

GATE MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELING RESOURCE NEWSLETTER

March 2019 Edition: Single and Blended Families

Julia Molodci, School Counselor



As the GATE middle school counselor, I am sending a monthly newsletter with tips, resources, strategies, and interventions to support GT students. This month's newsletter provides suggestions for single parents and non-traditional families.

"A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children" notes parenting a gifted child can be extremely exhausting in single-parent families.

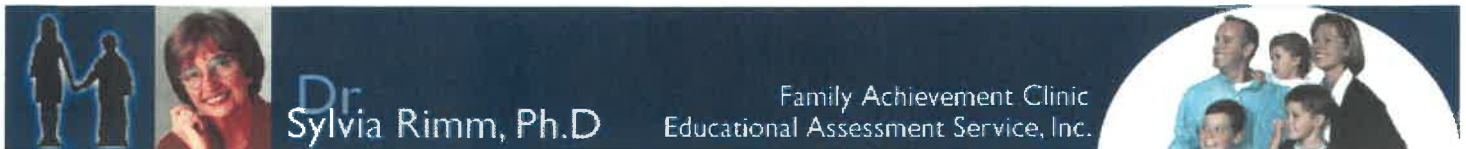
Divorce unavoidably involves stress and disappointment for the whole family. A bright child may choose to disengage from the extended family and the parent's new partner, in order to self-protect from disappointment.

Featured Resources (attached):

1. **"The Changing Family"** – by Dr. Sylvia Rimm, article describing statistics involving non-traditional families and what they can do to raise happy children
2. **"Suggestions for Single Parents"** – by Dr. Sylvia Rimm, article providing strategies for single parents and special rules for single mothers
3. **"Step-Parenting"** – by Dr. Sylvia Rimm, article providing tips for stepparents
4. **"Helping Your Children Cope With Divorce"** – by Dr. Sylvia Rimm, article providing guidelines to help the parent and children during a divorce

Featured Books:

1. **A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children** by Webb et al (2007) – this is a comprehensive book on topics related to parenting gifted children including a chapter addressing blended families and step-parenting



[View Cart](#)

THE CHANGING FAMILY

[Home](#)

[Sylvia's Bio](#)

[Family Achievement Clinic](#)

[Speaking Schedule](#)

[Testimonials](#)

[Letters from Educators](#)

[Articles for Parents and Teachers](#)

[Ask A Family or Teaching Question](#)

[Books, DVD's, Misc. Products](#)

[Dr. Rimm's Newsletters](#)

[See Jane Win](#)

[How Jane Won](#)

[Sylvia's Favorite Links](#)

[Underachievement/Creativity Measures:](#)

[Underachievement Identification Instruments](#)

[Creativity Identification Instruments](#)

[Underachievement Quiz](#)

[Parenting for Achievement Course](#)

For More Information, Contact:
Educational Assessment Service,
Inc.
W6050 Apple Road
Watertown, WI 53098

Phone: 1.800.795.7466
Fax: 1.920.261.6622
e-mail: srimm@sylviarimm.com

Families have changed so dramatically that only 3 out of 10 children live in traditional families with two parents in their first or only marriage.¹ Fully, half of children will live in a single-parent household for at least part of their lives. Almost one-third live with step families and 6% live with grandparents. The categories of family types beyond the traditional ones include single parent due to divorce, death, abandonment, or mother never married; step family; blended family; foster family; grand parented family; and homosexual family. With all those family differences, parenting effectively provides continuously new challenges.



MORE BAD NEWS THAN GOOD

The good news is that children from non-traditional families can't feel alone with being different because they're accustomed to hearing about many different families. Other good news is that many children from non-traditional families grow up to be well-adjusted and happy. Unfortunately, there is more bad news than good. Most single-parent families are father-absent; and father absence contributes greatly to violence, crime, and delinquency among children. Three quarters of adolescents in chemical dependency hospitals, more than 60 percent of teen suicides, and three quarters of teen pregnancies are adolescents from single-parent homes.²

Further bad news is that cohabitation has become increasingly the norm. If single parents with children are receiving welfare payments, getting married significantly reduces the amount they receive. A couple would then lose money if they married, but could keep the extra money if they only lived together.³ That greatly reduces the motivation for family stability.

HOW CHILDREN FEEL ABOUT THEIR CHANGING FAMILIES ⁴



Adjusting to divorce, separation, and blending families causes stress, abandonment, and sibling issues. A recent study of 467 children from diverse families found that most children were surprised and confused about the separation or divorce because they weren't provided with knowledge beforehand and had little opportunity to ask questions.

Children who were able to talk to their parents about their problems related to divided households adapted better than those who had little information. Approximately half of the children who lived in divided households responded positively about their divided lives. Of course, that also means that half did not, so there are many that need support and help.

A parent's death has a dramatic impact on children. Immediate regression behaviors like sleeping problems, anger, and worry are common. Even after time, these children often cope with confidence and preoccupation with illness problems (Barr-Harris).⁵

WHAT NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILIES CAN DO TO RAISE HAPPY, WELL-ADJUSTED CHILDREN

While raising children in non-traditional families can be more difficult, here are some suggestions for all kinds of families:

1. If you're having marriage problems, get counseling to improve the relationship before considering divorce or separation. Marriages are never perfect, but your children are likely to be happier if you can stay together in a respectful relationship.

2. If you've made a decision to separate or divorce, take time to explain to children what's happening, assuring them that they can continue to love both parents and be loved by both as well, provided those are likely possibilities.

3. If you have always been a single parent, explain to your children at an age-appropriate level the reasons that you are the only parent and reassure the children that you are capable of parenting them well. Don't share your worries and anxieties with your children. That's what counselors and friends are for.

4. Don't confide inappropriate adult details to your children—whether you are married, single, separated, or divorced.

5. Homosexual parents should help children with appropriate language and explanations for their difference, so that children will feel comfortable responding to questions by adults and other children.

6. Help children gradually build positive relationships with stepparents and step siblings. One-to-one time with a stepparent can be very effective for developing closeness.

7. Consider that sibling rivalry will be expressed in very different ways in blended families. Sibling rivalry is very natural even when children don't express it openly.

8. Don't treat children like adults if you lead a single-parent family.

9. Children benefit by having same- and opposite-sexed role models. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, teachers, coaches, and Scout leaders can all be helpful to your children.

10. Single-parent-led families can get together with other families to maximize feelings of togetherness and fun for holidays and vacations.

11. Single adults should be sure to preserve some time for adult relationships without children present.

12. Don't despair. Many non-traditional families raise successful, happy children.

References:

¹U.S. Census Bureau, 2003. Rainbow Statistics: A Generation At Risk.
<http://www.rainbows.org/statistics.html>

² U.S. Census Bureau report, Child Support and Alimony; 1989, released Oct 11, 1991.

³America's Changing Family by Aida Aki, December 2, 2005.

⁴Children's Views of Their Changing Families by Judy Dunn and Kirby Deater-Deckard, September, 2001.

⁵Death Statistics, 2003. Rainbow Statistics: A Generation At Risk,
<http://www.rainbow.org/statistics.html>

©2010 by Sylvia B. Rimm. All rights reserved. This publication, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.

©2010 by Sylvia B. Rimm. All rights reserved.

Report any **problems** with this site to **Webmaster@sylviarimm.com**





Dr.
Sylvia Rimm, Ph.D

Family Achievement Clinic
Educational Assessment Service, Inc.



[View Cart](#)

SUGGESTIONS FOR SINGLE PARENTS

[Home](#)

[Sylvia's Bio](#)

[Family Achievement Clinic](#)

[Speaking Schedule](#)

[Testimonials](#)

[Letters from Educators](#)

[Articles for Parents and Teachers](#)

[Ask A Family or Teaching Question](#)

[Books, DVD's, Misc. Products](#)

[Dr. Rimm's Newsletters](#)

[See Jane Win](#)

[How Jane Won](#)

[Sylvia's Favorite Links](#)

[Underachievement/Creativity Measures:](#)

[Underachievement Identification Instruments](#)

[Creativity Identification Instruments](#)

[Underachievement Quiz](#)

[Parenting for Achievement Course](#)

For More Information, Contact:
Educational Assessment Service,
Inc.
W6050 Apple Road
Watertown, WI 53098

Phone: 1.800.795.7466
Fax: 1.920.261.6622
e-mail: srimm@sylviarimm.com

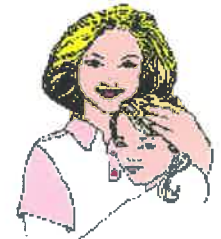
Thirty percent of children are brought up in single-parent homes. For the most part, single-parent homes are lead by women, although some are also lead by men. As a single parent, you may wonder if you're destined to have problem, underachieving children. Of course not, but your job is more difficult, and there are greater risks for your children. Here are some simple rules to guide you—simple only in that they're few and straightforward. In reality, they're terribly difficult for single parents to negotiate. Pat yourself on the back for each successful day; you deserve it.

- Find a career direction for your life to give you a sense of purpose and to build your personal self-confidence. Making your children your only purpose gives them power and causes them pressure that will be too stressful for them to manage.



- Find some adult social outlets for yourself. Don't feel guilty about enjoying yourself as an adult away from your children. Single-parent support groups can be helpful.
- Find a reliable childcare provider or day-care facility for your children. Consistency in care givers and surroundings is very important for youngchildren.
- Treat your child as a child, not a toy to be played with nor an adult to be depended upon. *Do not* share your bed with your child (except during thunderstorms or in the morning). That is an adult status that you should maintain should you wish to have another adult partner.
- If your children come home from visitation and are unruly, don't blame that poor behavior on the other parent. Instead, tell them you're pleased they had a nice time, and if you can manage a nice comment about the other parent, they'll settle down more easily. They need to know they can love you both.

- Don't tell your children you will love them more than anyone else forever, or a new partner will cause them to believe you deceived them. They will feel rejected.
- Take time (you have little) to enjoy your children's achievements, keep them involved in activities, and encourage them to share home responsibilities.
- Have family meals together at least a few times a week instead of just nibbling food when people are hungry.
- As a single parent, you are a very important role model to your children. Be aware of what you say and do. They are imitating you.



- Stay close to extended family, if possible. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents help your children feel surrounded by love.
- Remember, many successful and happy children have been brought up in single-parent families.

SPECIAL RULES FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

Below are three special rules for single mothers who are parenting boys:

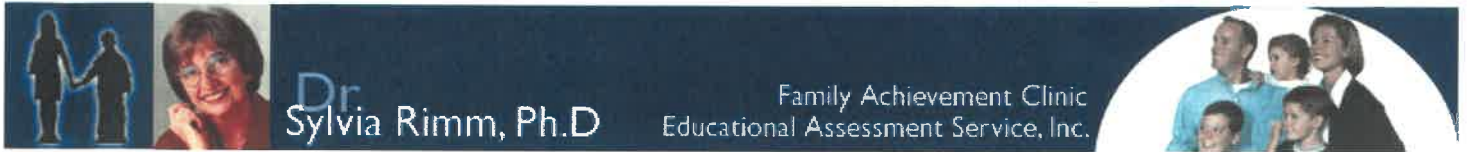
- Boys should have adult males to serve them as role models. Find effective role models for your boys. Uncles, grandfathers, teachers, Boy Scout leaders, sports coaches, and Big Brothers may all be helpful to your sons in learning to be comfortable with their masculinity.
- If you don't view your children's natural father as an effective role model, absolutely don't tell your boys how much they look like and remind you of their father, especially when you're angry.
- Avoid power struggles with your children's father. If their father mistreats you and shows open disrespect toward you, your sons are likely to imitate this powerful but disrespectful behavior.

©2007 by Sylvia B. Rimm. All rights reserved. This publication, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.



©2010 by Sylvia B. Rimm. All rights reserved.

Report any problems with this site to Webmaster@sylviarimm.com


[View Cart](#)

STEP-PARENTING

[Home](#)
[Sylvia's Bio](#)
[Family Achievement Clinic](#)
[Speaking Schedule](#)
[Testimonials](#)
[Letters from Educators](#)
[Articles for Parents and Teachers](#)
[Ask A Family or Teaching Question](#)
[Books, DVD's, Misc. Products](#)
[Dr. Rimm's Newsletters](#)
[See Jane Win](#)
[How Jane Won](#)
[Sylvia's Favorite Links](#)
[Underachievement/Creativity Measures:](#)
[Underachievement Identification Instruments](#)
[Creativity Identification Instruments](#)
[Underachievement Quiz](#)
[Parenting for Achievement Course](#)

For More Information, Contact:
Educational Assessment Service,
Inc.

W6050 Apple Road
Watertown, WI 53098

Phone: 1.800.795.7466

Fax: 1.920.261.6622

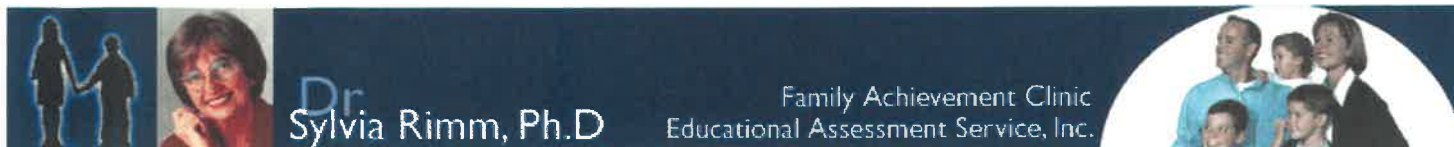
e-mail: srimm@sylviarimm.com

Stepparenting can be a difficult role for most families. Think of the "wicked" image of Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters. Children have rarely or never been exposed to any stories of wonderful stepmothers or stepfathers. In their unconscious is only the expectation of a negative and feared relationship. Children don't want an adult who expects to displace a parent they love. It's probably a good idea to come into the family viewing yourself in a relationship similar to what an aunt or uncle might have with the child. Children are accustomed to both respecting and loving aunts and uncles, and if you describe your relationship to them that way, it may help them to accept you. Here are some other tips for stepparents that may help along the way:

- Don't begin as the disciplinarian. Discuss discipline issues privately with the children's parent.
- Change children's lives gradually. If you plan to marry their parent, join them for some, but not all, activities at first.
- Try a one-on-one excursion with the children to get to know them privately.
- Leave some time alone for the other parent and the children until you've been accepted.
- Try to keep your life going forward. When you adjust well after a divorce, your children will look to you as a role model and will develop confidence in their ability to succeed in life. Bad divorces cause more stress for children. Adolescents whose parents have difficult divorces are more likely to become oppositional and abuse illegal substances.
- If the other parent is abusive or reluctant to keep a relationship going with the children, don't force or encourage that negative relationship. It will only result in your children being abused or feeling rejected by the other parent. It's better to move forward and help the children develop positive relationships with other important adults in their lives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close friends.
- If stepchildren are joining you, recognize both the benefits of new friendships and the potential for new rivalries.
- Give children opportunities to express their fears and worries.
- Don't speak negatively about the children's other parent. If you can manage to, describe the other parent positively and respectfully. If you can't, say nothing.
- Be respectful and positive about the children's grandparents. You need them on your side, and the children should be allowed to enjoy their grandparents.
- Be patient. You're not the *Brady Bunch* yet, but there is potential for a good family life ahead.



©2007 by Sylvia B. Rimm. All rights reserved. This publication, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.


[View Cart](#)
[Home](#)
[Sylvia's Bio](#)
[Family Achievement Clinic](#)
[Speaking Schedule](#)
[Testimonials](#)
[Letters from Educators](#)
[Articles for Parents and Teachers](#)
[Ask A Family or Teaching Question](#)
[Books, DVD's, Misc. Products](#)
[Dr. Rimm's Newsletters](#)
[See Jane Win](#)
[How Jane Won](#)
[Sylvia's Favorite Links](#)
[Underachievement/Creativity Measures:](#)
[Underachievement Identification Instruments](#)
[Creativity Identification Instruments](#)
[Underachievement Quiz](#)
[Parenting for Achievement Course](#)

For More Information, Contact:
Educational Assessment Service,
Inc.
W6050 Apple Road
Watertown, WI 53098

Phone: 1.800.795.7466

Fax: 1.920.261.6622

e-mail: srimm@sylviarimm.com

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN COPE WITH DIVORCE



Divorce is never easy on children or their parents. Although there are some differences in research on the permanent impact of divorce on children, all would agree that growing up in a two-parent, positive and happy family increases the likelihood that children will develop into healthy adults. A bad marriage is always stressful for BOTH adults and children, and research can't prove with certainty whether a good divorce is better or worse than a bad marriage. Divorcing parents usually wish to know how to support their children through a divorce and help them adjust as well as possible afterwards. If you're considering a divorce or have already divorced, here are some guidelines that may help you and your children during this difficult time.

- If there's even a small chance that your marriage may improve with counseling, make the attempt. All marriages go through crises, and many marriages improve with outside help.
- Even if you conclude that it's impossible to save your marriage, seek counseling for a smoother divorce. Definitely provide your children with at least some brief counseling. They'll want a safe person to talk to, and talking to either of their parents during this stressful time may cause them to feel "caught in the middle."
- Both parents should assure the children of their love and explain that the divorce was not caused by any of the children. Parents should also assure the children that they can continue to love both parents and don't have to take sides.
- Even if you believe the divorce was the fault of the other parent, don't blame the divorce on that parent when speaking to your children. Know that this is difficult to do when you feel angry or rejected.
- Don't confide in your children about intimate details of the divorce. Your oldest children, particularly, will often wish to take the role of confidant. Your children want the status of adults, but in the long run, treating them like an adult too soon will cause them to feel insecure. They often turn on the confiding parent and become more rebellious than typical during adolescence.
- Don't encourage your children to say negative things to you about their other parent. They may be tempted to do that in hopes of getting in your good graces. Don't say negative things to your children about their other parent.
- Emphasize positive achieving aspects of the other parent so that he or she can be a constructive role model. Children will see that person as a role

model even if you describe the parent negatively. The more emphasis you put on the negative characteristics of the other parent, the more likely it is that your children will feel helpless to do anything about their own similar negative characteristics. If it's difficult to find positive characteristics about the other parent, don't say anything at all.

- Children who live with and visit parents in separate homes should have two places where they can learn about work and play. Avoid the image of one work parent and one play parent. Try to make their two home lives as consistent as possible.
- When you feel angry at your children's behavior, don't remind them that they're like the other parent. That will not help the children with any problem but will probably cause the children to believe they have no other choice but to be like that parent.
- Don't get your children involved in your financial crises. That will either cause them to feel very anxious, blame the other parent, or see the other parent as the more powerful parent.
- Don't feel guilty about the divorce. No one is perfect. Guilt has never helped improve parenting skills. Time will heal the feelings of hurt and will put problems into perspective for your children if you and their other parent adjust to living in a reasonable relationship.
- Try to keep your life going forward. When you adjust well after a divorce, your children will look to you as a role model and will develop confidence in their ability to succeed in life.
- If the other parent is abusive or reluctant to keep a relationship going with the children, don't force or encourage that negative relationship. It will only result in your children being abused or feeling rejected by the other parent. It's better to move forward and help the children develop positive relationships with other important adults in their lives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close friends

©2002 by Sylvia B. Rimm. All rights reserved. This publication, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.

©2010 by Sylvia B. Rimm. All rights reserved.

Report any problems with this site to Webmaster@sylviarimm.com