

Ten Tips for the Holidays

Provided with permission from Dr. Robert E. Emery Ph.D., author of 'The Truth about Children and Divorce'

1. **Remember the holidays are not all about you.**

Your children deserve their celebrations even if you feel cheated out of yours. Encourage them to have a blast with their other parent, even if you can't stand the prospect of being alone.

2. **Get into the spirit of the season.**

This is a time of giving, forgiving, and fresh starts. Turn Scrooge's emotional lessons about holidays past, present, and yet to come into New Year's resolutions about letting go of anger and treasuring all you have -- despite all you have lost.

3. **Another lesson from Scrooge: Love means far more than money.**

Your time, attention, and emotional presence are much more important to your children than lavish gifts. You may be short on money but you can be long on love.

4. **The holidays are not a competition with your ex or for your children.**

Teach your children the true meaning of the holidays, not the meaninglessness of materialism.

5. **Communicate and coordinate with your children's other parent.**

A brief email, telephone message, or conversation can insure that you don't duplicate presents or plan back-to-back feasts for stuffed and confused children. Ten minutes now can save days (or weeks) of fuming later. (If communicating with your ex takes more than 10 minutes, you probably are getting into issues better left for another time.)

6. **Do the details.**

Work out exactly where your children will be during what times, and when, where, and how exchanges will take place. Your children will feel more secure, and all of you will avoid frustration and disappointment.

7. **Celebrate with your children's other parent.**

Consider celebrating part of the holidays together with your children's other parent, especially if your separation is fairly recent. Some people are shocked when divorced families celebrate holidays or birthdays together. Go ahead and shock them!

8. **Set up a plan for next year now.**

If you went through the agony of 11th hour negotiations this year, set up a plan for next year now (or after New Year's). Everyone will be happier knowing what is coming, and avoiding conflict on the eve of the holidays.

9. **Plan in advance with your extended family.**

Work things out in advance with your own extended family too, whether that means that you say "no," spend the holidays a little differently than usual, or ask for your family's understanding and help.

10. **Establish traditions with your children.**

Establish traditions with your children, even new ones that may be off time or different from past rituals. Your kids may not remember the details of 2004, but year-in, year-out traditions will stay with them for a lifetime.
