

Life, Work & Family

Monthly work/life news for UAW-Represented DaimlerChrysler Workers

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STRATEGIES FOR SINGLE PARENTS

Most single parents today find themselves occasionally overwhelmed. It's a real, everyday challenge to juggle the tasks and responsibilities of two people. As a single parent, the best way for you to deal with the ever-increasing demands of parenting, working and taking care of yourself is to concentrate on staying organized. And there's no need to feel that the weight of the world is on your shoulders, because you are not alone. Support is out there from many sources.

Here are some strategies and simple suggestions for single parents:

- If you're newly single, eliminate unnecessary chores, errands and extracurricular activities until you can establish a schedule that works for both you and your children.
- Take a good look at your daily and weekly must-do's. Make lists, draw charts and let your children help you by performing simple tasks and taking on appropriate responsibilities.
- Recruit help from family and friends. Whether it's a shoulder to cry on, someplace safe to vent, or hands-on help when the going gets tough, reach out to those around you.
- Don't avoid dual-parent families. Although in some circumstances it may feel awkward, getting to know other families can really make a difference when trying to build a network of support.
- Remember to put effort into keeping your relationships strong and healthy. It will come back to benefit you and your children.
- Take time for yourself without the children. It's to everyone's advantage if you let yourself be a priority once in awhile.
- Make sure you eat right and find time to exercise.
- Join a group of other single parents to begin networking, and investigate community or work-related support groups.
- Find activities in your area which you and your children will both enjoy. Many organizations not specifically focused on children are still kid-friendly, and can provide an opportunity for adults with common interests to meet each other.
- It's best to keep your children away from your dating life until someone serious comes along.



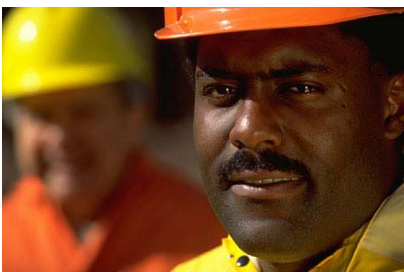
- If divorced, remember to speak kindly about your ex-spouse in front of the children.
- Don't deny the reality that you are a single parent. Whatever your circumstances, deal with the emotions attached to it. Only then can you begin to help your children with what they're going through.
- Talk with your children often. Know that if the situation is a new one, they will undoubtedly experience sadness, have behavior problems and perhaps difficulties in school.
- Don't be afraid to let your children know what you are feeling.
- Look into counseling if you seem to be struggling and having a hard time in your situation.
- Do research and find out about getting some good financial advice. Don't wait to plan for your future.
- Don't forget about your sense of humor, and have fun! If you are single because of a recent transition, a new life full of new possibilities is just starting.

Reorganization - How to Go With the Flow

You like your job the way it is. Why are they changing it? Reorganizing your department can mean anything from bringing in new technology, consolidating jobs and shuffling departments to merging with a new company.

Merger Stress

Mergers are perhaps one of the biggest reorganizational challenges of all. Companies that merge usually started out as competitors. You thought of the other company as "them" and your company as "us." Now you're being asked to redefine your "us" to include "them." This is not as simple as it sounds. The selection of new department heads and work areas sometimes brings surprise, fear and unhappiness. You fear the new system will need fewer employees to run it. You see former bosses get passed over for someone in the new company. Your feelings of job security are at an all-time low.



The Stress of Change

Few people like change, especially a lot of it. Change is hard for you to accept if you didn't initiate it, don't understand it or don't approve of it. But once management decides to make a change, rarely does balking help. Your best bet is probably to modify your attitude and accept change.

The Manager's Role

As a manager it's your job to implement any change from top management with your employees. Find out as much as you can about why the change is being instituted and how other managers are handling it.

Figure out what role you'll have in the change. Will you need to sell the idea to your employees? Will you need to provide technical assistance? Will you be the liaison between your employees and the various departments involved? Will you be given the task of developing an effective model for the change? By getting a clear picture of your specific task, you'll be better able to assist in the change.

Help your staff deal with the fear of the unknown by keeping them abreast of the change. Understand their insecurities and hesitations. It's your job to help them see how the change will affect them positively. If there's no direct benefit to your staff, you may be able to focus on a broad goal toward which they're working. Ask for their cooperation and give them positive feedback. If you continue to meet resistance, deal with each problem separately and directly. Try to answer all questions honestly. After the change has been instituted, assess its success and look for ways to fine-tune it.

The Employee's Role

As part of the acceptance process, your role as an employee can be to acknowledge the need for change, help make the transition smooth and let the change work to your advantage. It's a time to showcase your skills and adaptability. Work with your boss to understand the change more clearly. If you have fears, ask questions. See how you can help expedite the change and show that you're willing to invest the energy to make things go smoothly. Demonstrate that you are a team player.

Where to Get Answers

If you're not adjusting to the change in two or three months, seek help from your supervisor, personnel department or employee assistance program if you have one.

As an employee or supervisor, you have the opportunity to grow and change with your company. By accepting change and being a good team player, you can boost your future in the company.

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Fit at Any Age

Not only is it never too late to get fit, but it is even more important to make fitness a priority as you mature. Many of the common complaints associated with the aging process - joint stiffness, weight gain, fatigue and loss of bone mass, among others - can be prevented by adopting a regular plan of physical fitness. Keeping your muscles conditioned and your heart strong and efficient can offset these minor complaints and may help reduce your risk of more serious conditions, such as hypertension, heart disease and circulatory problems.



Fit Muscles

Muscles make you move and support your skeleton. But as you age, muscles and bones tend to lose mass and weaken, which can lead to poor posture and a limited range of motion. To prevent this from happening, it is helpful to do muscular conditioning and flexibility exercises.

Muscles and bones grow stronger by working against progressively increased resistance. The more demand you put on a muscle over a period of time, the larger and stronger it will grow to meet that demand. Exercises such as weight lifting, leg-lifts and standard push-ups are all muscle-strengthening exercises. Like an unused rubber band, unused muscles can become stiff and tight. By gently stretching your muscles throughout the day, you can remain limber and improve your ability to move through a wide range of motions.

Fit Heart

As we age, the heart muscle becomes more fatty and less muscular. The insides of the blood vessels narrow, and elastic-like fibers inside the arteries begin to stiffen. To keep your heart in condition, heart-strengthening aerobic exercise is of primary importance. But many mature adults think aerobic exercise involves wearing unflattering leotards or running a four-minute mile. Fortunately, you do not have to do either to condition your heart and lungs. Walking is one of the best cardiovascular conditioners and can be done by almost anyone, regardless of age or physical condition. The key to successful walking is to walk briskly enough to keep your heart beating in its target heart range (THR) for 20 to 30 minutes.

What Part Does Your Target Heart Range Play?

Your target heart range (THR) is the safest and most beneficial range of heartbeats per minute during exercise. While many factors, such as your overall health and medical history, can affect your THR, a basic guideline is to subtract your age from 220 and multiply the answer by .6 and again by .85. The two numbers will give you the low and high ends of your target heart range of heartbeats per minute. Remember to start slowly and gradually build up your pace until you can exercise comfortably within your THR for at least 20 minutes, at least three times a week.

Talk Test

Whether you check your THR during each workout, adjust your pace so that it is brisk but you are not out of breath. Use the talk test...always be able to carry on a conversation during cardiovascular conditioning.

NOTE: Mature adults on medications should check with their healthcare professionals to see if their medication might affect their exercising heart rate.

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