

Life, Love and Family Daily Fact Sheet
Dr. Tim Clinton

“Starting Over: Dating and the Single Parent”

- **Statistics: The Prevalence of Divorce and Remarriage**
 - 50% of first marriages, 67% of second, and 74% of third marriages end in divorce (Clinton & Trent, 2009).
 - 54% of divorced women remarry within five years (National Center for Health Statistics, 2002).
 - 75% of divorced women remarry within ten years.
 - More than 20 million kids in the United States live with one parent. Separation and divorce are the most common reasons for this (Sherman, 2010).

- **The Fear Factor: Children and Single Parent Dating** (Deal, 2012)
 - To some degree, nearly all children have concerns about their parents dating.
 - Dating sparks confusion for children. With the divorce they lost the control and predictability of their lives. Your decision to date is another change that your children may not have wished for.
 - After experiencing the losses caused by divorce, children often feel as though no one is to be trusted or counted on.
 - When parents date, kids feel the shift in direction away from them and the family, and this ignites more fear and loss.
 - It is incredibly detrimental when adults minimize or ignore a child’s concern. When a parent repeatedly dismisses a child, the child’s fear of being unimportant and on his/her own is confirmed.

- **Key Thoughts: Protecting Your Children** (Deal, 2012)
 - What kids want is more stability.
 - Children never recover from the death of a parent or parental divorce. They live the rest of their lives in the shadow of that event.
 - Before you begin dating, engage in “what if” conversations with your children.
 - Monitor where your children are at. Keep dialogue open and talk about the changes that are taking place in the family.
 - Do not force your dating partner upon your children or expect them to embrace the relationship.
 - Reassure your children by balancing the time you spend with your dating partner and with them.
 - It is advisable to monitor the amount of exposure your child has to your dating partner—minimal to not at all in the beginning stages of the relationship and increasing as you become more comfortable and trusting of the dating partner (Clinton & Langberg, 2011).

- Do not neglect the time and attention your children need.
- Your relationship with your child is the most important one that you have.
- **Before You Consider Dating: 3 Steps for The Single Parent**
 - **Acknowledge the Hurt**—to truly move out of the pain of divorce, you must first sit in it. You must recognize your hurt, loneliness, and despair, and call out to God for help as you walk through this new stage of life (Deal, 2012).
 - **Get Support**—you cannot heal from the past and begin to move forward in another relationship until you are emotionally ready. Join a divorce recovery program with others who have been through the same situation. Learn from others as you begin living life as a single parent.
 - **Explore Your Motivation**—when you begin to consider dating again, ask what is driving you to this relationship? Do you assume that a dating or marriage relationship is going to make you fulfilled? Are you avoiding remaining single because you feel incomplete? Thoughtfully and prayerfully answer these questions (Deal, 2012).
- **Quotes:**
 - *“As a single parent who is dating, make your child your priority. Make this known to the person you are dating.”* –Unknown
 - *“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”* –Theodore Roosevelt
 - *“Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.”* –Henry Ford
 - *“It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome.”*—William James
 - *“Your past does not determine who you are. Your past prepares you for how you are to become.”*—Joel Osteen
- **Dating a Single Parent?**
 - Acknowledge the major loss that the children have experienced. Do not assume that your presence will resolve the confusion, frustration, or hurt that they have experienced (Deal, 2012).
 - Do not think that the speed at which you wish your relationship would progress is the speed that you should force upon your partner or his/her children.
 - Develop genuine relationship with the children as you have opportunity. Be aware that children will see through phony actions and words.
- **Verses:**

- *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”—Proverbs 3:5-6*
- *“The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand.”—Psalm 37:23-24*
- *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”—Ephesians 6:4*
- *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”—James 1:5*
- *“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’”—1 Corinthians 15:33*
- *“Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.”—Proverbs 15:22*
- *“The Lord will accomplish what concerns me; Your lovingkindness, O Lord, is everlasting; Do not forsake the works of Your hands.”—Psalm 138:8*
- *“Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”—Psalm 37:3-4*

Endnotes

Clinton, T. & Langberg, D. (2011). The quick-reference guide to counseling women. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Clinton, T. & Trent, J. (2009). The quick-reference guide to marriage & family counseling. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Deal, R. (2012). Dating and the single parent. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers.

National Center for Health Statistics (2002). “Remarriage Facts.” Accessed February 22, 2013 from <http://www.remarriage.com/Remarriage-Facts/>.

Sherman, C. (2010). Living with a single parent. Accessed February 11, 2013 from http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/home_family/single_parents.html#.