

**How to Survive the Holidays Without Your Children:
10 Survival Tips for the Non-Custodial Parent**

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It already hurts a little during the year, but being without your children during the holidays may be downright depressing. If you have joint custody with alternating holidays, this may be your year without the children. Here is how to make it better.



1. Have Christmas a week – or a month, early. As with all natural disasters (earthquakes, fires, being without your children!), plan accordingly. If this is an EVEN-numbered year, and you have your children for Christmas on ODD-numbered years, you will need to celebrate early this year! Purchase gifts, set up a tree, and explain to the children that you are not skipping the celebration just because you don't have them this year. Instead of Christmas without you, they will get TWO Christmases!

2. Get Skype and see them on Christmas! If you are on good terms with your ex (and you should be, especially during the holiday season - REMEMBER THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS), arrange for the children to see you (and you them) via webcam.



Skype is also particularly useful for grandparents, who always have to share custody of their grandchildren for Christmas. :)

3. Volunteer your blues away! You think your life sucks? Go to the local orphanage, where you will find children who don't have parents. They would love to have you. If you have gifts of song or dance - or baking - or just simply being there to hug them, GO AND BE WITH the needy. They will love you. And love is what you need. Google local churches. They'll get you the volunteer A-List. Here, I just googled it for you. How to Find Volunteer Projects at Christmas Time. Enjoy. http://www.ehow.com/how_4549189_find-volunteer-projects-christmas-time.html

4. Celebrate your day without children by doing adult things! If you have very young children, this tip is for you. There are some restaurants and resorts that do NOT allow toddlers and babies. Yay! These are for you. Watch a REAL movie without cartoon characters. Get a massage, and then hang out and lounge at the steam room. Enjoy a nice long dinner with your friends without rushing home. Drink a glass of champagne. Listen



to music that Elmo doesn't sing.

5. Change your Custody Order. Get together with your ex, and if it's feasible (location, emotion) see if both of you can agree to share the children on this special holiday.

6. **Take lots of pictures and videos during your year, and view them every year.** It is amazing what a walk down memory lane can do for your



mood.

7. **Spoil yourself rotten.** Pamper. Indulge. Overindulge. Terranea Resort-style. You deserve it.

8. **Take a trip.** A long trip. An international trip with a huge time change. You won't even know you missed them.

The holidays are only a lonely time if you choose to feel that way. If you look around, there are many people who need you in so many ways. You can benefit by turning the focus on others (ah, the true holiday spirit). So many people forget the meaning of Christmas - it is the utmost celebration of the birth of our saviour Jesus Christ, who died to save our wretched souls. Being in the true spirit of Christmas is thinking of others, and forgetting our own selfish needs and desires.

If you cannot find solace in that (and believe me, I can understand why the above is not consoling at all), look to your friends. Being surrounded by other people will magically help you feel better. Remember, it's just this year. Next year, you'll have them again.

Finally, remember, all parents (whether separated, divorced/married, widowed) all eventually deal with not having children for Christmas. Consider it a blessing that you have the opportunity to deal with such a tragedy earlier than later!

For all of you - children, no children, married, single, divorced, widowed, it's complicated - Have a Wonderful Holiday.

Love,

The Law Offices of Kelly Chang