

Surviving Holidays as a Stepparent



By Michele

Sfakianos, RN, BSN for [Hope After Divorce](#)

It doesn't have to be difficult.

A stepparent who has different holiday traditions from the rest of the family, especially a stepparent with no child of their own, can feel left out of the celebration. All family traditions matter, and it's vital for everyone to be considered when planning holidays.

Actress Megan Fox is stepmom to hubby Brian Austin Green's son, Kassius. Word has it that she is a stepmother to the fullest extent. She has happily looked after Kassius since he was three years old. Fox is a good example of a stepparent who most definitely includes her stepchild in all holiday celebrations as well as every aspect of their family's life.

It should be this way for all children in blended families.

As a stepparent, here are a few things you should consider when planning holidays:

Related Link: [Reinventing Home for the Holidays](#)

Who is going to spend the holiday where? Holiday plans can be predetermined by custody or shared parental agreements. If you have the flexibility of options, discuss them with the children and keep their desires in mind. Some families split up the holidays each year: “I’ll take Halloween and you take Thanksgiving.” Or some try to do both: “I’ll take Christmas Eve” (Mom) and “I’ll take Christmas Day” (Dad). Several people celebrate twice, once with each parent.

Where will the gifts be opened? Parents who purchase presents for their children like to see their reactions when the child is opening the gift. How would you feel if you didn’t get to see their surprise? Make sure you think of all parties involved when making plans.

Watch out for trouble on the stepsibling front when the kids have other plans. Stepchildren can feel left out if there are “whole” kids in the picture. Try to keep the presents even and have the major festivities take place when all the children are present.

Don’t expect holidays to be as you had in the past. Be aware the loss of the old ways of doing things is a disappointment for the kids *and* for you. Discuss how holidays were for each of you and have each person define which rituals are most important to them. This can be hard to hear, but it’s important. Incorporate a few of these old rituals into your new holiday.

Create new holidays. If all the holidays seem to be taken up with stress and other people’s claims (“But Thanksgiving is mine!”), you can always select another day (Cinco de Mayo,

Arbor Day, Stepparents Day) to become an annual blow-out holiday. Acknowledge you are starting from scratch. There is a new excitement about having the opportunity to create holidays as you would like them to be. Aim for creating your own holiday spirit (with additions) and welcoming kids into it.

If you won't have the children for the holiday, create an alternate festivity for yourselves. Don't stay home and mope. Don't force false cheer. Make new memories. Get creative. Plan ahead and don't let yourself feel lonely or disappointed.

Related Link: [How to Cooperatively Co-Parent After Separation or Divorce](#)

Here are a few more simple tips to keep in mind as well:

- The first few years, try to lower your expectations.
- Don't assume holidays will be calm and peaceful if daily life is full of conflict. There is no holiday from mixed feelings, and you cannot force fun, laughter, and family spirit.
- The winter holidays are traditionally a time of family togetherness. You and your partner can have private time too, but always take the children and stepchildren into consideration.
- Take into account the religions of those involved. It's important to keep family traditions alive with certain cultures.
- Be flexible and encourage flexibility.
- If things are tense, do not force get-togethers or minimize the amount of time spent together.

No matter the holiday, remember to celebrate. You are a real family!

For more information about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).

Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN, is a Registered Nurse, Life Skills Expert, Speaker and Award Winning Author. She is the owner of Open Pages Publishing, which includes her series of "The 4-1-1" books on Life Skills, Step Parenting, and Surviving Teenhood. Michele is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, and CupidsPulse.com.