

An in Depth Look at Heterosexual Single Parent Dating and the Effects on Children

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How do children often react to their parents dating?

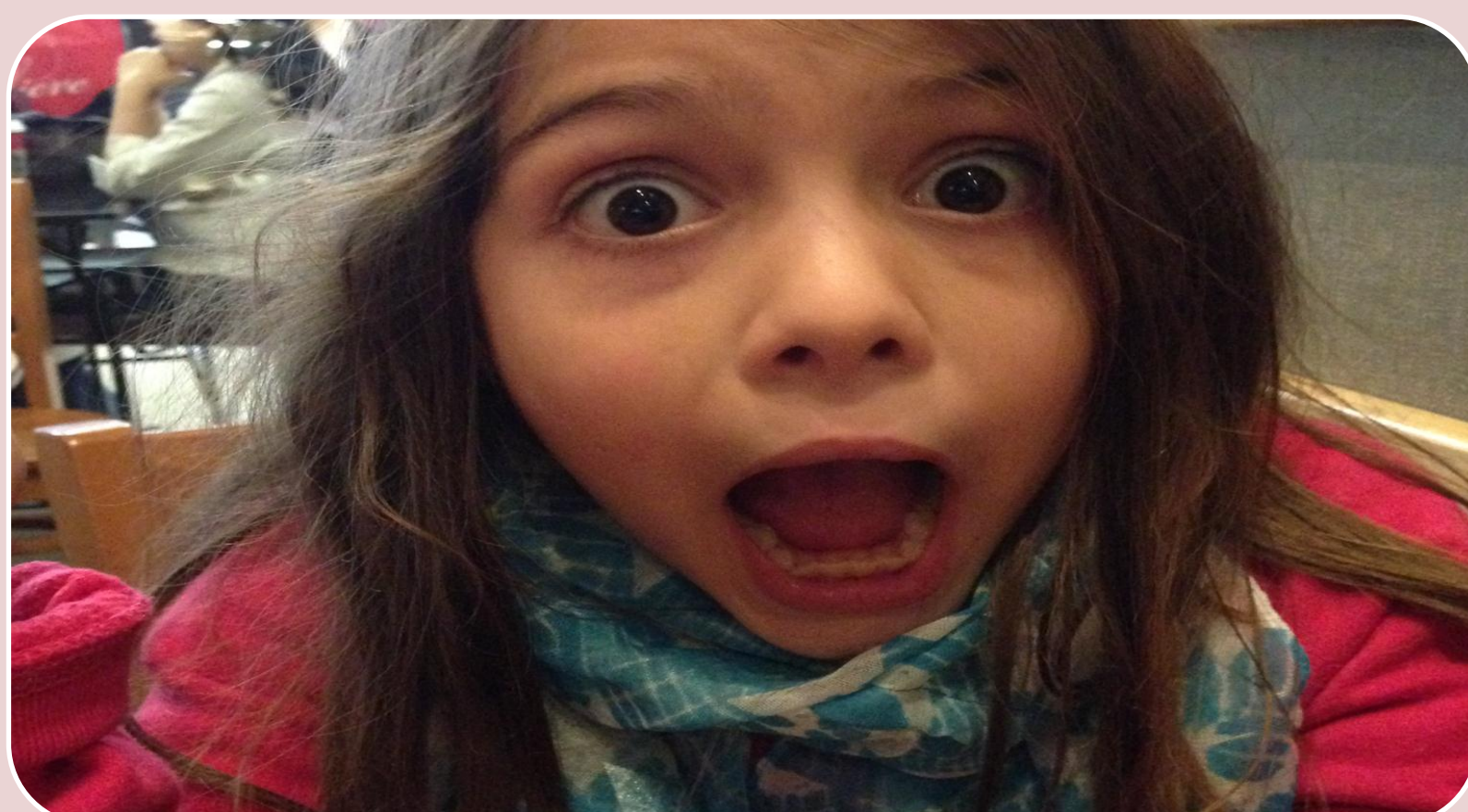
Facts about single parent families:

According to the 2011 U.S. Census:

- Over one quarter of the nation's children live in a single parent household.
- More than 1.5 marriages will take place each year and 60% of those involve children.

Purpose & procedure of research:

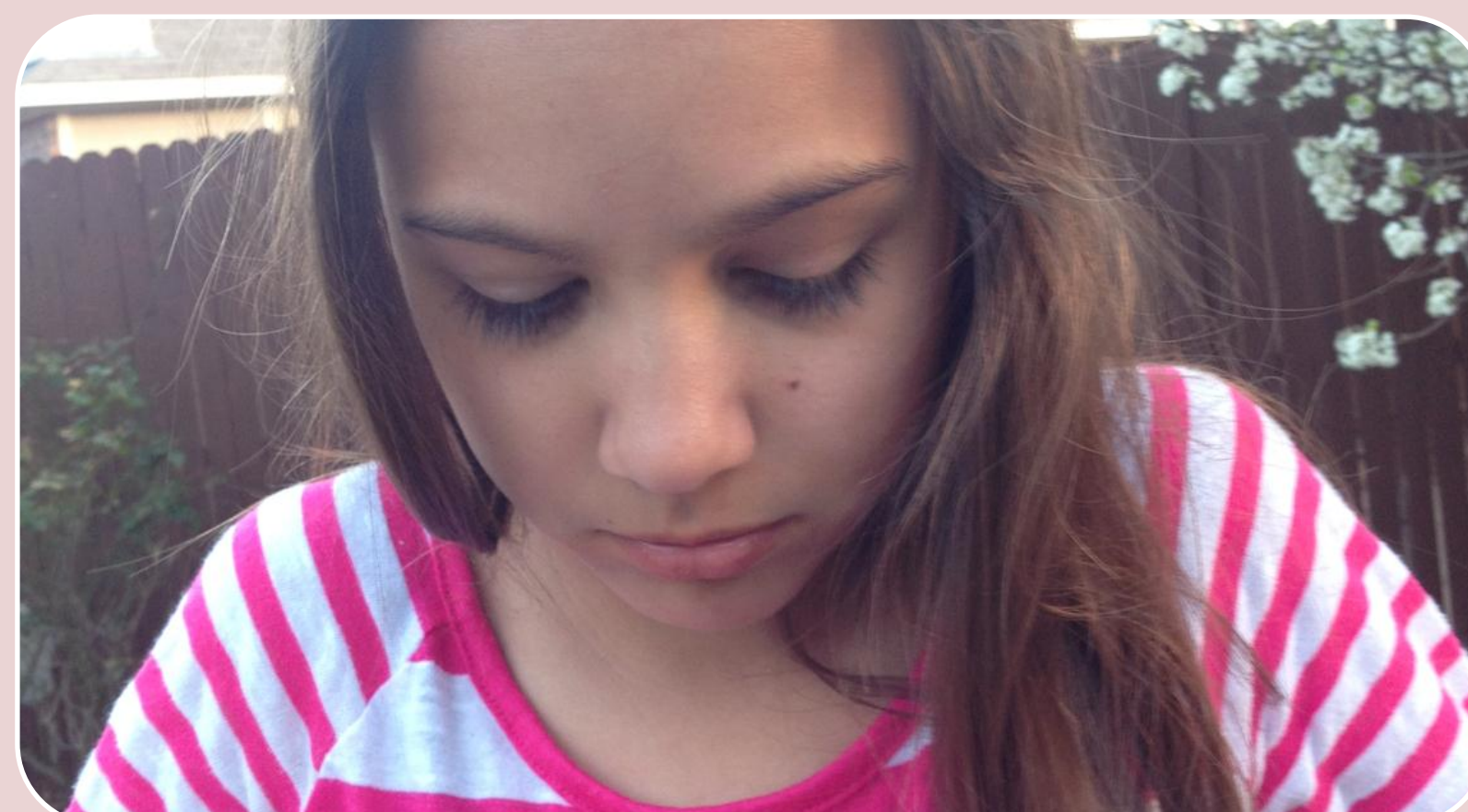
- Peer reviewed journal articles that included interviews from children of single parents.
- Support group curriculum and online resources.



Early Childhood

Common fears:

- The safety of their mother and the likelihood that she will return from the date
- That the new love interest will be scary, raise their voice or give demands
- Their parents will not reconcile



Middle Childhood

- Children see themselves as part of their parent: "we and us"
- View their parent's love interest in a personally beneficial manner
 - This includes seeking what material possessions they can receive or what novel experiences can they benefit from
- From a 12 year old child "...I think maybe she'll like him more than she likes me and she'll forget all about me and stuff"



Teens

- Annoyed at parents
- The resurrection of dating in an adult's life often brings up the same struggles a teen experiences in their dating life
- Boundaries of parental roles may become altered due to parents new dating activities

What moms and dads should keep in mind:

- Children appreciate when their single parent is honest about their agenda with relationships, since the child will be affected.
- Research on children's attitudes of their divorced parent's sexuality, reveals that children are more in tune with their mothers dating habits and sexuality than with their fathers.
- Children have also reported accepting the new love interest if the introduction was made by a family member or family friend rather than the parent dating online.

What does research say about when the appropriate time to start dating is

Research recommends single parents to delay dating for 2 years post divorce -- depending on the ages and adjustment some advice up to 5 years

Others claim 6-12 months is ample time to acclimate to singleness.

The parent's support system acts like an agent of protection for the child and the parent

Where can single parents go for support?

Parents Without Partners: Online resources available

Divorce Care: Offering support to children and the parents

Regardless of age all children agree:

- When parents are dating, regardless of sexual preference, the child views that they are a part of the success or failure of the relationship.
- Children can become the recipients of their parent's emotional tirades and insecurities thus placing the child in the role of supporter.
- "In actuality, the child has experienced two losses – the physical loss of the absent parent and the loss of the parental role of the present parent when generational boundaries are crossed" (Glenwick & Mowrey, 1986, p. 59-60).

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