

CHECKLIST FOR SINGLES DATING SINGLE PARENTS

If you are a single person dating or contemplating dating a single parent then this checklist is for YOU!			
	Yes	No	Unsure
1) I am clear about what I want my relationship to look like.			
2) I am clear about what I am looking for in a life partner.			
3) I understand stepfamily dynamics and my role in step dating.			
4) I am open with my dating partners about my needs and what I'm looking for. I'm equally interested in knowing about their needs and what they are looking for.			
5) I know very little about children _____ I know something about children _____ I have quite a bit of experience w/ children _____ * please check the appropriate box *			
6) I enjoy children and want them in my life.			
7) I have some knowledge of stepfamily dynamics and what is expected of me as a person dating someone with children. If I am not clear, I am open to having this discussion with my partner and/or learning more about this from a reliable source on the subject .			
8) I take responsibility for articulating and meeting my own needs in an assertive manner with out resorting to passive or aggressive tactics. I am prepared to have discussions with my partner about what my needs are, what I am willing to commit to and negotiate around, and what I am not.			
9) I recognize that my needs and wants are only one part of the equation when dating someone with children and that priority will be given to the needs (different from wants) of the children.			
10) I have a strategy for dating that doesn't interfere with my partner's responsibility to parent his/her children and meet their needs.			
11) I have an idea in mind or a timeframe for when I should meet the children.			
12) I have a plan with my partner for observing and enforcing sexual boundaries in our relationship, for the kids' sake. And I'm okay with that.			
13) I have someone else, other than my partner, who I am close to, with whom I can share some of my feelings and concerns, when I am not ready to take those to my partner just yet.			
14) I am prepared to be honest with my partner and end the relationship if and when I decide that it is not what I want			
15) If I decide to continue in this relationship, I am willing to learn more about stepfamily dynamics, in order to optimize the chances of our relationship being successful.			
My questions about dating a single parent with children for relationship coaching include:			
1.			
2.			
3.			

Note: These items are recommended areas for your consideration during coaching, and are not intended to be strict requirements. Each situation is unique and requires individualized strategizing with a knowledgeable professional.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SINGLES DATING SINGLE PARENTS

1. Do the work to determine what your requirements are of a Relationship at this time in your life. Have a vision of the future, what your values are, and the characteristics of the relationship that you are seeking to have. Be clear and honest with yourself. Be willing to walk away from a relationship that does not meet your requirements. Requirements are different from needs, in that they are the components of your relationship that you will not settle for less around. Needs are important but can be negotiable.
2. Take the time to decide if you are truly interested in dating someone with children at this time in your life. Do you like children, want to be around them and have an understanding of what they need? If you are not sure, and if possible, spend time with other children, friends or family; be aware of your comfort level, tolerance level, ability to enjoy them and how you generally feel about the experience. Do you have a plan for your life that eventually involves children? Can you envision yourself in a relationship that involves children, whose needs will often take precedence over your own as the natural course of events in the evolution of your relationship? Wanting children of your own someday is very different than being a stepparent to someone else's children, particularly if you are not ready for this type of commitment and it is essential to be aware of that.
3. Take responsibility early on for articulating your own needs. Don't assume that your partner knows what they are. Not talking about your needs and expectations creates a vacuum for misunderstanding and usually leads to issues between the two of you. It doesn't mean all of your needs will be met in the relationship but it does increase the likelihood that some will. It is also healthy because you alone are responsible for getting your needs met. By sharing this with your partner, you are also determining if there is a good fit between the two of you and what better time to find out than now?
4. Be willing to support your partner in meeting the needs of his/her children, as it relates to your relationship. This means having a clear plan around the following: how and when you see each other, boundaries around sexual conduct, how he/she maintains parenting responsibilities, in particular, alone time with the children, and what your role is with the children.
5. Learn as much as you can about step dynamics which are alive and well in any step dating relationship. It will help you determine if this is the relationship for you. And if you decide to pursue the relationship it will inform you about how to proceed in ways that will safeguard the interests and feelings of everyone involved.
6. Be willing to flag issues in the relationship so that you and your partner can assess if they are issues that you will be able to work through, or ones that are deal breakers for the relationship. If you are ever certain that the relationship is not going to work, then do the right thing and be honest with your partner. There are more people involved in this relationship than just yourselves, and there is more a stake. Step relationships at any level require a great deal of awareness, responsibility and honesty in order to protect the interests and well being of all involved.