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Dating

Dating, Sex and Single Parenthood

NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIP RULES WHEN YOU HAVE CHILDREN OR ARE INVOLVED WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS CHILDREN CAN FEEL LIKE A THREE-RING CIRCUS. OUR EXPERTS ADDRESS YOUR COURTSHIP CONCERNS SO EVERYONE CAN HAVE SOME

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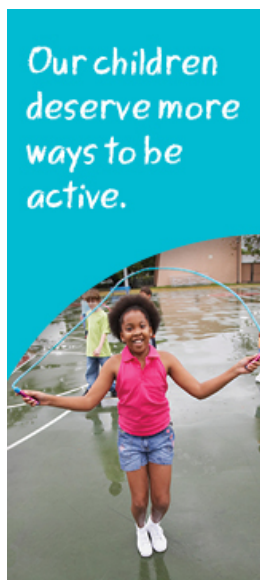
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author of *It Takes All 5: A Single Mom's Guide to Finding the REAL One*.

Isn't it selfish to date? "Release all guilt about having a social life. Happy mommy means happy household," says Zane. It's our first date. Is it safe to meet with a stranger? Follow these precautions from dating site Zoosk.com: Meet in a public place when people are around. Arrive using your own transportation. Don't allow someone to pick you up from your home or office. Tell a friend or family member where you are going and when you will return. Arrange a time to check in. Bring your cell phone. Don't drink alcohol. Don't leave your personal belongings (phone, purse, wallet) unattended. Above all, trust your gut.

My companion won't want to hear about playdates and school lunches. What will we talk about? Your child is a big part of your life, so the topic is hard to avoid. Don't. But stay current on pop culture and current events to boost your confidence—and pick up on conversational cues from your date. "I try to let [a new lady friend] do most of the talking," says Langley.

Things are serious between us. When's the right time for my child to meet



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my partner? “Definitely not in the first months,” says O’Neill. This is a time to compartmentalize your needs and your child’s needs.” When you feel the time is right, speak with your child when you have plenty of time alone to talk—not when you’re about to make introductions, she says. “[You might wait until your] child is curious and asks when he or she will be meeting this person. Let [the idea] settle in for some days or weeks and allow for further discussion before a meeting occurs.”

How can I pay more attention to my partner? Your calendar is your best friend,” says Date Out of Your League author April Massini. “Schedule time for romance, companionship and sex. Changing diapers isn’t sexy, either, but if you don’t do it, you’ve got bigger problems! Make your relationship a priority, and enlist the help of babysitters and family. Embrace the quickie to get you through [busy] periods in your schedule. It will keep you from feeling unfamiliar to each other.”

6 Misconceptions About Dating A Single Parent

1 (S)he must have messed up. “[The assumption is] that it was our fault the relationship with the mother didn’t work. It’s infuriating, says Mike Langley. “Society thinks that single mothers are loose women who just have babies out of wedlock. I don’t think they consider mothers who are single as a result of divorce, death of a spouse or those whose long-term relationship ended,” says Ty Knighten, 40, of Corona, Calif., who has a 10-year-old son.

2 Our first date will be at Chuck E. Cheese’s. “That happens in sitcoms, not real life,” says Eric Resnick, founder of profilehelper.com. “A single mother [will make] time for herself and her date.”

3 (S)he’s holding auditions for a new mom or dad. “This is just not how any single father I’ve ever helped has approached dating,” says Resnick. “And single moms are strong, self-sufficient women. Chances are, you won’t even meet her kids until she knows you are going to be around long term.”

4 Single moms aren’t interested in sex. Actually, emerging from an unhappy relationship and experiencing others’ attraction toward her can stir a sensual reawakening.

5 Get ready for baby daddy/mama drama. “Thankfully, life isn’t an episode of Maury. There is always the possibility of issues, but in most cases, they should not get in the way of dating,” says Resnick.

6 (S)he’ll want more kids. If you have your heart set on having children, put your cards on the table early.

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