

# Memories of a Single Parent

## A single father

The year 1988 was the beginning of a very tragic and extremely difficult episode in my life. It was the year when my world was shattered and turned upside down. Jenny (my ex-wife) decided to end our marriage to start a new life elsewhere. Her announcement came so suddenly that it stunned me into shock and disbelief. "How could it be?" I asked myself. I could not see any major problems in our marriage to warrant such a decision. I tried everything I could to save the marriage, but all my efforts were futile. Soon after, she left the country to reside in Germany.

Then the nightmare began. The grim reality of being a divorced person; of being alone in this new strange world slammed into me. I had just lost a wife, and my son, a mother. Immediately there was this piercing pain in my heart. I felt cheated and abandoned. Coupled with the intense hurt, there was also anger. "How could she do this to me? It is just not right!" I went into a state of daze, confusion and loss. I felt like a huge part of me had just died. All my hopes, my dreams and aspirations were smashed into pieces. Everything about me had gone right to the bottom -my self esteem, my confidence and me ego: things were never same again without her. Our home had suddenly become dreadfully 'cold' and quiet. The most difficult and painful task was to explain to my son of the absence of his mother. He was only 3+ years old then and I was 37. Extreme loneliness and emptiness haunted both of us. Our sadness and heartaches intensified when we saw families being intact and happy together. Outings to familiar places brought back fond memories of the past. Many a time I cried myself to sleep and at times we even cried together. I was very much aware of the pain and turmoil my son faced and I just did not know how to help him cope. The sadness and gloom were to stay with him for a long time, and it hurt me terribly to see him in this state. He had become closer and clinging to me with each passing day, as if fearing he might lose me someday (being the only person left in his world), I vowed to be strong and to provide him the best I could. But at times, I was so wrapped up in my own struggle, my own emotional chaos that I actually neglected him. One very tough task that drained me both physically and emotionally was trying to be both a father and mother to him. Tending to his daily needs, food-discipline and so on would sometimes leave me feeling hopeless and frustrated. I knew next to nothing about parenting and I could not cook. So we went through life each day by my trial and error method of bringing up a three and half year old child. There was once when I over fed him at dinner-time and he vomited in the middle of the night.

Over on my side, I could not cope with my own feelings and emotions. I was constantly feeling very depressed. There were the constant barrage of thoughts and questions, most of that were negative and tormenting. Life became so empty and direction less, and the future seemed bleak and frightening. I had lost so much weight because of poor appetite and lack of concentration and interest in work. My financial situation turned messy and I went into debts.

Very soon, the effects of it all started to take a heavy toll on me. I began to deteriorate so much that I dared not look at myself in the mirror. What I saw was figure that was pale, sunken, and haggard with a face lined with misery and agony. I likened my despairing situation to that thrown into a deep hole where the surroundings were dark and frightening. The only glimpse of light and hope was at the top where the face of my son beckoned. It was a hole where I had been stripped of all resources, where my broken self had nothing to cling to. Here I had to grope and crawl towards the top, only to fall again at certain heights and to try again once more. I had not lost the desire to be loved and wanted again. I wanted very much to be "normal" again. To be healed, to be socially active, to find an ideal partner, to raise a mature and emotionally well-adjusted child and to enjoy life once, again. In short, I wanted very badly to have a "normal" family. I soon realised that in trying to achieve all these things, I made very serious blunders that plunged me right to the bottom of the hole. One bad mistake was to get into a relationship, there were new problems, and adjustments. I had not worked through my problems and hang-ups and had not recovered well, so these excess baggages were brought to my new relationship. Ultimately, the relationship failed and with it brought pain, heartaches and added stress. It further dented my recovery and added confusion and hurt to my son, not counting the 'damage' to the other party.

It was one stormy and strenuous relationship I had which ended in failure and bitterness that culminated to my having a nervous breakdown one-day. Finally my worn-out body and stress ridden mind could not take it any more. I collapsed and was sent to hospital.

The road towards healing and recovery was a long one paved with many difficulties, pain and distress. For me, it all started when I turned to God. In my hour, when my spirit was at its lowest, when I was all broken up and desperate, it was when I reached out towards God's hand and He lifted me up. Life has never been the same since.

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