

redefining divorce

Dear Holidays: Please Go Away!

Divorce is hard enough at any time, but facing the end of a marriage during the holidays is torture!

The holidays are likely to elicit all sorts of feelings so a bit of planning will help you and your children cope with your changing family structure.

First, create new traditions with your family. Remember what your parents did with you on Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Years. If one of these days is more important to you than the other, propose a schedule to your spouse so you can have your special day and your spouse can have a special day. The children will appreciate having time with both parents. If you can't seem to agree on a schedule, consider going to a mediator to work out a suitable arrangement.

Second, surround yourself with people who are supportive of your circumstances.

This does not include "downers." These are people who speak negatively about your spouse and arouse your anger, pain and fear. Supportive people will generally give you the space to process what is going on without having opinions or try to rush you to "get over it" or "relax."

Third, if you can afford to, try going out of town for the day/weekend. There are plenty of inexpensive places you can spend the day that will allow you to remove yourself from the origin of pain for a brief moment.

If you have children and are going into the holidays, please remember this: Children learn culture, character and esteem from you. They take cues about what is acceptable from your actions not necessarily your words. The way you and your spouse handle one another during this difficult period will determine how your

children remember the season. Keep in mind, even if you don't look or live like you once did, shared love for your children is what makes you a family and is what keeps you a family. Don't allow the stress of the holidays to compromise your strength and power as a person, parent, and family. **IN**

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