



# When Parents Date...

Are you a single parent on the dating scene? Do you worry about the impact dating will have on your child? Do you wonder when and how you should introduce your new partner to your child?

**Children need to FEEL safe and BE safe when this happens.**

## DATING DO'S & DON'TS:

**DO** respect your child's feelings and opinions about your new friend.

**DO** put your children's interests first.

**DO** allow your child time to express his or her feelings naturally. Never suggest that a child kiss or hug a friend unless they want to.

**DO** let your new friend know your family safety rules, especially about touching. Tell him or her that your children have been taught to tell if any of these rules are broken no matter what.

**DO** ask your children if they like the new person and why or why not.

**DO** watch your children's reactions for clues to how they feel.

**DO** make surprise visits when you have left them alone.

**DON'T** force your child to like a person just because you do.

**DON'T** completely ignore your child's negative reaction to a person. You can often learn something about a person's character from his interaction with children.

**DON'T** leave your children alone with a new friend until you are sure you know him or her well enough.

## HELPFUL DATING TIPS:

**1. Do not expose your children to every casual date.** If you introduce your children to everyone you date, they may take away a small feeling of loss each time it doesn't last longer than a few dates. Children tend to believe that things happen because of what they do. They may feel responsible for the end of your relationship. So it is best to be selective, introducing your children to only the people with whom you feel you have a serious chance of a future together.

**2. Introduce your children to your new relationship slowly.** When you plan to introduce your children to your new partner, do so under the best possible circumstances. A short meeting is always best and it should not include the other person's children if they have any. Plan to do something that your children will enjoy. You can even make suggestions for conversation to your partner in advance in order to help things run smoothly.

**3. Give your children space to get used to the new person.** Many parents feel anxious for their children to like their new significant other and try very hard to make this happen. But be patient; no one likes to be forced to like someone else. By giving your children space to develop a relationship at their own pace, the end result will be greater acceptance.

**REMEMBER: Your commitment to your child is LIFELONG, and EVERYTHING that you do—including what you do with other adults in your life—affects your child.** Make sure that when dating, you always put your child's interests first. Take time to listen to your child's feelings about your new relationship without being defensive or giving explanations. Give your child adequate space and time to adjust to this transition.

**Parenting can be tough, but asking for help doesn't have to be.**

If you need more help dealing with dating and other parenting challenges, reach out!

Visit us online at [www.scanva.org](http://www.scanva.org)

Call 1-800-CHILDREN

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