



Holiday Help for the Single Parent

Whether you love or hate the holidays, a divorce can add new challenges to celebrating.

Here are some suggestions to help manage the holiday season, and make it as pleasant as it can be for you and your children.

CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE Children are perceptive and smart. They will take their cues from you. Put your best face forward, which is not to say to be false, but to keep adult issues adult and let your children be children. No negative comments about your ex or his/her family, or the gifts they give, or how they choose to celebrate the holidays. If you can't say anything nice, then don't say anything, and yes, facial expressions, sighs and mumbling under your breath count.

TIME Make sure your children are on time to events. If they are spending one part of a holiday with you and another part of the holiday with mom, dad, grandparents, or other extended fami-

ly, it is important that your children arrive on time. It is disruptive and disrespectful to both your children and the family to be late.

APPROPRIATE DRESS If they are attending an event that requires appropriate attire and cleanliness make sure they show up that way. Showing up in pajamas with unbrushed hair and teeth is not okay. It is they who are embarrassed and only serves to make things worse for everyone, including you.

FOOD This goes with being properly dressed. No one, especially a child, will do well on an empty stomach or one filled with sugar. Set your children up for success and a happy holiday season by keeping to a healthy and timely eating schedule.

REST FOR THE WEARY Holidays can be late nights and early mornings. Be sure your children get enough rest. Keeping them up till midnight with you when they need to be at their dads the next morning only makes for a miserable day for them.

SCHEDULE Over scheduling is hard on everyone. Shuttling back and forth between families is emotional and time-consuming. Allow for quality time to be spent with each family and let your kids fully participate at each event. One really isn't more important. They all are important to your children.

Things you can do to make your own holiday better:

MAKE PLANS Do make plans. Invite yourself if you have to; let your friends and family know you need support through this time.

VOLUNTEER It could be a good time to volunteer at a charity, wrap presents for underprivileged children, or work in a soup kitchen.

CREATE NEW TRADITIONS Traditions are the threads that hold childhood memories together. If you won't be together on a specific holiday, celebrate some other time. Cook together. Bake cookies. Go apple picking, or make something up, children love to be creative.

The key to successful holidays for the separated or divorced family is remembering this is about your children, not you. The holidays are not the time to compete with your ex (not that there is really ever a time to do that); however, the holidays seem to bring out the best and the worst in us. Keep your children's well-being as your priority, and your children will have good memories to share with their children one day. ☺

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