

# 5 Ways to Ruin Stepfamily Holidays

You may be wondering whether it's possible to be any more stressed out with the upcoming holiday than you already are. It is. Here are 5 sources of stress and ways to combat them.

## **1. Ignore your spouse's opinion on the holiday celebrations.**

Insist that you have the right to override your spouse's opinions and feelings, since only your opinions and feelings matter in making decisions regarding your biological children.

**Remarried couple tip: Make joint decisions with your spouse.**

Making joint decisions about the holiday celebration deepens emotional connections and strengthens your relationship. Additionally, your children benefit by observing a respectful, healthy relationship, which helps them feel safe and secure in your stepfamily.

## **2. Insist on sticking to old holiday traditions.**

Your holiday traditions with your biological children, your former spouse, and his/her extended family are the only meaningful way to celebrate. Your new spouse should just accept it and join you without questioning any of it.

**Remarried couple tip: Form new traditions together.**

Some people are very rigid. When they remarry, they expect the new spouse to accept and celebrate the way they used to in the past. Dropping all of the old traditions creates a sense of loss for both children and the adults, so it's important to maintain some of the old traditions so there will be a sense of continuity in the family. Creating new traditions helps people feel closer because everyone starts from the same place, rather than people feeling like they're intruding on something of someone else's. They create something unique, shared amongst members of their stepfamily.

## **3. Discriminate between your biological children and your stepchildren.**

Don't buy your stepchildren gifts of equal value as to your biological children. After all they are not your financial responsibility.

**Remarried couple tip: Buy the children in the family gifts of equal value.**

To a kid, the amount of money spent on their gift symbolizes how important they are to the parent who bought it for them, especially if it's a stepparent. When there's a discrepancy between the two adults' income levels or assets, the children of the parent with less money may feel particularly slighted, shamed, or less important if they receive gifts of lesser value. Ensuring the children receive gifts of equal value makes the children feel like they belong.

#### **4. Stick to your anger at your ex-spouse.**

Refuse to schedule changes requested by your former spouse, and don't coordinate holiday events' times as a way to express your lingering anger from your divorce.

##### **Remarried couple tip: Let go of old anger.**

It's toxic to your remarriage, your children, your former spouse, and yourself. Anger is a negative feeling that clouds over hope and love in a new relationship. Forgive your former spouse for past behavior, and remember to forgive yourself for your mistakes. You'll feel relieved.

#### **5. Neglect yourself and your spouse over the holiday.**

Don't indulge in any activity that may be fun or meaningful away from your children. Your full attention must be focused on the children and not at all on you and your spouse.

##### **Remarried couple tip: Take care of yourself and your marriage, even during holidays.**

Many people feel guilt over breaking up their biological family. Under the burden of this guilt, some parents try to make up for it by overindulging the children. This comes at the cost of neglecting one's self and one's new spouse. The past is behind you; it can not be undone. Do not let your fixation upon the past compromise your stepfamily's present and future.

Take a walk alone or with your spouse, or try a massage or watching a funny movie. You'll be surprised how much calmer you feel.

Remarried with Children

<http://www.remarriedwithchildren.org/ruin-stepfamily-holidays/>