent Families

The adult relatives who have been disap-

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*Reprinted from *The Family--Can It Be Saved?*, Victor C. Vaughan, III and T. Berry Brazelton, editors.

pearing from families include the parents themselves. Over a 25-year period there has been a marked rise in the proportion of families with only one parent present, with the sharpest increase occurring during the past decade. According to the latest figures available, in 1974, *one of every six children under 18 years of age was living in a single parent family*. This rate is almost double that for a quarter of a century ago.

With respect to change over time, the increase has been most rapid among families with children under 6 years of age. This percentage has doubled from 7% in 1948 to 15% in 1974. The proportions are almost as high for very young children; in 1974, one of every eight infants under 3 (13%) was living in a single parent family....

Today, almost 90% of all children with only one parent are living in independent families in which the single mother or father is also the family head.

The majority of such parents are also working, 67% of mothers with school-age children, 54% of those with youngsters under 6. And, across the board, over 80% of those employed are working full time. Even among single parent mothers with children under 3, 45% are in the labor force, of whom 86% are working full time....

More Children of Unwed Mothers

After divorce, the most rapidly growing category of single parenthood, especially since 1970, involves unmarried mothers.... This pattern indicates not only that a growing proportion of unmarried women are having children but that the percentage of single women among those of childbearing age is becoming ever larger. Consistent with this conclusion, recent U.S. census figures reveal an increasing trend for women to postpone the age of marriage. The rise in per cent single is particularly strong for the age group under 25, and over 80% of all illegitimate children are being born to women in this age bracket.

Such findings suggest that the trends we have been documenting for the nation as a whole may be occurring at a faster rate in some segments of American society, and more slowly, or perhaps not at all, in others. We turn next to an examination of this issue.

WHICH FAMILIES ARE CHANGING?

Which Mothers Work?

On analyzing available data for an answer to this question, we discover the following:

1. With age of child constant, it is the younger mother, particularly one under 25 years of age, who is most likely to enter the labor force. This trend has been increasing in recent years, particularly for families with very young children (i.e., infants under 3)....

Who and Where Are Single Parent Families?

As in the case of working mothers, single parenthood is most common and is growing most rapidly among the younger generation. By last year, almost one of four parents under 25 heading a family was without a spouse.

The association with income is even more marked.... Single parent families are much more likely to occur and increase over time in the lower income brackets. Among families with incomes under $4000, the overwhelming majority, 67%, now contain only one parent. This figure represents a marked increase from 42% only six years before. In sharp contrast, among families with incomes over $15,000, the proportion has remained consistently below 2%. Further analysis reveals that single parenthood is especially common for young families in the low income brackets. For example, among family heads under 25 with earnings under $4000, the proportion of single parents was 71% for those with all children under 6 and 86% with all children of school age. The more rapid increases over the past few years, however, tended to occur among older low income families, who are beginning to catch up. It would appear that the disruptive processes first struck the younger families among the poor, and now are affecting the older generation as well.

In the case of split families, we are in a position to examine not only who is likely to become an only parent but also where, in terms of place of residence. Figure 1-9 shows the rise over the past six years in the percentage of single parent families with children under 6 living in nonurban and suburban areas, and in American cities increasing in size from 50,000 to over 3,000,000. The graph illustrates at least three important trends. First, the percentage of single parent families increases markedly with city size, reaching a maximum in American metropolises with a population of over 3,000,000. Second, the growing tendency for younger families to break up more frequently than older ones is greatest in the large urban centers and lowest in nonurban and suburban areas. Thus, the proportion of single parents reaches its maximum among families with heads under 35 and living in cities with more than 3,000,000 persons. Here, one of three to four households has a single parent as the head. Finally, the most rapid change over time is occurring not in the larger cities but in those of medium size. This pattern suggests that the high levels of family fragmentation that, six years ago, were found only in major metropolitan centers now are occurring in smaller urban areas as well....

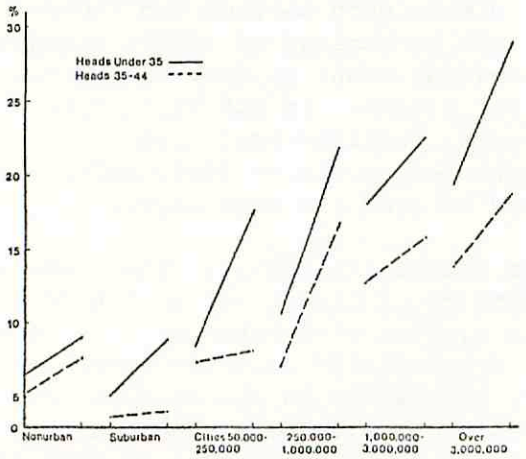
Turning to the issue of race, note that in the graph the rising lines for blacks and whites are almost parallel. In other words, within each setting and income level, the percentage of single parents is increasing about as fast for whites as it is for blacks. To put it in more general terms, *families that live in similar circumstances, whatever their color, are affected in much the same ways....*

But, of course, in reality, the overwhelming majority of blacks and whites do not live in similar circumstances. It is only in our artificially selected comparison groups, especially in the context that is most homogeneous, namely suburbia, that data for the two races begin to look alike. Without statistical control for income and urbanization, the curves for the two races are rather different; they are much farther apart, and the curve for blacks rises at a substantially faster rate. Specifically, between 1960 and 1970, the percentage of single parent families among blacks increased at a rate five times that for whites, and at the end of that period the percentage was over four times as high,

35% versus 8%. In the past four years, both figures have risen and the gap has widened. In 1974, the percentage of single parent families with children under 18 was 13% for whites and 44% for blacks.

This dramatic disparity becomes more comprehensible, however, when we apply what we have learned about the relation of urbanization and income to family disruption. On inquiry, we discover that in 1974 about 6% of all white families with children under 18 were living in cities with a population of 3,000,000 or more, compared with 21% for blacks, over three and one-half times as high; this ratio has been rising steadily in recent years.

Fig. 1–9.—Percentage of female-headed families with children under 6, 1968–1974, by place of residence and age of family head.



Turning to family income, in 1973, the latest year for which the data are available, the median income for an intact family with children under 6 was $12,300 if the family was white, $6700 if it was black. Ironically, single parenthood reduced the race difference by forcing both averages down below the poverty level--$3700 for whites, $3400 for blacks. Consistent with these facts, the percentage of black families that fall below the poverty line is much higher than that of whites. In 1973, 33%, or one-third, of all black families with children under 18 were classified in the low-income bracket, compared to 8% for whites, a ratio of over four to one....

For the nation as a whole, the analysis reveals progressive fragmentation and isolation of the family in its child-rearing role. With respect to different segments of American society, the changes have been most rapid among younger families with younger children, and increase with the degree of economic deprivation and industrialization, reaching their maximum among low income families living in the central core of our largest cities. But the general trend applies to all strata of the society. Middle class families in cities, suburbia and nonurban areas are changing in similar ways. Specifically, in terms of such characteristics as the proportion of working mothers, number of adults in the home, single parent families or children born out of wedlock, the middle class family of today increasingly resembles the low income family of the early 1960s.

Talking About Divorce and Talking About Death

Following are excerpts from Earl Grollman's books *Talking About Divorce* and *Talking About Death*.

When you die, you're dead.
Try saying that word, DEAD.
It is a hard word to say, isn't it?
Not hard to pronounce, really,
but hard to make yourself say.
Maybe because it's a sad word...
even a little frightening.
Let's say it again:

DEAD.

Now, let's say another word:

DIE.

That's what happened to grandfather.
Grandfather died.
He is dead.

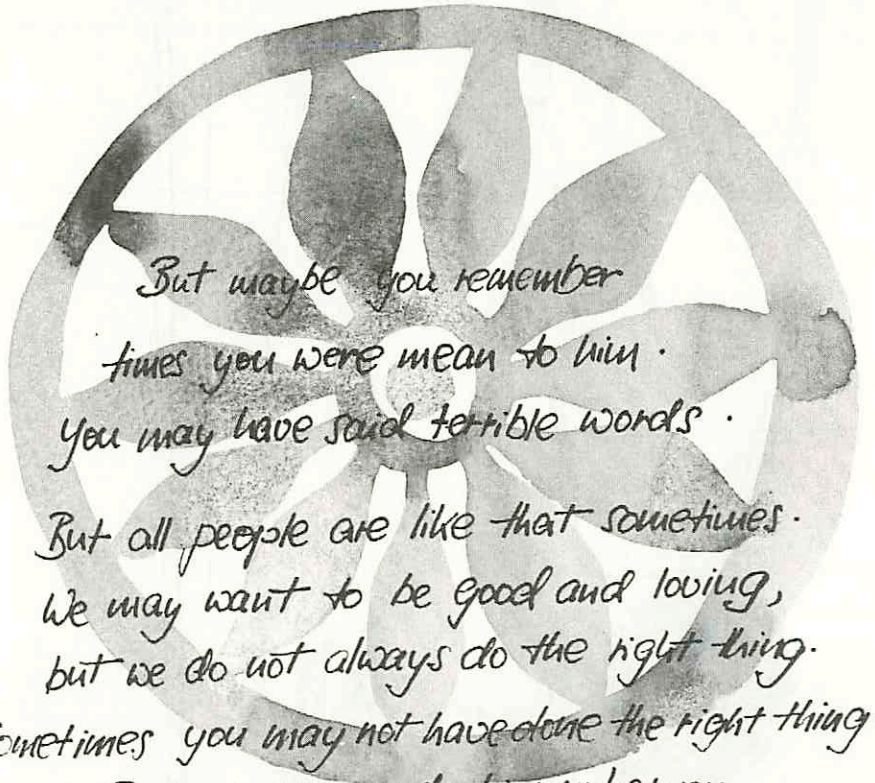
It is not like playing cowboys and Indians.
"Bang! I shot you. You are dead!"
And then you start all over again
and play another game.

DEAD IS DEAD.
It is not a game. It is very real.
Grandfather is gone.
He will never come back.

Are you worried?
Afraid you did something wrong
and that's why grandfather is not here---
as a punishment to you?
OF COURSE NOT!

Grandfather did not die because you may
have been bad.
You did nothing to make him die.
Let me say it again.
You DID NOTHING TO MAKE HIM DIE!

Nothing you did had anything
to do with his death.
In fact you helped to make
him happy when he was with you.



But maybe you remember
times you were mean to him.
You may have said terrible words.
But all people are like that sometimes.
We may want to be good and loving,
but we do not always do the right thing.
Sometimes you may not have done the right thing.
Perhaps you made him unhappy.
But grandfather always understood.
He could forgive you.
HE LOVED you.
You had nothing to do with his death.

All people die.

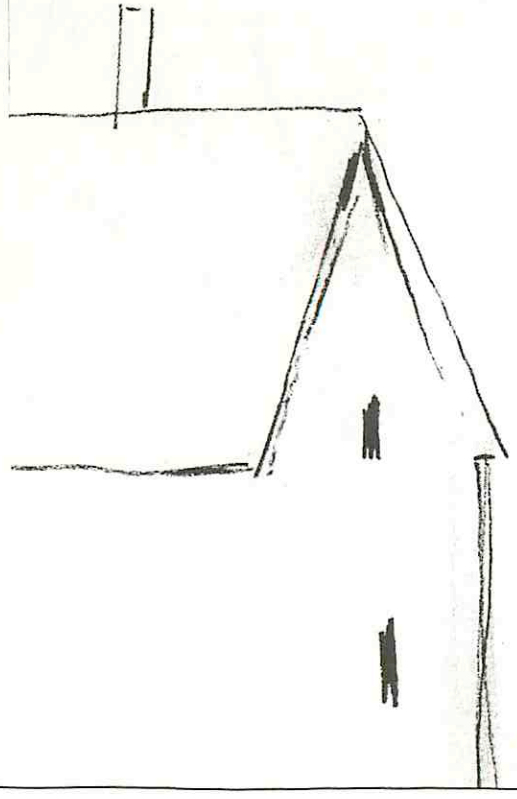
You are **NOT** to blame for the divorce.

You are **NOT** to blame.

Our marriage is not a good one.

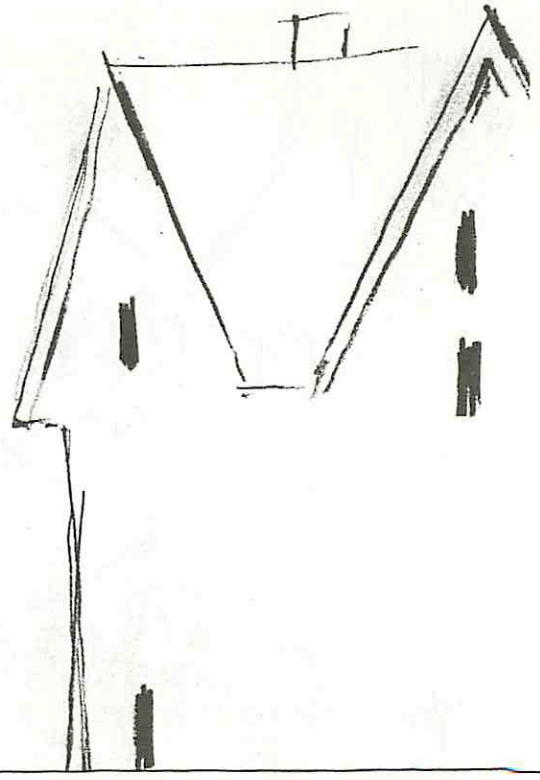
It is a mistake.

Sometimes the way to correct a mistake is to make a change.

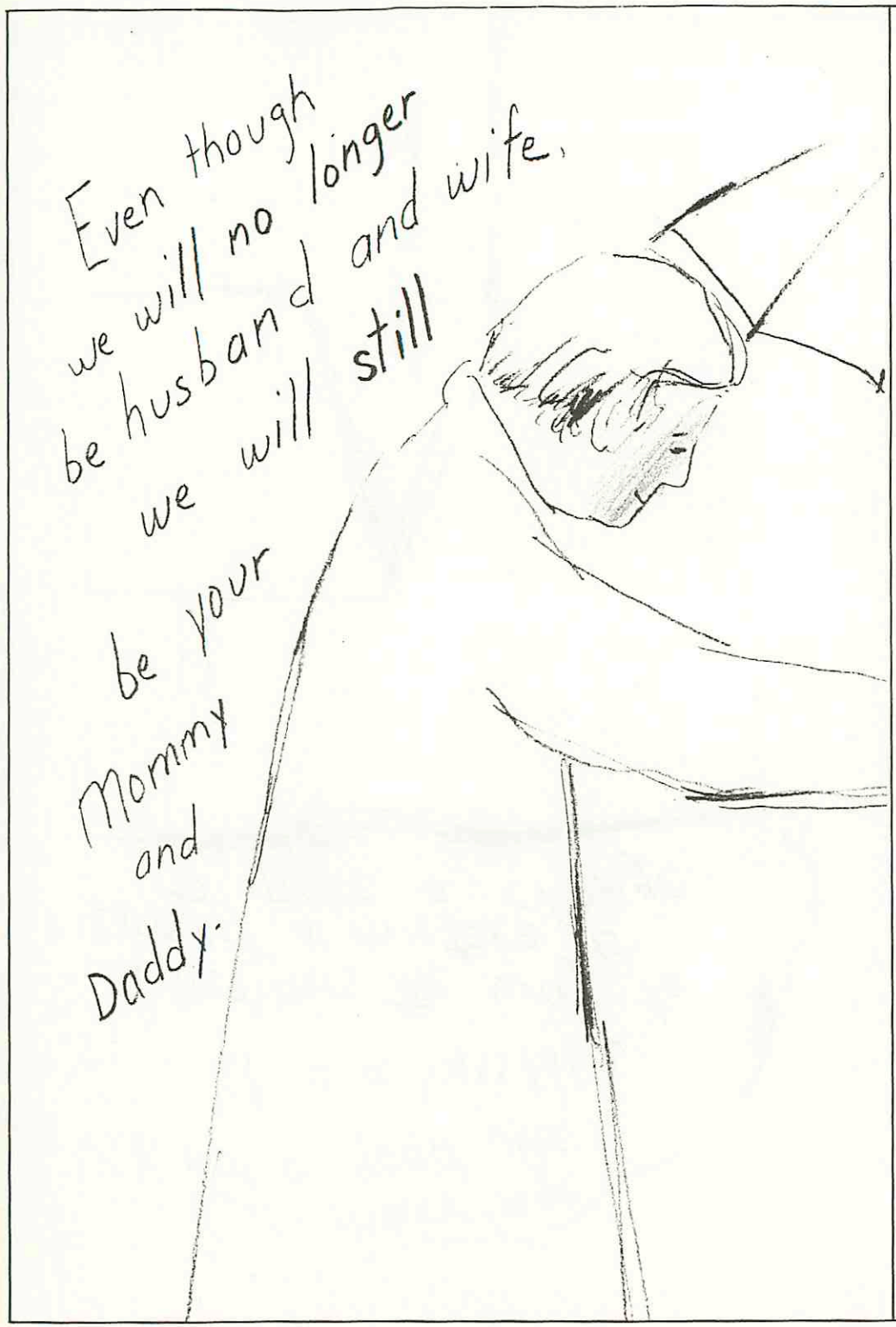


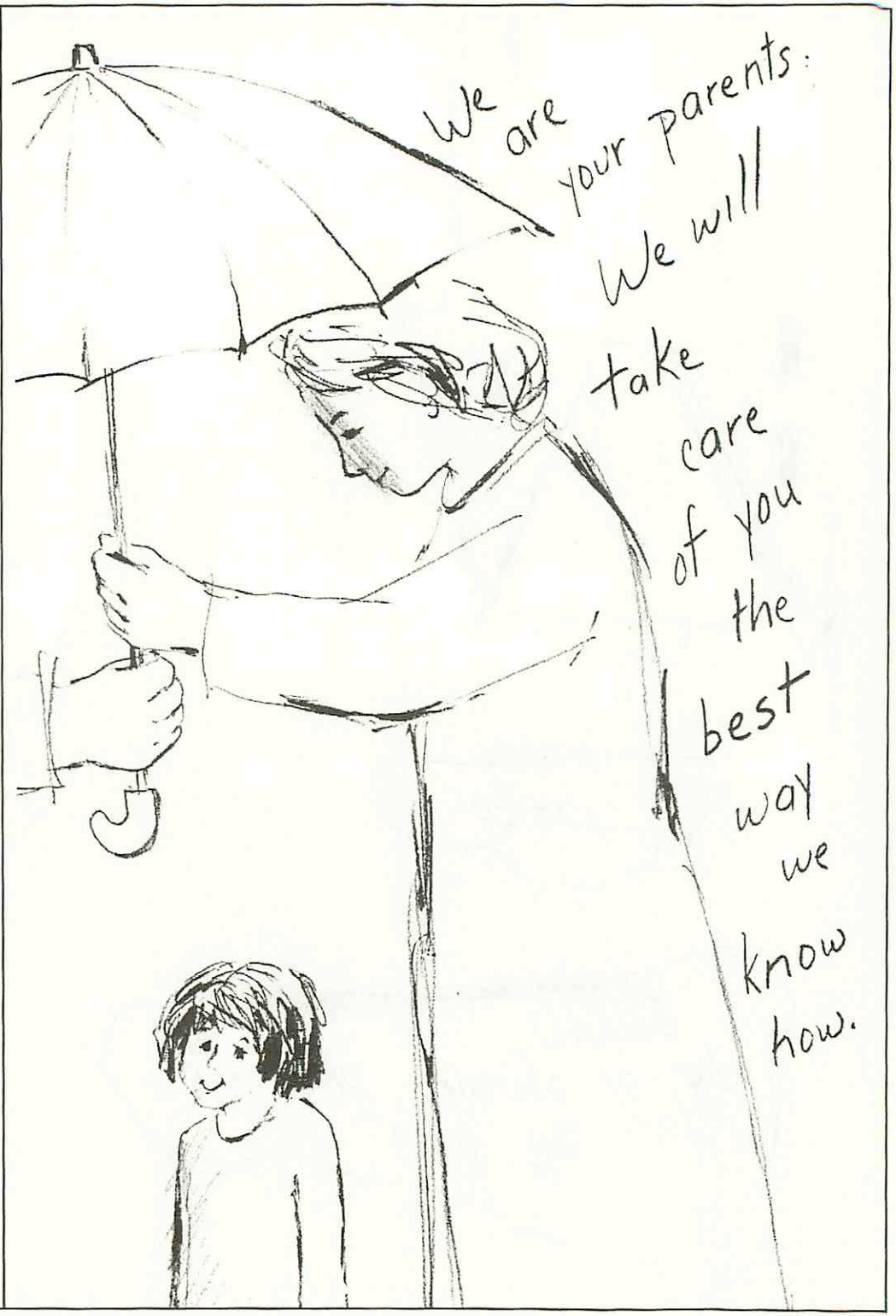
And the way we will change is by living

apart.



Even though we will no longer be husband and wife, we will still be your Mommy and Daddy.





We are your parents. We will take care of you the best way we know how.