

TIPS FOR SURVIVING

The First Holiday Season Following a Divorce

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Going through a divorce is challenging at any time of the year, but it can be especially difficult during the holiday season.



For recently divorced individuals, the holidays can bring into focus many emotional (and financial) challenges that they may not have recognized before, such as missed family traditions, dividing time with the kids, the financial challenges of gift giving and the stress of event planning. I believe the key to navigating this difficult “first” is in taking the time to evaluate and articulate what’s truly important about the holidays, and making decisions to preserve the spirit of the season.

For more than two decades, I have worked with clients to help them navigate both the emotional and financial aspects of life transitions, and I have noticed that the holiday season is an especially difficult time for those experiencing a major life change. If you are facing the holidays after a divorce, I hope the following tips will help you find joy in your “new normal.”

Find Joy in New Traditions

Holiday traditions create treasured memories that last a lifetime. It’s often difficult to let go of traditions after a divorce, but it is also a great opportunity to evaluate what is truly important to you and create new traditions accordingly. Did your ex-spouse make a fabulous Christmas meal,

but you can hardly boil water? Order carry-out from a local restaurant and have a picnic next to a roaring fire. Missing the hustle and bustle of a house full of people? Invite friends over. Having everyone bring food to share creates an instant party with little hassle and time to spend with each other.

Know that it’s Not the Actual Day that Matters

The holiday is not defined by a specific date on the calendar. It’s time spent with your loved ones that truly matters. Try to keep this in mind if your children are spending the holiday with your ex. Celebrating before or after the actual holiday can give you more time together without having to shuffle to family members’ events.

But, don’t spend the actual day alone, either. Make a plan in advance to spend the holiday with family or friends. Have a friend who has also gone through a divorce? Reach out to see if she has room for one more at her holiday table. Even if she has her kids with her this year, you may be able to return the favor in the future. (New holiday traditions, remember?)

Give the Gift of Time

Another challenge many recent divorcees face is not being able to spend as much on holiday events and gifts as in previous years. Again, it’s all about focusing on what’s most important during the holiday season. Did your past holiday traditions include an elaborate Nutcracker performance with the kids? Many local dance studios and community colleges put on excellent performances for a fraction of the cost. Are your

children used to extravagant gifts under the tree? Talk to them in advance about what they can look forward to and what not to expect. Planning the holiday together and getting on the same page can make a big difference. Focus on the gift of spending time together.

The holidays are an emotionally charged time for many of us, but they are also a time to count our blessings and spend time with those we love. Be patient with yourself and find joy where you can. After all, a new year is about to begin, and with it a fresh start and endless new possibilities.



Happy holidays!

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