



Blended Families & Holidays

■ by Debi Mitchell, MS, LMFT

“And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are all called to live in peace. And always be thankful.” –Colossians 3:15 NLT

Blending families tends to be stressful no matter what time of year it is. When mixing a blended family with an already stressful season, it can cause parents to want to lie in the fetal position under a mound of covers until January rolls around! The reality of planning can cause most people anxiety and moments of panic. So how can you lower the stress? Here are two tips.



TIP 1: COMMUNICATE EARLY. Take some deep breaths and discuss these questions.

1. When are we celebrating?

Some families have a traditional time to get-together that is NOT on the actual holiday; other families are less flexible. For those homes where an ex-spouse also shares time with the children, scheduling becomes even more difficult. Also, try hard not to blame your spouse if his/her “ex” is making scheduling difficult.

2. Which families will we see?

How many families do you know that have two full Thanksgiving meals on the same day? Christmas tends to be even more difficult as the trips to both parents are scheduled around opening presents at home.

3. What were our traditions before we met?

There are as many traditions as there are families, but every family has at least one. Before the meal: give thanks one-by-one or someone special prays? Christmas Eve: candle-light vigil or last-minute shopping? Christmas Day: stay in pajamas and play with the toys or visit family? For Christmas, be sure and discuss expectations for gift-giving and the timing for opening gifts for each other and for the children.

4. Which traditions are important to keep?

Can't do without Mom's special stuffing recipe? Does the topper on the (real? artificial?) Christmas tree have to be an (angel? star?) It's important to know which traditions are LOVED and which are just...traditions.

5. What can we do new that will be “ours”?

“His” and “Hers” are fine for monogrammed towels, but a new family tradition can help the family to feel more like one family instead of two families who decided to live together.

TIP 2: FOCUS ON THE TRUE MEANINGS of THANKSGIVING and CHRISTMAS. Here are a few ideas to help refocus:

- Invite someone without family nearby to Thanksgiving Dinner.
- Use an Advent Calendar with daily scripture readings or an Advent Devotional.
- Keep a nativity set in a prominent place in the home. Remember the wonderful gift of His Son and the blessings of family with whom to share His gift of Love.



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