

Child Expenses After Divorce



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

The expenses for caring for children continue to rise, and that doesn't make it any easier for divorced parents. Each parent attempts to keep their own household going, and at the same time, they often try to share expenses for their children. This may be court ordered or due to a mutual agreement between the parents.

Whether the divorcing couple is a celebrity couple in the public eye or a private couple, the children's needs and welfare should be the number one priority. You must accept and embrace the reality that your children's expenses to live will not change. They are our greatest responsibility and deserve the best care and protection we can give them, whether married or divorced. Some divorced celebrity couples, like Demi Moore

and Bruce Willis and Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillippe, seem to put their children's best interest ahead of their own as they co-parent together.

Related Link: [Ryan Phillippe Says He's 'Proud' of How He and Reese Co-Parent](#)

Routine check-ups at both the doctor's office and the dentist are essential for your children. One of the parents should have both medical and dental coverage on the children, as the cost of this type of preventative care out of pocket is very high. If one of your children have an emergency for either place, it can be a bill you have to pay for a very long time.

Childcare is another expense that can add up when a divorce takes place. Perhaps one of the parents was the caregiver, and now both are in the workforce. The parents should decide on a childcare provider together. It may be a licensed facility, a nanny, or even a family member. The cost of childcare should be second to the quality of care that your children are receiving.

Inevitably, there will be additional expenses for your children. Who is going to pay for school clothing and supplies? Many parents who pay child support assume that they pay enough for such items with that monthly check. Yet it may be just enough to help the family with food and shelter. You don't want your children to go without due to lack of money.

Many children love to be involved in extracurricular activities as well. It can be sports, dance, or clubs. There will be expenses involved, including special clothing and shoes needed and even enrollment fees. Parents need to be willing to share these expenses so that their children can take part in such events.

Related Link: [Helping Your Child Through Divorce](#)

Summer is also a time when there are more expenses for

children. They may want to go to swimming lessons, camping, or even to a summer camp. All of these things cost money, and someone has to pay it! Some feel the parent who makes more money should cover the cost. This is up to the parents though, as many want to do everything 50/50. Problems could arise when one parent can't afford their share.

As you can see, there are plenty of additional expenses to consider for your children when you are divorced. Make sure you are willing to discuss these expenses with the other parent. You always want to do what's in the best interest of your children. Bottom line: Get as much in writing as you can when it comes to who will cover expenses. This way, everyone involved knows what to plan for.

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.

To Move or Not to Move? Why This Decision Is Tough on Kids



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

Divorce is one of those life events that forces huge changes in your life, whether you like it or not. During a divorce, a decision will need to be made on living arrangements. Let the court decide who needs to move out and what will happen with the home. Sometimes, one spouse will offer to move out but wants their part of the equity in the house. The partner who stays put may have to put it up for sale in order to pay the other partner unless they can refinance, thus adding the amount of equity onto the mortgage.

Definitely get some legal advice before you make your choice. Leaving the home before the court date might have a detrimental effect on the outcome. Couples will want to communicate in a responsible manner to find a way to share the residence. If there's too much disagreement, then another solution may be necessary...but you still need a professional

opinion before packing up those boxes.

Since they have just announced their desire to divorce, Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin are one such couple who will be considering the effect moving will have on their two young children. Hopefully, through their “consciously uncoupling,” the transition will be as smooth as possible for their kids – as well as themselves.

Related Link: [Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin Separate](#)

There are times in each child’s life when a change like moving to a new school, city, or state can be devastating. A young kid depends on the security of their home and school, while a teenager may simply want to finish high school with their friends. You need to take these situations into account when making your plans. The parent who has the children a majority of the time should do their best to stay put.

With divorce, the furnishings are often divided, which may leave the family home empty. Since it is your kids’ house too, you should try to include them in the decorating decisions. This approach helps them to feel valued. Listen to the child’s needs and tastes. It also provides opportunities for two important activities:

1. Education: You may know that it’s an antique chair, but for your children, it’s an old ugly chair until you teach them about the distinguishing signs and history.

2. Shopping: Head to local flea markets, auctions, or estate sales for old furniture. Refinish or repaint the old dresser. Your kids will feel like a part of the process and enjoy using the item they helped refinish.

Once you’re finished decorating, throw a party and show off the new look of your place. By celebrating, you are showing the children that you love and respect their help and that everyone can enjoy the newly decorated home.

Related Link: [What Now? Transitioning From Married to Single](#)

If you must move, understand that a new place will not fix everything. Moving is traumatic and expensive, and when everyone has to move, someone will be upset. Yes, the new house may have clean paint and a fresh look, but those moving into it are still the same people. After the movers are gone, you may find yourselves standing around and looking at each other thinking, "What now?" Post-Move Syndrome Letdown (PMSL) is common.

Hang in there and try to enjoy setting up your new home. Make sure to include everyone. If you see your children having difficulty adjusting to a different home or community, address it immediately. Find someone for them to talk to. Be supportive and encouraging and let your children know that you'll be with them every step of the way.

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Making the Most Of Valentine's Day Even If

You're Unhappy



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

unhappy valentine's day? it doesn't have to be

After a divorce, many holidays can be depressing, and Valentine's Day can be the most depressing of all. The media promotes this day for lovers, and those not in a relationship – or just getting out of one – may feel left out. The holiday can also leave you feeling as if something's wrong with you because you don't have someone special to share it with. But don't worry – you can still have a happy Valentine's Day!

Related Link: [Surviving Holidays as a Stepparent](#)

If you have children, celebrate your holidays with them. After all, they're a special part of your life. If you don't have

visitation that day, then pick another day and celebrate. Children love special celebrations, especially when you tell them that *they* are the reason for the celebration. If you don't have children, why not plan a special outing just for yourself?

It is time to adjust how we feel about our holidays. We shouldn't feel pressured to have a significant other in our life. We should love ourselves and celebrate that love every day, not just on holidays.

Look at celebrity couple Hilary Duff and Mike Comrie, who recently announced their separation. They have a one-year-old son and are both very dedicated to co-parenting, loving, and raising Luca as a team. The exes still spend a lot of time together with their son. For example, on New Year's Eve, Duff shared an Instagram of the three of them at Disneyland the week before. I wouldn't be surprised if they spent Valentine's Day as a family as well!

Related Link: [Hilary Duff and Mike Comrie Announce Their Separation](#)

Here are some great ideas for your special celebration:

- Call a close friend or a family member and go to a movie, get a manicure and pedicure, or bake a sweet treat.
- Turn off all of your electronic devices and read that book or magazine that's been sitting on your nightstand for months.
- Take your children on a nature walk or to a local park. Don't just send them off to play; go play with them!
- Make yourself a fancy dinner. Use your best dishes and make sure to put fresh cut flowers in the center of the table as a present to yourself.
- Take a warm bath with essential oils. Don't forget the candles! Just totally unplug during this time. Read that book

or magazine I mentioned earlier.

- Share your time with someone in need. Volunteer at a local shelter or serve dinner at a soup kitchen.
- Turn on the tunes and dance!
- Set the evening aside to look at old photos, especially those that bring back great memories.

Celebrations don't have to be expensive, but it is important to acknowledge the holidays. Valentine's Day is what you make of it. It is a day to celebrate love. No matter if you are alone or part of a couple, celebrate yourself and the power you have to make others feel valued. Remember: The most important thing you can do to bring true love into your life is to love *yourself*.

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Surviving Holidays as a Stepparent



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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!

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