

# Diary of a Single Mother

Written by

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On May 30, 2009 I embarked on the most difficult, yet most wonderful journey I'll ever experience in my whole life. I became a single mom. I am now the proud mother to a 2 year old mini-wonder who consumes my entire existence and for whom I live every single day.

It wasn't my intention to be a single parent, but sometimes things don't work out the way you hope them to. Along with the obvious physical and financial struggles, the most taxing issue I face is the emotional battle I wage against myself daily. It is difficult to believe that I am not alone in my efforts although I know there are tons of mothers that fight the same fight right alongside me every single day. So many in fact, that we might call being a single mom an epidemic. According to the National Kids Count Program, 40% of Hispanic children were raised in a single parent household in 2009. Long gone are the days of "Leave it to Beaver" or "The Happy Days" where Dad comes home after a long day of work to his waiting family. Ladies like me, we really are doing it by ourselves.

Let's talk baby daddy because for a single mom, he can be the biggest headache of them all. If you've got a good one; one that regularly sees his children, supports them financially and in general makes your life as a mom easier, I applaud you. If your baby daddy is a deadbeat, girl I feel for you with all my heart. In my situation, let's just say he comes around whenever he has nothing better to do and no he doesn't offer any help at all. The only thing he gives me is stress. I'm not sure my daughter would even remember who he was if she saw him right now. In the words of Beyonce, "Me, Myself and I is all I have in the end." Yes, I feel torn and guilty every single day of my life. I have the ability to work hard enough to give my daughter everything her little heart desires. I can show her how to be a good person and a strong woman, but I can't show her what a good father should be because her father chooses not to be one. I worry how my daughter's future decisions will be affected by her father's absence during her formative years. How will it affect the kind of man she dates, will she know how a man should treat her if she's never experienced an example of a good male-female relationship. I'm doing the best I can, but there are certain things only a father can do. I too come from a family of divorced parents, but we fought to maintain our family. I talk to and see my father regularly. What happens when a father is never around? I'm sure I'm not the only single mom to worry about these issues. I can't begin to think about the day when my daughter starts asking why her dad was never around and if he left because he didn't love her. I'll leave the nightmare of those thoughts for another day.



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While most of us agree that it is better for a child to have both parents present in their lives, as single parents we realize we are mothers before we are women. I cringe to think that my daughter's father will do her more harm than good by his constant in-and-out behavior. As much as I would like for them to have a positive relationship, I can't allow him to play with her expectations by watching him "do the dip" for months and then pop up whenever he finds it convenient. I will always have some sort of tender emotion for him. We were together for years and had a child; those things are momentous and not easily set aside. However, she is my #1 and if he can't honor her as highly as I do, that's where I put my 'mom pants' on and say, "The buck stops here. You won't play with our child the way you try to play with me."

So, how do we cope? It can be infinitely lonely. The responsibility of a little one is awesome, yet heavy on the heart. As a single mother, I think we feel the duty ten-fold. We want to make up for the love our babies are losing out on because Dad isn't around and the bond created by carrying that child within us is indescribable. There's absolutely nothing we wouldn't do, nothing we wouldn't give and when the person who created this child disappears, guilt and sadness threaten to consume you. How can that person stand to not see their little blessing every single moment of every single day? Does he realize how much he's missing? All the new little things she's constantly learning, the funny things she says and does. He has absolutely no idea who she is becoming as a person. It makes me livid and I look at my baby and think, "You deserve better and I will give you better." Baby daddy? GO THAT WAY!!! Of course, as Latinas we usually have the support of an extended family who aide us financially and provide endless hours of babysitting and for that, I know I speak for all of us single mommas when I say, "We are eternally grateful." However, it's not the nuclear family we imagined after giving birth.

At times the woman in me speaks up from somewhere hidden deep down inside and says, "What about me? I want to have fun too." Dating...SIGH. That's rough. You may have already been through the wringer with your child's father and have the acute belief that all men are the same. You may be lucky enough to meet someone you actually like but will he run at the mention of a child? Will he be worthy enough of meeting your little angel? Will he treat your baby with the same respect you do? I haven't met anyone I liked enough to actually go through this process with, but I think about it every single time I go on a date. It's not just me. We're a package deal. Love me and love my baby girl just as much.

As I sit here writing these words, my daughter is grabbing at the keyboard, trying to climb up on my lap and asking for something to eat all at once. Does it make me crazy sometimes? Yes. Two year olds are exhausting. Would I change my circumstances? No way! She is my masterpiece. So I ask you to call your mom tonight and ask her what her lifetime's greatest accomplishment is. Even if it was just the two of you as she worked three jobs and saved every single penny to buy you Jordans while she rocked Payless, I'll bet everything I have, she'll still say "You."

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Words by Nicole Aston