

### CHAPTER 5: WHEN A MOTHER IS ALONE

This chapter has something for every mother, whether you are a single mum or in a partnership.

Rob Parsons says this about being a single parent:


*"Nobody believes more strongly than I that, if possible, it's best for a child to have a mother and a father. But it's sad if, in making that basic point, we make single parents not only feel second-class but suggest that they are doomed to failure ... I believe they have the hardest job on this earth to face."*


#### 1. The perfect parent?

There is no such thing as a perfect parent. We all make mistakes as we navigate the route through motherhood. Whether or not you are a single mum, stop right now and take a look in a mirror, and say to yourself:


"I'm not perfect, but I am OK. I'm doing the best I can for my children and we will be OK."


This is true, even in prison. You can still do the best you can, to be the best mum you can.


 Can you relate to any of the stories on pages 64–67?


 Write your own story. You can write it like an essay, or draw it as a timeline. Draw a long line from birth to your current age and mark off the points that are significant to you in your life. Briefly describe why that time is significant. Feel free to use colour if it helps to make certain events, or a period of time, stand out (you may like to use a notebook for this exercise).

Read Lynda Hunter's story on pages 67-71.

 Underline in the text or write down anything that you relate to and that gives you hope and encouragement.

 Describe what you were feeling as you read her story?

 Write down Lynda's ideas for spending time with her children that cost very little. Can you add any ideas of your own?

 Did you find any other wisdom in her story that might help you or a friend?

## 2. Forgiveness

One thing that really stands out is Lynda's decision to forgive her husband.

This is not something that is easy to do, especially when you've been hurt very badly and/or you have been in an abusive relationship. Believe it or not, forgiveness is a choice. You can choose to forgive, or to hold onto resentment and un-forgiveness.

Choosing to forgive does not mean the other person is let off the hook, or that you have to welcome them back into your life. What it does mean is, that in choosing to forgive, you let go of anger, resentment, pain, hurt and all the other negative emotions. In doing so, you find a sense of peace and freedom that allows you to move on. You are letting go of the right for revenge. It is not something you do for the other person; it is something you do for yourself. It is not a sign of weakness.

*"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."*

Mahatma Ghandi

It takes a strong person to feel pain head on and then forgive the person who caused the pain. It's not easy. It takes time and is often a process of choosing to forgive several times before you really feel that sense of peace and freedom; rather than the anger, resentment and pain that previously occupied you.


## Putting it into action

Is there anybody you need to forgive?

On a separate sheet of paper, write a list of the hurtful things that person has done to you. When you feel ready, tear the paper into tiny pieces and throw them in the bin. This represents you letting go and choosing not to feel the resentment and the negative emotion associated with the offences. You are saying to yourself:

*"I choose to let this go. I want to be let go of this hurt from the past and any power it has over me. I want to be free to move into my future with peace and joy."*

Sometimes we need professional help to work through these difficult emotions and memories. Where could you go for further support?

 Forgiveness includes forgiving yourself. What might you need to forgive yourself for?

## 3. Moving forward

*"Forgiveness liberates the soul, it removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon."* Nelson Mandela

Now, turn to the positives in your life. Write a list which begins: I am thankful for ...

Marina Contacuzino, is a journalist who looked for stories of hope and encouragement in the midst of all the terror and pain of the Iraq War in 2003. She collected many examples of forgiveness from different situations around the world. She has called this collection *The Forgiveness Project*. We'll give her the last word:

*"It is important not to let the pain of the past dictate the path of the future."*

### Next time ...

We'll look at Chapter 6 and explore how to be a good mother even from a distance.

