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The Gift of a Joyful Holiday Season

By Jonathan Dana

The holiday season can be a time of great joy, but also a time that causes anxiety for many families. For those going through divorce, separation, or some other family transition, the holiday season can be particularly fraught with stress – especially when children are involved.

If you are feeling distressed, angry, or hurt about changes to your family, it can be a challenge to spare your children from the upset you are experiencing. Here are some pointers on how to give your children – and yourself – the gift of a less stressful, more joyful holiday season.

1. Don't get stuck on the day itself.

Even if you are not with your children for a holiday or for all of a holiday, that does not mean you cannot celebrate with them another time. Thanksgiving turkey tastes just as good a few days earlier or later. And your children may enjoy getting to start celebrations early or keeping them going for extra days

2. Create new traditions.

When the structure of your family is changing, it can be an opportunity to take a fresh look at the holidays. Come up with new and meaningful celebrations for you and your children, like decorating a Christmas tree for the first time or volunteering together to help others in need. And be sure to support your children when they are building new traditions with their other parent.

3. Avoid conflict and find joy in the holiday.

Seeing parents who are down or fighting with one another during the holidays can leave children feeling torn, guilty, or confused. Try to avoid brooding and focus on the celebration. If your kids are shielded from unnecessary conflict and see you looking cheerful and upbeat, they will feel more at ease showing these emotions as well.

4. Let your kids express themselves.

Let your children know that it is all right to share the pain and sorrow they might be feeling during the holidays about the changes to their family. Reassure them that, no matter what happens, their parents love them and want them to have positive memories of these holidays and many more to come.



Jonathan Dana, a family law partner at Feldesman Tucker, excels at helping clients going through separation or divorce to work through their emotions to make sound decisions for the future. Known for his ability to solve complex cases and his hands-on, personalized approach, Jonathan is consistently recognized by *Washingtonian Magazine*, Super Lawyers, and Best Lawyers as one of the top family law attorneys in the D.C. Metropolitan Area.

The family law team at Feldesman Tucker is dedicated to helping clients make sound decisions for their future.

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