

by Susan Havens

**I** *don't know when it began, but I feel like always feared the thought—or to be more accurate, the reality—of being a solo mom. (Certainly that fear was fueled by my mom's struggles as a divorced single mom.)*

So being the reporter I am, I figured I could script that entire scenario out of my life by simply never having a child.

Fast forward about 30 years. So much for scripting my own life! I am now living out what used to be my worst fear; I am a single mother. I'm carrying on our family legacy the conventional way via divorce. (And I have a little girl that is much like I was. My mom says that part is pay back!)

Yet contrary to my previous beliefs, I'm now finding the true blessings in my solo-motherhood status. I know it's not the ideal, picture-perfect, all-American dream, but it's certainly not uncommon; in fact today it's more likely the norm. That in itself makes it a little easier.

No matter how you get there, the reality is that the stigma persists. And society isn't set up to champion the single parent. Still, we *are* family. Daily challenges, pressures and aggravations are simply a part of any family's life; they're just of a different sort, perhaps a little more complicated, when there is NO one to pick up the slack.



And so it is; some issues become amplified—like actually sticking to a budget or taking a sick day (*I want a tummy rub and someone to bring me soup!*)—while others become much less important, such as keeping a spotless house or hanging on to eternal beauty.

But I've found there are solutions, while not always obvious or mainstream. Sometimes you just have to get creative and perhaps even make them up along the

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way. (That's the adventurous part, and I've heard it's actually good for stretching beyond your comfort zone!)

I leapt into this sea of uncertainty nearly three years ago not knowing how I would make it, especially when I have zero family to support me within three thousand miles. Now I'm living proof of that old adage “What doesn't kill you will only make you stronger.” I've become, and I will continue to become, a much stronger woman. For that I am proud, as any single mom should be. After all we're doing double duty meeting the unrelenting demands that are usually fulfilled by a mother and father. Not only are we nurturing and caring for our children, we are also acting as the maid, the breadwinner, the cook, the drill sergeant, the bookkeeper, the coach, the teacher, the fan and more!

Yes, I am a survivor. (If you're anything like me, you cringe when you hear a married mom saying she feels like she's single. It's not even close!) I've now come

to realize the real key to success, however, is to figure out how to go beyond merely surviving to actually thriving, despite the stress, to embrace single motherhood regardless of its inequities.

I credit my girlfriends, who've successfully navigated the choppy seas before me, for graciously nudging me in that direction. No longer am I swimming against the tide wishing and whining, “This isn't how it's supposed to be.” I'm embracing this time in my life through a new paradigm that's shifted the way I see things.

I realize this is a valuable time to grow, not only closer to my daughter, but within myself. (To put it more precisely, it's time to grow UP.) The one caveat—my daughter's well being is always at center stage in every decision I make. That's where the transformation begins and my script begins to flow; priorities and attitudes adjust, values are realigned, things come into focus, clarity leads to ambition and that opens up a whole new world of possibility.

What's truly valuable in life and who or what is worthy of my time becomes very, very clear. The word sacrifice takes on a whole new meaning. Choosing *less* to have *more* actually starts to make sense. No longer am I fueling that childhood fear of being a mom on my own, for I have found the silver lining in the cloud, the beauty and the blessing of being solo while really pouring into my daughter. Finally, I'm becoming the mom I'm *now realizing* I always wanted to be.

It's my goal to help you face each and every day with increasing vitality, buoyancy and resilience as a single mom. Even though the anecdotes of my life may not mirror your exact

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