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## Handling the Holidays

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When holiday season or the summer break roll around, separated parents could either get overwhelmed, or have a great time together. While some families handle these situations with ease, for others it can be a total nightmare. So what should you do and who should compromise?

Naturally, the best case scenario is when the two parents remain friends after the separation, and both compromise, for the children's sake. More often, the decisions are settled in custody hearings and agreements. However, legal agreements don't tell you how to act and what to do, in order for everyone to have an enjoyable, fight-free holiday. Surely though, you can keep the peace, when the family has to come together for a special occasion, in order to make your children happy. You just have to take advantage of a few useful tips.

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## What if You Can't Reunite the Two Families?

Some children celebrate two Christmases, two birthdays, and so on. While it may be fun for some children to have double festivities, others may have a hard time enjoying themselves, without the other parent and relatives involved.

However, if the situation is awkward or results in even more conflict, it's best to keep people apart. Remember that conflict and aggression make it even more difficult for children, since they may feel in the middle of the "battle".

Of course children can't be split in half, but what we can try to do is divide the time they spend in each home. In this way, the efforts can be guided towards making the time spent with each parent as even as possible. With a bit of planning and willingness to communicate with your ex, it's always possible to spend time with your children on important dates.

## **Reuniting the Families and Keeping the Peace**

There are some occasions where it will be virtually impossible not to reunite with your ex and probably even his/her new family. Unless you want to miss out on your children's events and important life experiences, such as school plays and parties, graduation, and even their wedding, you'll need to maintain a civilized relationship with your ex. That's the best way to keep the peace between the two families.

If you and your ex have healed and have now established a relationship based on friendship and mutual respect, this shouldn't be a problem. If, however, you aren't on the best of terms, you could benefit from considering the following:

### **Avoid Confrontation**

If a certain subject is sensitive, don't go there. It's best not to blurt out everything that goes through your mind. Being civilized and respectful to your children's needs, is partially about maintaining a cordial relationship, and avoiding private arguments in public. Silence can be a good response as well.

### **Don't Sit too Close**

To avoid having to mingle and make small talk with someone you're not interested in, you can quietly ask to be seated elsewhere, with people you feel comfortable talking to.

### **Don't Judge or Criticize**

When we're angry, it's easy to start a fight. Everything that the other person does is wrong and you may feel like your ex should just not be there. However, remember that this person is also your children's parent and has every right to want to share important events. It's all part of keeping the bond alive. If you don't have anything nice to say, it's best not to make any observations at all.

### **Be Patient**

Actually, you'll need to be extra-patient in these situations. If you ever feel like you're losing your cool, you can always go to the bathroom and give yourself some time to calm down. Try to distract yourself with other things, rather than focus on what has upset you.

### **See the Big Picture**

It's not about you, how much you still feel hurt or humiliated. It's about your children and giving them a sense of family and being loved.

## **Be Friendly**

There's no use in making someone feel unwelcome or unwanted. Instead, try to be glad that they have shown up. It's important for your children to see their parents still being parents, despite no longer being in a romantic relationship.

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