



Parents

nobody's perfect

Fatherhood in Special Circumstances

All parents have to find ways to handle everyday challenges of raising children. Sometimes they find themselves in situations that require some extra effort.

Single Parenting as a Dad

As a single dad you will have many of the same concerns that any other parent has. You are responsible for making sure all of your child's needs are met. This is a demanding and rewarding task. It is important to find ways to reduce stress by looking after yourself so you can better look after your child.

Trust your gut. Sometimes other parents will give advice that you did not ask for. It is easy for others to make assumptions about how you are to parent. You are the expert of your child so trust your own judgement. *Nobody's perfect* and everyone makes mistakes. The important thing is to do what you think is best for your child.

Ask for help. You can share the load of parenting by asking for help from family and friends. It is good to have other positive adults in your child's life. Everyone needs help sometimes. Seek advice from people you like and trust. Remember that no matter what you do, you will never please everyone. The important thing is YOU are your child's parent. You are doing a good thing raising your child.

Being a Dad After a Separation

Separated dads deal with personal issues that can affect their relationship with their child. It is normal to have feelings of anger, low self-esteem, and hurt feelings during a separation. Lots will change, like your role as a dad and the way you spend time with your child. Take time to adjust to the changes in your life.



For more information about *Nobody's Perfect*, or to download this document, please search "Nobody's Perfect Tipsheets" on Canada.ca.



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Being a Dad After a Separation (cont'd)

Your child may be confused by the separation. You can help your child understand what your family is going through. Stay in touch with your child in any way you can and look after as many of their needs as possible. Your child needs you to be a “real Dad”, not just a fun guy. You need to continue to provide boundaries, rules and discipline.

It is important to separate your feelings about your ex-partner from your relationship with your child. Work as a team. Compromise and negotiate as often as possible. Keep conflict to a minimum. Always speak well of your ex-partner in front of your child.

Help yourself by finding support:

- Find someone to talk to. Look for someone who listens, understands your problems and cares about you. You may want to talk to friend, family member, Elder, neighbour, member of the clergy, your parent group facilitator, or health care provider.

Help your child:

- Answer your child’s questions about their other parent and your family situation no matter how often they ask. Answer in a way that your child can understand. Be brief, honest, and positive.
- Give your child as much comfort, time and love as needed. Tell your child over and over that:
 - they are loved.
 - they will be looked after and taken care of no matter what happens.
 - it is **not** their fault that you and your ex-partner do not live together anymore.
- Your child needs to know what to expect. Even if you and your ex-partner do not live together, you can still talk over and agree about things like your child’s routines and discipline.

Step-parenting as a Dad

Being a step-dad in a blended family takes hard work and lots of creativity but the effort you put in now pays off later. Your step-child will need to adjust to your new relationships. Give your step-child time and ensure that they have positive contact with both families. Let your step-child know that you understand that this is a difficult time. Protect your step-child from conflict and other adult problems.

Here are some ways to help connect with your step-child:

- Do fun activities together helps with getting to know each other
- Help look after your step-child, while respecting their relationship with their other parents
- Play together and let your step-child lead the play
- Be kind, positive, and patient as she adjusts to your new relationship
- Support good routines throughout the day

 **You can still meet the needs of your child in challenging circumstances.**

The Public Health Agency of Canada gratefully acknowledges the collaboration and expertise of Dad Central Canada (www.dadcentral.ca) and their national network in the development of the *Nobody's Perfect* tipsheets for dads.