



6 Tips For A Holly-Jolly Co-Parenting Holiday Season



We're in holiday crunch mode. The shopping is done (let's hope) — next up is the cookie baking and gift wrapping. But how are you supposed to get all that done when you're shuffling your littles back and forth between your house and their other parent's? Not to mention, even though it's the most wonderful time of the year, no amount of holly-jolliness can take the edge off of some of your interactions with an ex.

You try your best to be cooperative, but they know how to push every single button. And honestly, it's sucking all the joy and holly-jolliness out of the season.

Never fear. We spoke with Kathryn Dickerson, a family law attorney. She shared six tips she recommends for a smooth and enjoyable co-parenting holiday season for you and your littles. Honestly, you might want to hang onto these tips all year long.

Six Co-Parenting Tips for the Holidays

Be Consistent

Who doesn't like consistency? Not that change can't be fun and exciting, but we've certainly had plenty of that already over the past two years. A consistent schedule for your littles will help them feel secure and give them one less thing to worry about. Kathryn suggests giving your children a visual aid for smoother co-parenting this holiday season. "Eliminate uncertainty and set clear expectations for kids. Put the plans on a dry erase board where they can see them."

Avoid a Gifting War

Kathryn advises that more often than not, this backfires. "Parents think giving extravagant gifts is what every child wants. But in reality, it dampers their ability to enjoy their new toys." If you think about it, this makes a lot of sense. Instead of relishing in all the new things, they're trying to not make either parent feel bad by favoring one gift over another. So do yourself and your kiddos a favor, and don't overspend with impulse buys.

Choose Your Battles

Co-parenting this holiday season doesn't have to be hard. So what if your co-parent wants to take the kids to get their photo taken with Santa? It doesn't mean that you can't do it too with your own traditional spin. When it comes to the holidays, parents tend to mourn the loss (or changing) of traditions more than the kiddos do.

Kathryn wants to remind co-parents, "Your children will remember your behavior more than the circumstances surrounding the traditions. Kids remember negativity more often than not because as humans, it's just what we do." Make it easier on yourself by not stressing out about co-parenting battles this holiday.

Don't Forget to Take a Step Back

Emotions tend to run high during the holiday season. For you, your littles, and everyone who loves and supports you. But sometimes, even the most well-intentioned support and advice can make things worse. "Taking a step back and finding objective perspectives that aren't emotionally involved can help avoid problems," Kathryn says. Things that feel like a really big deal at the moment, might not actually be as bad as they initially seem.

Create New Traditions

As a co-parent this holiday, you might be tempted to fall back on old traditions you created together. But instead, try letting your kids come up with new activities.

Kathryn reminds us, "New traditions don't have to be expensive or extravagant. Co-parenting during the holidays isn't made easier by trying to out-do the other parent. Instead, let your children do the leading." You never know what new hobbies they'll discover like, baking together.

Gift Yourself

Did we say it? Yes, we did. One of the things you can do to keep stressful co-parenting this holiday season to a minimum is to gift yourself. No, it's not selfish — it's okay to focus on yourself.

Kathryn really hit home when expanding on this tip. "When you become a parent, you can lose yourself. It's easy for your identity to shift to parent first. You're no longer Kathryn. You just become your kid's mom. Gifting yourself doesn't have to be with a material thing. It can be a new experience or something as simple as a day of silence."

These strategies don't guarantee to make co-parenting pure bliss, but they're certainly a place to start. At the end of the day, any parents of littles just want them to be healthy, happy, and safe. But a big part of that is making sure as parents we're doing well too. Take care of yourself, so you can take care of the kiddos, and then everyone can enjoy this holiday season.