

Single Parenthood, Small Spaces, and Kid Adventures

Click on the links to plan your excursion with your kids in Southern New Jersey!

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Oftentimes during a divorce or after a divorce, a change of residence occurs for either both or one spouse and it's not necessarily what was originally planned, to say the least. I found myself as a single parent having to move into a much different living arrangement. Essentially, and for a myriad of reasons, I was the first one to move out of our big, beautiful house.

For me, the same standard of living which I had experienced with two incomes during my marriage was no longer an option. Further, the stress of paying an astronomical mortgage was one of the many factors leading to my divorce. I had no desire to ever have an overwhelming mortgage again and liked the idea of lower monthly mortgage payments. Since I wanted to keep my kids in a private school that even had daycare for my toddler, there were real limitations to what I could afford post divorce. I decided to opt for security and more luxury and location instead of space. I wanted my 5-year old daughter and my 3-year-old son to move to a safe environment and continue with their expensive day care and private school. It was very important to me to be as close to my kids' school as possible. I already knew the early morning challenges of handling two toddlers and preparing them for school and day care as a working parent. Whenever I tried to rush my 3-year-old son, he seemed to move more slowly.

So, we moved to a new suburban town and into a tiny two-bedroom condominium complex that actually had a door man and that was mostly inhabited by senior citizens. My two young children had a multitude of grandparent-like admirers who showered them with attention. And, I felt basically safe. With regard to the lack of space, I just pretended I was living in NYC. Further, as a single parent, since I had chosen a thick-walled, sixth-floor condominium, worrying about the weather, raking up the leaves, snowstorms and shoveling, or fixing a roof was obsolete. Instead, my time was freed up to do lots of interesting things with my kids.

Ironically, my kids became quite sophisticated in a way that I had not imagined. Good things come out of hard experiences. With no space in our home, guess what my objective was: outside adventure that was both fun, educational and tiring so bedtime was easier. So with no back yard, we became experts as to which neighborhoods offered the best [playgrounds \(click here then backspace to return to reading\)](#). The three of us would go to different [libraries](#) (and come home with around fifty library books which of course were never returned on time). One of my favorite libraries in Southern NJ is [The Cherry Hill Library](#). And many libraries have Pajama Days where kids come to read in their pajamas. We would go to museums like the [Garden State Discovery Museum](#) located at 2040 Springdale Road, Cherry Hill, NJ, 08003, which has a great Dinosaurium and is open until 8:30 on Saturdays. If you join there you also get in for free at the [Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge](#), located at 4 Sawmill Road, Medford, NJ. One of

our favorites was the [Please Touch Museum](#) located at Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park, 4231 Avenue of the Republic, Philadelphia, PA, which is wonderful for toddlers because they get to touch everything. If we were just looking for physical activity, one of my favorite places to go was the [Mt. Laurel YMCA](#) where adults can even run around on a track that is elevated above a basketball court where kids can play. Adults can watch their kids and run at the same time. They have babysitting, also. A dream for a single parent. A lot of these activities cost money, but instead of giving my kids only toys, which took up too much space, we would get tickets instead.

We would go to events like the upcoming **“Big Cat Country Exhibit”** at the [Turtle Back Zoo](#). My kids' teachers praised them for their animal expertise which they acquired from frequent trips to both the [Cape May Zoo](#) and the [Philadelphia Zoo](#). Our threesome would review newspapers and websites that had kids' events sections, and lot of the events were for free. For instance, a good freebie was the local Police Department exhibit where they bring their [police dogs](#) and have them perform all kinds of tricks. We would go to websites like [www.gokidsnj.com](#), [www.visitsouthjersey.com](#), [www.southjerseykidsconnection.com](#), [www.kidsguide.com](#), or [www.thekidpost.com/events](#), and [www.jerseyarts.com](#). We would go to a lot of museums like the [University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology](#) where we would look at mummies and royal tombs or the [Adventure Aquarium](#) in Camden, NJ, and learn all about our sea creatures. We would go to [Color Me Mine](#) at 910 Haddonfield-Berlin Road, Voorhees, NJ, and make creations out of clay and then paint it. If we didn't want to drive we would take the [New Jersey High Speed Line](#) and the [New Jersey Transit Trains and Busses](#) for such excursions. We certainly were not bored.

Despite some of the wonderful times we had, things certainly were not easy. Apartment living brought real hardships with regard to my ability to discipline, and my rambunctious son had nowhere to run and would often bother the neighbors with his loud temper tantrums. Had these temper tantrums occurred in a big house with a lot of space to absorb the sound, it would have been a lot different than a child screaming or crying in a small apartment. Furthermore, my 5-year-old daughter was always subjected to the tantrums since she had no space of her own. Luckily, my next-door neighbor to the left of us had been a single parent herself and she was filled with compassion for me and my predicament and even shared some of her experiences with me. I always feared that we would be asked to leave for being too noisy, but the walls were thick and a lot of the tenants had less than perfect hearing so we navigated our way through.

Sometimes I became so desperate in trying to distract my son that I found myself out in the hallway playing running games with him. I would tell him that he's a racehorse and would time him while he ran down the hall and back. Or, I found myself exhausted from playing “airplane” – a game I devised in which I would lift them up in the air atop the bottom of my two feet. We also played the “animal game” where they would pretend they were an animal and I would guess what animal they were because we had nothing else to do, space was limited, and the weather was not

conducive to going outside. However, I found myself allowing my children to do things that I wouldn't normally just to maintain my own sanity as a single parent.

For instance, they loved going into the bathroom to "make potions." They would wastefully pour all of my shampoos and liquid soaps into small plastic cups, bottles, spoons and bowls. At the same time they would also spill it all over the bathtub, the sink, the toilet, and the floor. As long as they weren't swallowing it, I hate to admit it, but I didn't care. It would preoccupy them for as long as what seemed like two hours. I was finally getting a break. It wasn't as if I had a spouse who would take over when I was tired.

A lot of time has now passed. My son and daughter are in their twenties! I am remarried and my husband and I are empty-nesters. Overall, I think my children look back on our tiny apartment life as a memorable time in which our family was snugly reorganized. I know it was cramped and limited in a lot of ways, but our love for each other, and quest for outside adventure, carried us through. The presence of our elderly neighbors long ago brought a new sense of security during a time of drastic transition and division. Somehow we adapted to our new life and shared an intimacy that we most likely would not have shared in a big, beautiful and expensive house.