

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott

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For Lehigh County



Single Parents Need Time Too

I was reviewing some statistics on families in the United States. The number of single-parent families has more than doubled in the past 15 years. Approximately 11 million children under 18 years old live with a single parent. One million of those live with their dads. Demographers estimate that 70 percent of the children born after 1980 will spend some of their first 18 years in a single-parent home.

Many families are experiencing what this means personally. The challenges for these folks are great. Economic pressures top the list of concerns for single parents. Cindy Fletcher, extension family economist at Iowa State University, reports, "Divorce results in reduced income for all income groups...Per capita income in female-headed household is about half that of two-parent household."

But economic pressures are not the only concerns. Like most parents, single moms and dads also

struggle with having too much to do and not enough time and energy to do it. The good news is that studies are now documenting that "Children receive as much support and discipline in mother-headed homes as in two-parent homes," according to Virginia Molgaard, another family life specialist at Iowa State University. However, single-parents are often not supported by others to the same extent that they offer support to their children.

If you are a single-parent, you can make choices that will help your family. First, it is very important for you to carve time out of your schedule to be with other supportive adults. Relying on your children as your primary source of emotional support can be damaging to your kids. Molgaard emphasizes that, "When the parent receives support from other adults, children are more likely to be healthy and happy."

University of Illinois researchers agree. They have found that single-parents who have a strong

social support network experience fewer psychological stresses and parent more effectively. By taking time to be with other encouraging adults, you're not only helping yourself, you're also helping your children.

Secondly, take five minutes to write down the good things about your family and your adult life as it is today. Tape this to the dash of your car or the refrigerator door. Single-parents may get trapped in a rut where they only notice the things that are "wrong." Remind yourself often of the positive things about your family.

Third, treat yourself to a class or time to work on a special project. People who build skills feel

anger. Who are you really mad at? Take at least three slow, relaxing breaths before returning to the group.

- Go into the bathroom and splash cool water on your face. Wash your neck and hands.

- Do 50 sit-ups or get outside for a walk. • Phone or visit a friend.

Even if you aren't a single-parent, you probably know one. Take time this week to be a supportive friend to baby-sit while she gets her hair cut, to complement him on something he's doing well, to "play catch" with her kids, to welcome his family to your home for potluck dinner.

better about themselves and are better able to address new challenges. Use a pottery class, karate lessons, or desktop publishing assignment as an opportunity to develop a new skill. Set a goal or schedule a discussion with a child's daycare provider or your banker. Don't do it all. Tackle one area that you want to improve. Concentrate on that until you feel comfortable before moving on to other projects.

Finally, when the pressure is too much, and you're about to lose your cool with your children, your parents, or your boss, try these coping tips:

- Put yourself in time-out for a few minutes to think about your

Beans The Cancer-Fighting Food

(NAPS)—What food is low-fat, low cost, packed full of essential nutrients and helps reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease? If you didn't think about beans, then perhaps you don't know beans—about beans.

"Medical and nutritional experts have found that adding beans to your daily diet can reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease, as well as help control weight gain," says Gene Hermenet, president of Brooks Foods, a leading producer of beans. "Eating beans represents an excellent step in the right direction toward a more healthy lifestyle."

Beans bear powerful assets: B-vitamins facilitate cell production as well as healthy skin, eyes, hair and nails; iron is essential for healthy blood production; calcium is key for strong bones and teeth; and protein is essential to proper functioning of every cell in the body.

"Beans help fight weight gain because they provide lots of protein, but include only a tiny fraction of fat compared to equal servings of meat and poultry," explains Hermenet. A one-cup serving of beans contains about one gram of fat; a 3½ ounce serving of ground chuck contains 23.9 grams of fat.

Calories from beans come mainly from carbohydrates and protein. The high carbohydrate content in beans means calories taken in are burned up quickly and converted into usable energy.

Beans reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease because the high fiber content—12.2 grams per one cup serving—is more than half the

recommended daily requirement. Soluble fiber, along with a low fat, low cholesterol diet, also aids in reducing blood cholesterol levels (a major factor in heart disease) by blocking the amount of cholesterol the body absorbs.

Beans regulate blood sugar levels and are an excellent way to manage diabetes because of their high carbohydrate and fiber content. Experts recommend that about 60 percent of a diabetic's calories should come from complex carbohydrates. Consuming just one cup of beans provides more than half the daily adult requirement of complex carbohydrates.

"Americans are more health conscious than ever, and can find great tasting low-fat alternatives in creating bean dishes like rice and beans, fajitas and chili," says Hermenet. "Beans provide 'one-stop shopping' if you're looking for a cancerfighting, low cost, goodtasting nutritional value."

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