

## Parenting Advice: Single Mums Having Problems With Sons

Q. "I am a single mother with three children; Caitlin 7, Tom 9, and Liam 11. While Cait is fine, the two boys are causing me problems. Tom behaves well in school, but has learning difficulties. After school though, he turns into a monster, and throws temper tantrums. Liam is rude, not affectionate and just generally hates me. His dad never visits, and Tom's dad died when he was a baby. I'm going crazy and want to know what I'm doing wrong."

A. I'm so sorry you're having a hard time. We all expect parenting to be mostly fun.

First, stop blaming yourself as it won't accomplish a thing. Just like anyone else, you have most likely made lots of bad decisions. It doesn't matter. The big question is what do you do now, to make the best of what you have?

Remember too that your daughter is fine, so your mothering skills must be on the right track.

It is also good news that your younger son is doing well at school. If he is able to settle down and work, even though he has learning difficulties, that is very encouraging. However, you might want to check with the school about how much he is struggling there, as it may be that he is bringing his frustrations home.

Undoubtedly, both boys are feeling the lack of their fathers. This is a tough situation. It most likely is easier for the youngest one. At least his dad died, and didn't purposely leave him. As for the absent dad, there isn't much you can do except be up-front about it. Don't defend or berate him. If you take his side then your son will feel that you are siding with his "loser dad" and not him. If you say anything negative about him, your son will want to defend his dad.

Remember that you cannot change the children. You can only change yourself. So, in what ways could you be different that would make life more peaceful for yourself? Surprisingly, if you can find ways to be more positive yourself, it will probably result in the kids also being more positive. Conversely, if you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always got.

Most of all, believe in yourself and your children. Don't look back, look to the future and decide how you want it to be. Think in positive terms i.e. don't think about what you don't want, or what you worry about, think instead about what desired outcomes you do want. Don't expect to get there in one day, but look for tiny little steps that will gradually take you there. And then do what it takes to get there. It will take a bit of effort at first, but then, living like you do now also takes effort. Read what you can. Talk to other parents. You will get there if you are prepared to make the effort.

### About the Author

Dr. Noel Swanson specializes in helping parents with their children's behaviors. To read more of his expert [parenting advice](#) go to his website and check out his hugely popular GOOD CHILD Guide manual, packed full of extremely helpful [parenting advice](#).

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