

Holidays and the Divorce Process

In general, the divorce process can be a stressful period in someone's life. The holiday season can be stressful as well, especially when juggling so many things at once – travel, budgeting and buying gifts, family, planning, etc. So, what happens when both of these overlap? It can be a perfect storm of stress and chaos. If left unmanaged, it can be overbearing. We compiled a few suggestions that we pass along to clients during this time of year. If you're in the midst of the divorce process and feeling the weight of the holidays, read below.

Modifications to your Gift List and Budget

If you're like most, the divorce is likely to be a burden on your finances. Accept the fact that this expense is a priority in your life, and the holidays may have to be shifted back. It doesn't mean that you should be the grinch this year, but take a look at your normal gift list and modify as necessary. If you normally buy a gift for your spouse's parents but don't expect them to be in your life after the divorce is finalized, it may be a wise decision to eliminate them from your list this season. For others, you may decide to include them on your list but trim down the budget to ease the holiday financial burden.

Prioritize your Time

As with the modifications to your gift list, take a look at your "people" list as well. If you've spent the last 15 years following a tradition of time spent with certain people associated with your spouse, it's OK and an ideal time to create change. This is especially true in cases where spending time with certain people was done out of courtesy or obligation and not necessarily a joyful experience. Again, it depends on circumstances and the relationships you have forged. Perhaps total avoidance isn't appropriate – in that case, you can simply decrease the amount of time you give them. Drop by to say hello, wish them a good day, and make an exit. You may find that you're treated differently as a result of the divorce. Don't accept any negativity or uncomfortable friction – look out for yourself and your well being. No need to put up with awkward situations created by those that likely won't be in your life moving forward.

Take a Winter Break

With the holidays that take place in November and December, the family law courts will be closed on certain days, and your attorney will likely be taking days off as well. Give yourself a break from the process as well. Try to take in the positive spirit of the holiday season and allow the divorce to take the back seat. Reflect on everything you've accomplished up to this point and visualize your new life that awaits around the corner. Do something special for yourself such as creating a new tradition, traveling to a new destination, or rekindle relationships with people that may not have liked your spouse!

New Routines

Embrace your situation and the new freedom that come along with it. So you decided to skip out on the 5 hour flight and 3 days normally spent at your brother-in-law's house this year. All of that time is now yours to spend how you like. Sleep in late, brew a cup of coffee, and plant yourself on the sofa while watching movies. A new year is around the corner – sign up for that gym membership that you've been putting off because your spouse wasn't supportive. Now is the time to invest in a "new" you.

Don't Forget about the Kids

This one is important to remember, and it's no surprise that California family law courts and judges place children at the top of the priority list. In our experience, the holiday season can almost be viewed as more for the children than the adults. Some of your best memories as a child may consist of certain gifts that Santa brought, or favorite relatives that you were able to spend time with. Depending on their age, it's likely they'll be aware of what's going on between you and your spouse. Don't allow the divorce to get in the way of the holiday spirit or create bad memories for them. Embrace the time and freedom the children have to create memories with each of their parents. Try to maintain a positive attitude and avoid conflict with your spouse when in their presence. We've observed children who are very receptive to their parents and can decipher emotion and behaviors better than many adults.

Hopefully the info in this article helps you manage the holidays while your divorce is in progress. If you have questions or need additional guidance based on your specific situation, don't hesitate to [contact us for a free consultation](#).