# Why You Should Join a Single Father Support Group

By Matt Haviland

If a single dad I know named Jon didn’t have a single father support group, “I wouldn’t have a place to go,” he said. In 1960, approximately 300,000 single fathers lived in the United States. Today, there are more than 2.6 million. Personally, I consider a single father to be any man who has full or primary custody of his children, is a non-custodial parent, or has children but is currently unable to see them. With this many families in need of community, it is vital to keep establishing single father support groups across the nation.

I became a single dad in 2006 and quickly realized just how few resources were out there for guys like me. So in 2008, I formed a small group out of my living room. Eventually, it grew into a national organization. What I know about single father groups is based on a decade’s worth of my personal experiences leading one. Here’s why you need to be part of a single father group.

## They are a refuge.

Several years back, I surveyed our attendees at a single-parent conference. I asked both single moms and single dads what their greatest need is. The options included both tangible and intangible needs. Want to take a guess at what topped the list? It was not financial stability, stable housing, or reliable transportation. The number two answer was a strong and stable community. Number one? Emotional support. A single father support group can provide both of these. In doing so, the dads are able to do life with others in similar situations. A good group leader can help cultivate emotional support. And though they may feel alone, single dads discover they are not—and that brings a lot of hope.

## They help you form new friendships.

About half the guys in our group were divorced and the other half had never been married. One gentleman was a widower. The common bond was all our lives had changed. As our group grew and morphed over the years, many of us built bonds that have lasted. The guys started hanging out with each other outside of group time. For many, they were coming from a couple’s world and now found themselves the odd man out among their married friends. Others had friends who were still single but did not have any kids. Those friends had schedules that allowed them more freedom in a way that was not compatible with that of a single parent. These small groups are so important because forming new friendships in a time of crisis can really help someone get through it.

## They meet needs specific to single dads.

*“A single father group may not be therapy, but it can be therapeutic.”*

Single father groups meet unique needs. They help when you’re dealing with [divorce](https://www.allprodad.com/rebuilding-life-after-divorce/), custody struggles, [co-parenting,](https://www.imom.com/4-tools-help-child-transition-between-parents/) child support, or other financial challenges. A general men’s group may touch on topics that are applicable to all fathers, but not on topics unique to a single dad. We live in such a hurried and busy world; something is always demanding our time. For a single dad, the pressure to perform and complete tasks can be elevated all the more. A single father support group carves out regular and designated time when those who attend can talk through what’s affecting them most. A simple lesson or conversation can be a massive relief. A single father group may not be therapy, but it can be therapeutic.

## Other Suggestions

Can’t find a single father group? Then start one! I suggest a leader or co-leaders who are in a strong and healthy place mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. This is important because guys who join the group may carry in a lot of baggage like addictions, emotional turmoil, and bitterness. Know what resources are available in your area and use those to refer out when appropriate. Lastly, hold to three foundational principles for the overall health of your group: Meet regularly, respect confidentiality, and never slam the moms. Even with all the challenges that may ensue, be assured that being in a single father group is one of the most rewarding opportunities.

Read the original article and others articles here: <https://www.allprodad.com/join-single-father-support-group/>

BIO:

Matt Haviland is the Men’s Center Director for Alpha Grand Rapids (AGR) which operates two centers: Alpha Women’s Center and Alpha Men’s Center. He is married to his amazing wife, Christy, and is the father of a wonderful teenage daughter. He and Christy are currently in the adoption process as well. Matt has been working with fathers since 2008 through a variety of organizations and partnerships. He joined the team at Alpha Grand Rapids at the beginning of 2021 shortly before the new Men’s Center facility was completed and opened as one of the first standalone buildings solely serving fathers in the United States. As Men’s Center Director, Matt empowers staff members and volunteers to walk alongside fathers and equip them to be the best man, partner, and father possible. He is deeply passionate about discipling men and understands how valuable fathers are to their families and communities. A native of Grand Rapids, MI, Matt enjoys family time, reading, playing golf, and almost all outdoor recreation

Matt Haviland is also the author of [A Father's Walk: A Christian-Based Resource for Single Fathers](https://www.amazon.com/FatherS-Walk-Christian-Based-Resource-Fathers-ebook/dp/B0792KF4VZ/ref%3Dsr_1_2?keywords=matt+haviland&qid=1578686120&s=books&sr=1-2) and the co-author of [The Daddy Gap](https://www.westbowpress.com/en/bookstore/bookdetails/602638-The-Daddy-Gap). For more information, email Matt at afatherswalk@gmail.com.