

Psychoanalyst: Forget Political Correctness, Kids Need Both Parents

When I was a young college student, trying to feel my way through classes and take assignments seriously, I dutifully weighed in on an online discussion board with a few thoughts on the disadvantages children raised in single parent homes face.

Big mistake.

I was lambasted with emotional responses, the essence of which can be summarized as, “I was raised by a single mom! I turned out just fine!”

Over the years, I’ve learned such responses aren’t limited to college students. I get it. Single mothers have rough lives and do yeoman’s work, many sacrificing constantly to give the best to their children. They need all the love and support we can give.

But giving love and support doesn’t mean that we should ignore the fact that children raised with only one parent – mom or dad – face various life disadvantages.

Psychoanalyst Erica Komisar understands this. Writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, [Komisar claims](#) that “Political Correctness Is Bad for Kids,” citing a new poll in which nearly 70 percent of those with a liberal political affiliation disagree “‘that marriage is needed to create strong families.’” Those who think this way are wrong, says Komisar, noting, “It’s a shame that political correctness inhibits discussions of what’s best for children.”

She lists three disadvantages which come from growing up

without a father *and* a mother. I repeat them here because they illuminate several head-scratching trends we've seen among millennials and those in Gen Z.

1. Losing the Apron Strings

Children need a balance of secure attachment and healthy separation, and the traditional two-parent structure provides it. Mothers are uniquely suited for sensitive nurturing, which helps regulate distress and is critical to early development. Fathers provide balance by teaching children to regulate their aggression and become independent. In my practice I have seen an increasing number of moms who are single by choice. Although the mothers have the attachment part down, they don't have a man around to help the separation process, and the kids struggle as a result.

The last several years are full of stories about a generation that can't seem to make it on its own. They don't know how to cook, or clean, or do "adulthood" tasks. They have trouble going to college interviews or navigating their first real job without mom playing advocate and running interference for them. There could be other factors at work, but is it possible the increasing absence of fathers has gotten our kids into this mess? Is the current generation of young people unable to spread their wings and fly because dad is so often the one who helps them cut the apron strings?

2. Marriage Decline

Children of single parents also lack the opportunity to observe a loving relationship between two adults, and that can interfere with their ability to form relationships when they grow up. These losses can be repaired only if they are acknowledged.

Another trending topic in recent years is the inability of

young people to properly date, marry, and raise a family. Theories abound – it's video games, or social media, or the explosion of choices on dating apps that keep young people from settling down like they once did. What if they just don't know how? We learn by example. If the example of a father and mother loving each other is absent, or if those stories of "how I met your mother" aren't there, won't it be much harder for young people to make their way to the altar?

3. Behavioral Issues

Traditional family structures have fostered a division of labor in which the father earns money and the mother cares for children. That balance has become more difficult even for two-parent families, but single parents have far more difficulty. Along with the emotional challenges, this can contribute to a cycle of poverty. Children in single-parent families are likelier to have emotional and behavioral problems, to drop out of school and to be poor as adults.

The worsening behavior of children is a topic of conversation in almost every generation. But with tales of violence and disrespect against teachers proliferating in the last few years, it seems safe to say that the current generation wins the prize for having the most emotional and behavioral problems. Would today's teachers have more time to spend on instruction if they didn't have to deal with the emotional fallout from America's broken homes?

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