

# Holidays for Co-Parents

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## Tips and Tricks

Holidays are for the children and they should be center stage.

Your children will have a range of feelings this holiday, give them permission to love their other parent

Take care of yourself, be kind to yourself and be flexible

Slow the pace and make travel fun

## Tips for the Holidays

The upcoming holidays are important and usually stressful times for families that have separated or divorced or who are in the process. How do you protect your children from the stress? Children have good memories of previous holidays and will feel the loss of their family, especially during holidays. They are also vulnerable and will remember holidays for a long time, so you want to make those memories as positive as possible.

Here are some tips:

- Put a stop to the trash talk- often your family and friends will try to show you support by bad- mouthing your children's other parent. Your kids identify with each of you, any criticism of either parent, they apply to themselves.
- Share the kids- even when it's "your time" with them. Let your children talk to or see their other parent on the holidays you have them. They miss their other parent, especially on the holidays.
- Communicate, coordinate, and be flexible. Communicate with your co-parent early about the holiday schedule so things will go smoothly. Be very specific on dates and times. Send the agreement to each other via email so there will not be any misunderstandings later. Be prepared to make changes according to the kids needs.
- Make gift arrangements. Talk about gifts you plan to give the children so there is not duplication. Avoid trying to one up the other parent with a better gift.
- Ask your kids what they want. Talk to your children about what they would like to do during the holidays and who they would like to see.
- Stop-Look-Listen. When you find yourself getting upset with your co-parent or children, use the Stop-Look-Listen method. Stop yourself from reacting with anger by taking deep breaths, making yourself aware of your feelings. Look at all your options before responding and choose which will best prevent conflict from escalating. Listen to your better nature and choose the response that shows understanding, wisdom, and kindness.
- Learn to use "I" messages. When you have a complaint you want to voice to your co-parent, use an "I" message instead of blaming.
- Slow the pace. If you are rushed to have your children see all their relatives in a limited time, slow down. You may not be able to do this if it causes more stress on your children. Chances are, they are still grieving the loss of their family and may need a slower pace.