

Without Daddy



Sometimes daddies go away. It doesn't much matter why. Maybe it was a tragedy or maybe it was his choice. Maybe the choices were made long before he became Daddy and he couldn't see the consequences.

No matter why, the family left behind is like a puzzle with a missing piece. Little ones miss that piece more than Mommy (and she misses it plenty, even if she's also angry). This is not the life we signed up for, she thinks.

At first, the heartbreak reigns, spoiling every happy moment with thoughts like, "He should be here for this," or "He should be the one holding the baby right now while I hold the camera."

Instead, no one holds a camera because pictures without Daddy seem wrong. The hole where that piece used to fit is so glaringly obvious that nothing works right. Every attempt to live normally feels like an awkward stumble in the dark.

Little ones ask, "Where is Daddy?" And it is followed by silence because Mommy can't think of the right answer. Or they say, "I miss Daddy. I want my Daddy." And that is followed by Mommy's sobs and the most heartfelt, "I know, baby, I know."

But life goes on. Even if we don't like it, we are creatures of change. Even when we think I will never recover from this, we do. The little ones, especially, know how to move on. That is a blessing for them, and Mommy won't take it away with her tears and bitterness.

But Mommy's bitterness lingers still as she struggles to be both parents. It feels like a never-ending shift in a 24-hour café. This is not what I signed up for, she repeats over and over in her head. She feels the weight of the chores, the money and the raising of the children.

The Laughing Mom: humorous tales of motherhood

Written by Susan Pfaltzgraff

Mommy can't be two people, so instead she is two half-people, or less maybe. She is angry at life.

And then she starts to worry that her children are being cheated. They lost their Daddy, and now they are losing Mommy to the grudgeries of day-to-day living. She can point the blame at whoever or whatever took Daddy away, but in the middle of the night when no one is listening, she is admitting to the stars that she is failing. It is her negative attitude that is poisoning the little ones' happiness, and she promises to pull it together ... in the morning.

Many mornings pass and she doesn't fulfill her promise. But then, she finds herself awake again talking to the night, and she realizes that she has finally made the change she wanted. She is finally one whole parent who smiles again. Mommy doesn't have to be both parents. She doesn't even have to be Super Mom. She just has to embrace a new role as The Parent.

"That's it," she realizes in the dark, "I can't fit the traditional mold, so I will carve a new one. The children can be happy, and so can I."

So life goes on and all is well. Daddy becomes a person in old photos that the little ones happily remember. Mommy sighs with a twinge of pain but smiles a heartbeat later. The family is whole again, in a new way. Mommy teaches the children how to laugh and be thankful. She hopes that investment may lead them to their own happy families someday. She hopes they find a way to carve their own molds because life is worth living—with or without Daddy.

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