

## Different ways work for different families



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IS SUPERPOP**

**Y**OU PROBABLY CAN think of lots of different family types in your neighborhood, each one not any less successful than the other. It seems to be magic, imagination and the sensitivity of the family members that makes each one work. Defining the family is some what complex and beyond the scope of this article. We can take a look at some family types that are around town.

I can remember appearing on the Midday Live show in the early '70s with host Lee Leonard. I shared the stage with Sol Stein, publisher of Stein and Day. Leonard questioned me about my paternity leave and the extensive time I stayed at home with my two daughters. Stein didn't spend nearly as much time at home with his children. However, he had an interesting response. Although his time at home was limited, he more than made up for it by taking his family with him on the many business trips he took. Stein had an

arrangement that worked for his family, and I had an arrangement that worked for my family.

### Single parents

Did you know 16 percent of our families are headed by a single parent and this number is about doubled in the New York City area? Further, 54 percent of our children that were born in 1977 will spend some time in a single-parent household by the time they are 18 years old. We know that children are going to feel angry, hurt, offended and sad over mom and dad breaking up.

Mature parents can make a divorce easier on the children. A single-parent family does not mean that the children will grow up to be neurotic or delinquent. Neurotic and delinquent children come from homes where little if any communication occurs between family members and a psychological void exists. Single parent families can be productive for all concerned.

Work has a direct relationship on the stability of a family. Who will or who can work in the family is a major concern. Often, the wife must be the breadwinner and the husband must assume home responsibilities. This pattern of home life, if accepted and agreed upon by both parties, will not negatively effect the children, rather, offer them some stimulating insight as to how adults can be bold and innovative in attempting to do things differently in order that they (the children) can have the necessary financial backing to stay in school, have clothes on their backs and receive adequate medical care.

Teachers are being laid off by the thousands these days. Parents who are teachers may find it necessary to take one full-time teaching position between them—one set of benefits, teaching half time each and sharing equally in the tasks at home. This kind of family pattern can really take the misery out of doing the household chores.

### I gotta be me

A line from a Sammy Davis Jr. hit, but also a reflection of what each of us feels. When I was growing up and ready for college, my mother tried to persuade me to take a job on Wall Street. This represented a secure position, reg-

ular employment hours and no worries about the future. This was the way of my father, of course, and there would be no reason why my employment status should be any different. I was different though. I knew I didn't have to worry about providing the basics for the family. I would always work—at something. I was secure with a good education, a nicely oiled mind and an extraordinary ability to be different and be needed. I didn't care about making loans, paying bills or quitting one job and taking another. I still don't think much about it.

This thinking I have does effect my family. I am teaching my two daughters to deal with greater possibilities in life. To speak out, not disrespectfully, but to speak out and question what is all around: this makes my mom and dad do a double take. My parents gave me love and an education. I turned out differently in many respects. I am giving to my children and they very well may turn out to be different. As the generations move on, it is difficult to see a family type duplicated. You do see new and unique family characteristics developing, each very capable of supporting the young person in his or her drive to be a good person. Indeed, new family types are always in the making and neighborhoods will reflect this.