



The Divorcee's Holiday Survival Guide

Robin Graine, JD, CDFA®
December 26, 2018



Holidays are filled with emotional landmines.

We can't recapture the excitement we had as children, but we'll never forget it, either. Add in the divorce that stripped you of your daily joy, and that's a recipe for the holiday blues.

There are ways to safeguard holiday joy during and after divorce. You just have to shift your expectations. (Yes, again. Divorce is doing that to you a lot, huh?)

Here are a few ways to hold on to the “merry” you were hoping for:

1. Build some new traditions

When a divorce has you off-balance, it's hard to recreate the happy holidays you knew as a child.

So stop fighting. Relax. Create new traditions for your children. Try dividing the holidays between parents, or compromise by celebrating the holidays over two days.

When you do, expectations change. You can slow down. You needn't frantically defend old ways in a time of extraordinary change.

A lot of kids like doubling up on holidays, and can handle two days of celebrations better than one hurried dash.

Parents are less stressed, which is a great gift to your children (and you).

2. Put things into perspective

If you anticipate a gloomy holiday, plan ahead to volunteer your time. Give something back to receive the gift of perspective.

Spend time with a lonely neighbor or shut-in to hear reminiscences of Christmases long past. Or check with local nursing homes, hospitals, or senior centers to see if you can help with carol sings.

Bring small gifts in beautiful wrappings to create joy; the happiness you share will reflect back on you, too.

Hard to find a better cure for Grinchy feelings than that!

3. Reassess the finances

It's not just hearts that are broken in a divorce, your household budget will probably take a hit, too and the holidays are usually a time of excess.

So think about what's important.

Simplify and make thoughtful gifts instead of buying fancy things. Go green. Without that spouse, you can abandon traditions you never liked anyway.

Now you can customize the holidays to suit you.

If you have children, they already know the holidays won't be like last year. Try to avoid a buying competition with your ex.

Your time and attention are the most precious presents your kids will unwrap, so plan outings and activities that they'll remember long after the fad gift is forgotten under the bed.

4. Allow happiness



You're entitled to feel low during or after a divorce, but make sure you're not avoiding happiness.

Accept the help of family and friends this holiday season. Grab a winter cocktail with a friend or see the lights with family. If you discover you're smiling, don't hide from it. Let those good feelings flow.

Consider divorce as a fresh start

Divorce can truly be a fresh start, even if you didn't think you needed one.

The holidays are a good time to let go of pain and guilt and maybe mend some fences if that's needed. Allow yourself to feel excited about the new life ahead. Envision how you will do things differently and better.

Everyone deserves to be happy. That includes you, too.