

STRICTLY PERSONAL



THE PARENTING LIFE OF **TANIA BABB**

Renowned artist and single mom to India (five). Tania Babb's ceramic sculptures are in great demand both locally and abroad



When I discovered I was pregnant I felt humbled and bewildered. The pregnancy was unplanned. I had only been in the relationship for three months. My father had fairly advanced cancer. Life and death felt too close. With this, an enormous sense of responsibility to my child and myself, welled up in me.

I decided to parent solo because I felt I could offer her a stable, love-filled home more successfully on my own. I have never regretted this decision. I also knew that the relationship with her father would not last and I didn't want to put her through the trauma of a break-up later, when it would be more disruptive.

The biggest challenges for me as a single parent are bank statements and counting pennies! Probably the most fundamental challenge is integrating motherhood with earning a living. The time available to devote to working is less and the expenses

are more. This is a tricky one and I suspect it's a strong motivation to remain in an unsatisfactory relationship, but I believe a tense and unfulfilled relationship is more harmful to a child than her having to wear hand-me-downs. Her father will always be her father and I expect they will have a very close relationship one day. The door is always open for him to visit, which he does from time to time. I have tried to keep a close relationship with her father's mother as I feel this family is a part of her and she needs to have a connection with them.

On the upside, single parenting has many advantages. You have an unADULterated relationship with your child. As a single parent you get to appreciate the essence of this relationship without having to negotiate an intimate partnership at the same time. Emotionally it is purer. Parenting techniques never

have to be negotiated. You do what feels right for you. The child doesn't get mixed messages. There is probably more consistency because of this. A child will often pick up tensions between parents and react to them. The lack of tension you have by being solo is the best thing about being a single parent. The downside to this is that when your child goes through behavioural glitches, there is no-one else to blame!

Having a child has taught me that I'm capable of much more than I ever dreamed possible and that I can love much more than I ever dreamed possible.

If only I could spend less time running the house and my business and more time doing puzzles and reading stories.

The best gift to give a mother is time.

I know it's all worth it when she puts her little hand in mine. □