

Surviving the Holidays During a Divorce

The holidays can be a stressful time of year. It seems as if the period between Halloween and New Years Day is one big blur - filled with non-stop shopping, parties, family obligations and more. It's hard enough to handle even when everything seems to be going well. But, for someone experiencing divorce it can be a sad, bittersweet time.

FINANCIAL CONCERNS, EMOTIONAL ISSUES AND FAMILY OBLIGATIONS VIE FOR ATTENTION

The whole world seems to be filled with the sights and sounds of the season. Everyone around you appears to "be of good cheer" while you feel overwhelmed by the whole thing. So, how do you manage expectations - yours and those of everyone around you - without spending too much of your financial and emotional energy? Here are some tips to help you survive the "most wonderful time of the year" and come out of it relatively unscathed:

Financial Aspects - Plan ahead by including a realistic amount for holiday gifts in your budget. Make a list of recipients and allocate a portion of your budget for each person on your list.

- Need to cut corners? Give gifts you make yourself (such as baked goods-sharing your time or photo ideas-sharing your memories).
- Shop pre-season sales or pick up items during year so you won't feel the entire financial impact at the end of the year.
- Save on postage to out-of-town recipients by sending gift certificates.
- You may have to revisit your gift list and send a homemade card with a few activity photos and a heartfelt letter instead.

Emotional Aspects - Finding this Holiday season to be exceptionally painful? You are not alone. Here are some things to do in order to lessen the feelings of loss and depression:

- Establish new traditions that replace the old ones.
- Explore new ways to express your gratitude to strangers, friends and family members alike.
- Close your eyes and listen to the sounds, see the sights as if looking through a child's eyes, notice what you would miss if you didn't observe these things.
- Volunteer - celebrate being alive by giving of yourself, sharing your talents with others less fortunate. This sets a good example for your children.

Sharing the Children – It is best to discuss and agree on a Holiday schedule long before the Holidays arrive to alleviate stress, friction, resentment and anger. Above all, don't ruin the Holidays for your children by being negative. This will only make the children feel uncomfortable and you'll feel guilty later. Some ideas:

- Attempt to make transitions as pleasant and smooth as possible by focusing on the positive aspects (Won't this be fun?).
- Keep what is best for the children in the forefront.
- Allow for flexibility when unforeseen situations arise.
- Keep adult discussions private; do not pry, compare or confront your children regarding issues with your spouse.

Take care of yourself – The last thing your children, family and friends want to do is spend time over the holiday season with an over-stressed, sleep deprived person. It's also the last thing you need to do to yourself.

- Make sure to budget time for yourself.
- Set aside enough time to get a good night's sleep and a power nap from time to time.
- Stock up on good healthy food so you don't spend the holidays in a caffeine and sugar induced haze.
- If you feel like crying or need support, solicit an empathetic friend who will listen.
- If you are absolutely miserable, talk to your therapist.

Remember, you are no good to anyone unless you are good to yourself!

About the author:

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