

Christmas Survival Tips



Christmas can be the loneliest time of the year for divorced or separated parents as well as grandparents and wider family members. It is the time they most want to see their children but it may not be their turn to have them for Christmas Day or any Christmas Day.

1 COVID-19 is the uninvited guest this year, making arrangements even more stressful. It can be an opportunity for separated parents to reset their previous rigid approach. Children are looking for reassurance that both their parents are looking out for them but if that doesn't happen don't turn disappointment into a grievance. Look after yourself.

2 Remember to put the kids first. Even though you are missing them don't put your distress ahead of their enjoyment. Christmas Day may not carry the wider significance to them as it does to you. Encourage them to look forward to the next time they're with you when you can have your own celebration.

3 Try and negotiate with your former partner at least a phone call or facetime of some sort with your children on Christmas Day so they know you are thinking about them and sharing their excitement. Keep in mind they may be hyper at the other end so don't get disappointed.

4 If you do have them this year don't go overboard on arrangements. Think ahead about what they'll enjoy rather than what's expensive. It's time together that counts in the long run. Remember if it is your turn your former partner may be feeling the same distress so don't grudge a call or facetime. It's best to fix a time in advance.

5 Don't compete on presents with your former partner. Outspending will create friction especially if money is short for both of you. When you have limited time with your children it's often tempting to try and compensate by extravagant gestures. Don't. Good cheer now may pay off in the New Year.

6 Keep in mind that your children will remember the time they have with you. Don't worry that they don't give you a second thought when they're not with you. That's what kids are like.

7 If you don't have any contact with your kids at all, sit down and write them a letter even if it is only for your own Memory Box. Even if you never send it it may be your time with them this year.

8 Don't let yourself get miserable or lonely at home. Make sure you see friends if you can within restrictions or think about volunteering with some of the organisations that look after others at Christmas.