

Product Review: A Lounger Fit For a Celebrity Baby



By [Karley Kemble](#)

Whether you're a first-time parent or a mother of multiple kiddos, your child deserves the same treatment as a [celebrity baby](#). Give them the proper care they need! The [DockATot](#) is a staple for all growing babies and is loved by moms everywhere, and has been called "A blessing for baby and parents." Celebrity moms like [Kim Kardashian](#), and [Lauren Conrad](#) all rave about this must-have baby product! This ergonomically designed lounger will make your life easier, and will provide your little one with a safe, snug, and soothing place to kick back and relax.

If you're looking for a product that will truly change your baby's life, you need a DockATot Lounger.

DockATot comes in two sizes: Deluxe, for newborns to nine months, and Grand, for babies nine months to three years. Each size is designed to aid your growing child through key developmental stages, and truly helps them sleep more soundly. The Deluxe lounger mimics the womb – creating a safe sleeping spot, and prevents flat head syndrome. It's also perfect for diaper changes and for getting their tummy time in! The Grand boasts the same benefits, and is also perfect for the later transition from cribs to big-kid beds.



Related Post: [Product Review: A High Chair for All Ages](#)

Offering more than standardized baby loungers, the DockATot has been carefully constructed with your baby in mind. One review tastefully states "I'm convinced there is magic fairy dust sewn into the DockATot!" Fairy dust or not, these loungers are embedded with temperature control that doesn't harbor heat. Because of the special hygienic fabrics, your child is prevented from becoming sweaty. The loungers are crafted with the highest quality of breathability and non-toxic materials, allowing for maximum comfort and convenience. The website also boasts a thorough list of safety certifications and standards, which ensures that your child's safety is a top priority.



Whether you are an on-the-go [traveler](#), or simply taking your baby to grandma's so you and your spouse can go on a long overdue [date night](#), you'll find it easy to tote your DockATot. Not only are these loungers lightweight, portable, and super easy to travel with, they are very stylish! There are a variety of different covers that truly make your lounger feel customized for you. Made from 100% cotton, DockATot's covers are washable and durable for the messier moments in life, too.



Related Post: [Product Review: Celebrity Moms Use Diono Convertible+Booster Car Seat For Travel](#)

DockATot is a must-have for any child or toddler. Give your little bundle of joy the ultimate celebrity baby treatment and see for yourself how revolutionary these loungers are!

For more information about DockATot, visit DockATot.com.

Celebrity Baby News: Megan Fox Reveals Third Pregnancy



 By [Cortney Moore](#)

In exciting [celebrity baby news](#), 29-year-old actress Megan Fox showed off her baby bump, effectively announcing her pregnancy, in a form fitting black dress and jacket combo at Monday's CinemaCon in Las Vegas. Fox was there to promote the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* sequel. According to [People.com](#), Fox filmed her role in the midst of her [celebrity pregnancy](#). Fox has not revealed details regarding if the father of her third [celebrity baby](#) is her estranged husband Brian Austin Green. Regardless, we can't wait to see this celebrity baby and Fox's two other children, Noah Shannon Bodhi Ransom all together!

This celebrity baby news has us scratching our heads. What are some ways to cope with an unplanned pregnancy?

Cupid's Advice:

A pregnancy is an exciting milestone to reach in your life, but sometimes you don't know what to expect. Cupid is here to help you navigate this surprise:

1. Gather support: The first thing you should do once you learn about your pregnancy is to tell people you can depend on. It's commonly said that it takes a village to raise a child, so you should find a select few who will support you through this transitional stage of your life.

Related Link: [Celebrity Baby News: Fetty Wap Was By Masika Kalysha's Side During Baby Girl's Birth](#)

2. Learn all you can: You're bringing life into this world. Buy a few books or find sources online that will help you learn how to best take care of your bundle of joy. Even seek guidance from people you know that have children. There's

always something that can be learned!

Related Link: [‘DWTS’ Pro Anna Trebunskaya Is Pregnant](#)

3. Nobody is perfect: This could also be a stressful time for you. Make sure to remind yourself that nobody is perfect. Just do your best and everything will fall into place.

Have you ever experienced an unexpected pregnancy? How did you handle it? Share your comments below.

Product Review: Find Out Why Celebrity Babies Love Lorena Canals Rugs



 *This post is sponsored by Lorena Canals Rugs.*

By [Dena Linzer](#)

Your favorite famous couples aren't the only ones living in luxury. Their [celebrity babies](#) enjoy their cozy and stylish bedrooms just as much. Stars like Chrissy Teigen and [Kim Kardashian](#) are head over heels for Lorena Canals rugs, both owning the Galleta. If you're looking for some parenting advice on how to style your child's room, add that chic and comfy look with safe and eco-friendly rugs from [Lorena Canals](#).

Decorate Your Child's Room Just

Like a Celebrity Baby with Lorena Canals rugs

Lorena Canals rugs are more than your typical floor covering; they're free of toxic compounds and chemicals, which means they don't come with that "new carpet smell" that accompanies most synthetic rugs. They are machine-washable, all-natural, hypo-allergenic, *and* functional. Most importantly, they give you peace of mind. You can let your little ones roll around and crawl on these environmentally-friendly rugs with no worries for their safety.

If you enjoy giving back, purchasing one of these rugs will do just that. Buying a Lorena Canals rug helps send children in Northern India to school. Plus, with their own factory, the company is a leader in socially responsible manufacturing and guarantees no child labor.

It's no wonder that Tiffani Thiessen and Kimberly Caldwell are big fans of Lorena Canals rugs for their celebrity babies. These carpets are handmade, so just like your sweet tot, each one is unique. A rug is a perfect accessory to add both function and character to your child's room. With Lorena Canals, you know that your baby is getting the best!

GIVEAWAY ALERT: One lucky reader will now have the chance to win the Galleta rug that Chrissy Teigen and Kim Kardashian have just by entering our giveaway! The rugs the celebs have are going fast. To enter our giveaway complete the form on our [Contact Page](#). Pick "Giveaways" in the drop-down menu and include your name and address as well as "Lorena Canal Rugs" in the message field. For additional entries, you'll also need to follow Lorena Canals on [Instagram](#). Our giveaway ends at 5 p.m. on May 16.

To learn more about or purchase a rug from Lorena Canals, visit LorenaCanals.us.

Thanks to DockATot Baby Loungers, Your Child Can Relax in Style



 *This post is sponsored by DockATot.*

By [Dena Linzer](#)

Ever wonder how celebrity babies like to relax? Look no further than the [DockATot](#) baby lounger! If your child struggles to get comfortable during their daytime naps or even while they're in their crib or your bed at night, this lounger will help them get the rest they need. Plus, you won't have to worry about their safety: The ideal hygienic microclimate mimics the womb, and the lounger is 100 percent breathable.

Tuck Your Baby Into a DockATot Tonight

The DockATot baby lounger has a unique shape and design for a snug place for your baby to rest. All materials used are sourced from top-quality suppliers and are Oeko-Tex certified. Plus, all covers are machine-washable and safety-tested.

If you've been itching to plan a vacation inspired by your favorite celebrity couple but don't want to mess up your baby's sleep schedule, a DockATot will calm your worries. It's portable, making it easy for your child to snooze on-the-go. Whether you're enjoying the sunshine at the beach or in a cabin on a snowy mountaintop, your baby will sleep soundly,

thanks to the DockATot.


Of course, these celebrity baby loungers are super chic and come in a selection of stylish colors. They're also available in two sizes: Deluxe and Grand. The Deluxe is meant for babies from birth to nine months. It provides a safe sleeping spot, facilitates tummy time, prevents flat head syndrome, and is the perfect place for diaper changes. The Grand is for children from nine months to three years old. It's perfect for bed transitioning, as the air permeable bumpers act like regular bed bumpers to help little ones feel snug and secure in their new big kid beds.

DockATot is a Mom's Choice Award, TillyWig Award and Silver NAPPA Award winner and has earned the National Parenting Center Seal of Approval. It's also won the Must-Have Award among celebrity moms and dads.

For more information about DockATot, visit DockATot.com.

Celebrity Baby: One Direction's Louis Tomlinson Welcomes First Child



 By Jasmine Igwegbe

As we change diapers, diapers can also change us. In the [latest celebrity news](#), One Direction's Louis Tomlinson is expecting a [celebrity baby](#) with L.A.-based stylist Briana Jungwirth. Fatherhood for Tomlinson was, of course, unforeseen, but luckily he is thrilled about bringing

a [celebrity baby](#) into the world, according to [UsMagazine.com](#). Both Tomlinson and Jungwirth are looking forward to partaking in this changing experience.

This celebrity baby was a surprise, but a happy one! What are some ways to cope with a surprise pregnancy?

Cupid's Advice:

While some sit down and plan to enter parenthood, others are unexpectedly invited with the help of a surprise pregnancy. Cupid has some advice on what to do if you are unexpectedly invited:

1. Educate yourself: It is important to be educated about pregnancy when giving birth. Being well informed makes those 9 months fly by with confidence and excitement. With today's technology constantly improving, the internet is one of the many ways to become educated. Make sure you make a list of everything you are concerned about or need more information on, and use the internet to help you with the answers. Obtain information, but don't take in so much that it becomes overwhelming.

Related Link: [Simon Cowell Gives Louis Tomlinson Parenting Advice in Latest Celebrity News](#)

2. Get a support system: An unforeseen pregnancy may be overwhelming. Talk to your partner, friends or family members to help nail down a plan. These conversations can give you insight into what you can do at tough times during pregnancy. Your support system can also help you prepare and reassure you that you are not making a bad decision.

Related Link: [3 Ways to Support Your Anxious Partner](#)

3. Change your perspective: The questions you ask yourself during pregnancy shape your experience. Instead of looking for who to blame for being pregnant, ensure that you are okay. Ask yourself how you can make the situation better for you and your baby. Find solutions instead of creating more conflicts.

What do you believe are some ways to cope with a surprise pregnancy? Share with us below.

Bristol Palin Announces Second Celebrity Pregnancy



By [Katie Gray](#)

There is another [celebrity baby](#) on board! Bristol Palin recently announced her second celebrity pregnancy. According to [UsMagazine.com](#), Palin released a statement saying, "Honestly, I've been trying my hardest to keep my chin up on this one. At the end of the day, there's nothing I can't do with God by my side, and I know I am fully capable of handling anything that is put in front of me with dignity and grace."

Some celebrity pregnancies aren't happy occasions. What are some ways to announce your unexpected pregnancy to family and friends?

Cupid's Advice:

If you weren't planning on getting pregnant, it can be a tough thing to break to your close friends and family. Cupid has some love advice:

1. Have an intimate conversation: Sometimes being direct is the best course of action. Plan to have an intimate conversation or series of conversations with those close to you. Make sure the mood is calm and positive before you start, and just let them have the news. Make sure you have thought things through and have a pregnancy plan in place so they know you're handling things well.

Related Link: [Bristol Palin Cancels Celebrity Wedding](#)

2. Choose a time not associated with another event: Don't choose your partner's birthday as the time to break the news about your unexpected pregnancy. It's important to be prepared for a wide range of reactions, so you don't want to ruin the lighthearted happiness that typically goes with a birthday celebration.

Related Link: [Bristol Palin Wants More Kids... Someday](#)

3. Buy a sentimental gift: Just because a pregnancy is unexpected doesn't mean it's not a happy occasion. Consider buying a small pair of booties or a onesie that says "Daddy" to announce the pregnancy to your partner. Showing that you're happy about the situation will let your partner know it's okay to have his own feelings about it without having to worry about yours right away.

What are some other ways to announce your unexpected pregnancy? Share your stories below.

'Sons of Anarchy' Star Theo Rossi Is Expecting Celebrity Baby with Wife Meghan McDermott



 By Meranda Yslas

It is [celebrity baby](#) season! [UsMagazine.com](#) confirms that *Sons of Anarchy* star, Theo Rossi, is expecting his first child with wife Meghan McDermott. This soon-to-be first time dad is not nervous at all, but rather he and McDermott are “really excited” about their celebrity baby news. The married celebrity couple’s baby is due in June.

There’s no lack of celebrity babies in Hollywood right now! How do you know whether to have another child with your partner?

Cupid’s Advice:

Having a baby for the first time is fun and exciting, and so is having another! Having a second child is a serious step in your relationship and love and just like the first time around, deciding to have a second child requires planning and commitment from both partners. Here’s some of Cupid’s love advice on deciding whether or not to have another child:

- 1. You feel prepared:** Once you feel that you have a handle on raising your first child, you may be eager to want another. If you feel confident that you will be able to raise two kids at

the same time, then you're ready!

Related Link: [Justin Timberlake Gives Shout Out to Pregnant Celebrity Love Jessica Biel at iHeart Radio Awards](#)

2. Financial Stability: Babies are expensive and it becomes even more expensive when raising two kids. It is always a good idea to have children when you are secure with your finances and are able to provide for them.

Related Link: [Famous Couple Brandon and Leah Jenner Announce Celebrity Pregnancy with Cute Instagram Photo](#)

3. Age gap: Another factor parents take into consideration when deciding to have a second child is the age difference. Do you want your children to be close in age so they will always be friends growing up or would you prefer a big age gap so that the older sibling can act as a mentor to the new baby? Once you and your partner answered this question, you will get an idea of when to start preparing for the second baby.

How did you know you were ready for another child? Share below.

Hilary Duff Says She Loves Her Post-Celebrity Baby Body



By Meranda Yslas

Two years following the birth of her son celebrity baby Luca Cruz, Hilary Duff is loving her post-celebrity baby body, according to [People.com](#). The actress admitted that getting

back into shape wasn't easy, and her body isn't the same as it was before her [celebrity pregnancy](#). "My body is never going to be what it was," the 27 year old celeb shared. "I have stretch marks, my boobs are different- much different! And that's fine and I'm happy with them."

Even celebrity babies cause their moms to struggle with getting back in shape. What are three ways to get secure with your post-baby body?

Cupid's Advice:

Having a baby changes a woman's body and it is can be difficult or even impossible to get the body you had before the pregnancy. You may see things that weren't there before, like stretch marks or some permanent weight gain. These aren't the end of the world and Cupid can offer some self love advice on how to be comfortable in your post-baby body:

1. Say it out loud: For the most part, coming to terms with your body is something you have to accomplish in your mind. Standing in front of the mirror and saying, "I love my body" everyday for awhile just might make you believe it.

Related Link: [Robert Pattison's Celebrity Love FKA Twigs 'Really Wants Kids' Says Source](#)

2. Talking with other moms: It can be hard for friends to try and console you about your post-pregnancy body insecurities if they haven't been through a pregnancy themselves- they don't understand the changes. Try talking to other women who have gone through a pregnancy and see how they got comfortable with their body.

Related Link: [Hilary Duff Says Aaron Carter's Love Declarations Are 'Uncomfortable'](#)

3. Flaunt it: Sometimes pregnancy may make you gain weight in places like your bust or your butt. Rather than try to hide your new attributes, show them off! Wear some great jeans that make your post-pregnancy booty look awesome.

How did you come to accept your post-pregnancy body? Share below?

Gaiam Product Review: Stay Fit During Pregnancy with Desi Bartlett!



 *This post is sponsored by Gaiam.*

By [Rebecca White](#)

Learning how to listen to your body is of the utmost importance, especially during pregnancy. While you're waiting for your bundle of joy to arrive, prenatal yoga will calm your mind, relax you, and build your endurance to prepare you for the journey of motherhood. To help pregnant women everywhere, Gaiam has teamed up with renowned yoga expert Desi Bartlett to create a new workout DVD called [Prenatal Yoga Workout with Desi Bartlett](#). With our product review, find out how you can stay calm throughout your pregnancy and learn some helpful love advice for you and your honey during this time!

Product Review of Prenatal Yoga DVD

Prenatal yoga can be very beneficial for your relationship and love life by keeping you stress-free, fit, and centered. However, it will be even *more* beneficial for your baby as he grows in your belly. “Prenatal exercise, including prenatal yoga, is associated with more efficient oxygen exchange for the baby as well as less clinical interventions during labor and delivery,” Bartlett shares. “It helps with easier labor and delivery as well as recovery time after birth. A sense of calm, security, and trust in our bodies allows mama to remember that her body was designed for this.”

Bartlett, who has over 20 years of experience and has worked with many celebrities, designed the prenatal yoga workout in two sequences so that women would be able to practice yoga in safe, effective segments while achieving inner tranquility. The first sequence is Strong Mama Yoga Workout, which is perfect for increasing strength and endurance, both of which are needed throughout pregnancy and labor. The second sequence is Cool Mama Sequence, which is a great way to maintain flexibility and connect to a deep sense of center and tranquility. Together, they take just over an hour to complete.

The DVD, which currently sells for \$14.98, includes modifications for all three trimesters and allows for adjustments based on energy levels. It also features a warm up and cool down session as well as a Mommy and Me workout for after the baby is born – a quick, six-minute workout designed for new moms to connect with their baby.

Bartlett leaves us with three pieces of advice for staying fit during pregnancy: Don't forget to breathe; workout for five to ten minutes and see how you feel; and squat! “Enjoy your strength and work with it. If you are feeling more mellow, then allow for that, and take it down a little bit to

accommodate your body's needs that day," she explains. "If there is a feeling of weakness, extreme fatigue, or nausea, it's time to stop and consult your medical professional."

Staying fit during pregnancy won't just make your labor and delivery easier. It'll help you bond with your baby and also ensure that you continue to feel sexy for your partner, improving your relationship and love life in amazing ways. You'll be surrounded by good energy before you meet your newest addition!

'Bachelorette' Star Emily Maynard Enjoys Her Celebrity Pregnancy While Taking a Boat Ride with Family



 By Emma L. Wells

Lucky for fans, former *Bachelorette* Emily Maynard is keeping the world up-to-date about her [celebrity pregnancy](#) via Instagram. Last week, the blonde beauty posted a picture of herself with husband Tyler Johnson and daughter Ricki with the caption, "Spring break on a boat." In it, the reality TV star is glowing, and her baby bump is growing! [UsMagazine.com](#) reported that she recently celebrated her celebrity baby shower and shared a sweet photo of the gender reveal cake. Unfortunately, Maynard didn't let out any secrets about her celebrity pregnancy, writing, "The cutest gender reveal cake I ever could've imagined...I'll let you all

know once I tell all our family first ☐ Any guesses?"

This *Bachelorette* star is having fun during her celebrity pregnancy! What are some pre-baby activities you and your partner can do to make this time special?

Cupid's Advice:

Pregnancy is amazing and exciting for you and your significant other, but it can also be hectic and overwhelming. It's important for you to take some time to enjoy this moment! Cupid has some relationship advice to help you do so:

1. Plan a babymoon: Babymoons are quickly becoming more and more popular, and it's easy to see why. Like a honeymoon, you and your sweetheart can get out town for a few days and spend some quality time together. Even if you do a staycation, it can be beneficial for your relationship and love to just relax and enjoy each other's company before there's a new addition to your family.

Related Link: [Celebrity Pregnancy: Former 'Bachelorette' Emily Maynard is Expecting!](#)

2. Take lots of pictures: You're going to want to document this time in your relationship! It can go by fast, and you two will enjoy having pictures and video to look back on. They'll also be great to show your little bundle of joy when they're all grown up. You may even consider getting professional photos taken for you to frame and hang in the nursery.

Related Link: [Former 'Bachelorette' Emily Maynard Marries in Secret Wedding](#)

3. Throw a party: Your pregnancy is a special moment to be shared with everyone you love. Though baby showers are fun, why not throw a party to celebrate you and your partner? Invite your friends and family over and have a great time reminiscing about the past and getting excited for the future. It's also a good opportunity to get some advice from other parents!

What are some pre-baby activities you and your partner have done together? Tell us below!

How to Celebrate the New Year with a New Baby



 By [Courtney Omernick](#)

You may think that all of the fun of New Year's is over because you have a new baby in the house, but guess again! Just because your newborn is taking control of how you spend your time doesn't mean you have to have a dull New Year's celebration. Check out some fun ways to celebrate New Year's with your baby in tow:

1. Host a slumber party: If you have enough space in your home, consider inviting a few of your friends who have children to party at your place. Yes, your house will have even more chaos because of the extra children, but this gives your friends an incentive to get out of the house and celebrate too! You can even have it catered to take some of the pressure off of you and your partner.

Related Link: [Scarlett Johansson Secretly Married Romain Dauriac in October](#)

2. Dress up: If you're planning a night in, you don't have to resort to sweats! Add some sparkle to the event by wearing a skirt or dress (for her) and a bowtie and suit (for him). Make sure to include your new baby in the festivities by dressing them up in a cute outfit too!

Related Link: [Did 'Bachelor' Winner Nikki Ferrell Reveal She Has A New Man?](#)

3. Bring your baby to the party: Obviously, this option depends on the type of party you're attending. After all, you won't want to bring your baby to a loud bar. But if you're going to a friend's house, you might be able to bring your newborn along. If there's a place in your friend's home where you can put your child down for bed, you won't even have to worry about interrupting their usual routine.

How else can you celebrate the New Year with a new baby? Share your ideas in the comments!

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.

You and Your Significant Other Can't Have Kids: Should You Adopt?



By [Courtney Omernick](#)

Making the decision to have children is definitely one that takes some thought. But, if you can't have children the natural way, the adoption process is a whole different thing to think about. Should you or shouldn't you adopt? Hopefully, Cupid's advice below will help make the decision process easier:

1. Get in touch with your emotions: It's very important that you and your partner make sure that you want to adopt a child for all the right reasons before getting involved in the process. Are you doing this out of guilt? Are family members or friends pressuring you into the situation? Make sure you're doing this because you truly want to.

Related: [Kendra Wilkinson Gives Husband Hank Baskett Second Chance After Infidelity](#)

2. Assess your current situation: Secondly, you and your partner are going to want to make sure that even though you may want a child, this is the best possible time to do so. Are you financially ready? Are you ok with the fact that this child may need time to adjust, extra love and care, etc? Get ready to ask yourself a lot of thought provoking questions.

Related: [Jason Derulo Broke Up With Jordan Sparks Over the Phone](#)

3. Determine your support: Do you and your significant other

have family members or friends that are willing to help you take care of the child when need be? Or, can you fall back on certain family members financially if the situation arises? Also, it might be important to consider your employer's benefits. Sometimes companies will provide financial assistance in adoption situations.

Should you adopt? What are some reasons pro or con? Share in the comments section below!

Helping Your Child Through a Divorce



By Patricia Bubash, M.ed, LPC for [Hope After Divorce](#)

In spite of the naysayers who were telling me to not bother spending money to see *Jersey Boys*, I decided to go see the matinee (it was cheaper, of course). And I was glad that I ignored the unfavorable critics. I thought it was an excellent movie: good acting, touching story of poor boys making it big, and music that had everyone clapping, tapping their feet, and enjoying songs from their youth. I anticipate seeing it at least another two times and even buying the DVD when it comes out.

So where does my delight with *Jersey Boys* fit into a site devoted to helping those who are divorced or contemplating the end of their marriage? Not to give away any of the story, but I need to explain how my movie going experience and divorce corresponds.

Growing up, Frankie Valli lived in a low social economic neighborhood, the tough streets of New Jersey. Through determination, grit, drive, and connections, he achieves success and recognition in the entertainment world. And, not so different from the regular guy who must make a living by working overtime and traveling, his career takes over his family time. From the all too common divorce stories, we know the toll that work takes on a marriage. The mother of his three daughters, his first true love, throws Frankie out.

Related Link: [6 Things Women Should Never Do in a Divorce](#)

Just before he packs his two suitcases and departs the family home, Frankie puts his youngest daughter to bed. She asks him to sing to her (oh, how special would that be – a dad who sounded like Frankie Valli to sing you to sleep!). As he is singing, she interrupts him to ask, “Do you like me?”

Watching this scene, I felt a tug in my chest. I experienced flashbacks from conversations with former counseling clients, students, and my own daughters, who all shared similar deep feelings to me as I listened to their familiar, anguished words. Like my students and my kids, there was genuine confusion and puzzlement over *why* dad would no longer be living with them. Did he really have to go? And did they do something to cause him to be mad – mad enough to leave?

Young children often internalize that they are the reason for mom and dad divorcing – you know, the failed math grade, the disciplinary action for talking in class, squabbling with another student, or fighting too much with a sibling. It’s this idea that, “Had I been a better kid, they wouldn’t be divorcing.” The adults are so involved in their own dynamics, focusing on the logistics of getting out of the marriage, that the children’s interpretation of the why goes overlooked.

International star and actress Jennifer Lopez and her husband,

singer Marc Anthony, went through a divorce with young twins. They have seemed to be amicable and respectful in their new co-parenting roles, keeping their focus on their beautiful children. You may become divorced from one another, but you will always be your children's parents together. These ex-spouses set a good example for all divorced parents on how to be respectful in the essential role each parent plays in the lives of their children, both equally important. Lopez recently ended her relationship with longtime boyfriend and dancer Casper Smart. Hopefully, she was able to gently communicate and share this decision with her son and daughter, as it would have been a loss of another relationship for them as well.

When this beautiful child in *Jersey Boys* asked her dad if he liked her, I knew the why of that question. Could it be that her dad really didn't like her and that she was the cause of it? Of course, Frankie assured his beautiful daughter that he loved her. And then he was gone. For many dads and moms who become so involved with work, after divorce, it is often said, "Not only did they divorce their ex but the children as well." It's an adult decision, but it's the kids who struggle most with a new family composition. They are commonly not ever asked what they want, which is the real tragedy in parents divorcing. Why shouldn't our children be asked what they want and what they think? They should at least be heard so parents can take into account knowing how their very own children feel about them dissolving their family.

Related Link: [To Move or Not to Move? Why This Decision is Tough on Kids](#)

As a former educator, school counselor, family advocate, and, most credible of all, a divorced parent, I feel comfortable offering the following suggestions:

– Together, assure your children, "We may no longer want to be together, but we will always love you." You can never

remind them of this truth enough. Your children need to feel secure in the continued love of both parents.

- Be honest. If divorce is imminent, then don't give your children the false hope that you might be together again. Explain the changes: visitation, sharing of holidays, and any possible moves into a new home or school.
- Encourage them to talk with you and truthfully answer their questions.
- Let the school know the situation. Many times, a teacher has come to me with a student acting out, and we discover that the family is going through divorce. Knowing this helps the school in helping the child – thus, the reason for school counselors.
- Don't talk negatively about your ex-spouse in front of your children or even to others when your children might hear your conversation. Speaking despairingly of the other parent (even if it is true!) is like shooting an arrow in your child's heart.

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

Divorce changes our lives and that of our children. It is one of the most difficult and emotional situations for a family to experience. Fortunately, we have resources like Hope After Divorce and Divorce Support Center. And through these resources, we find hope for the future. Our children also need to have hope for better times ahead, and as their parents, we are responsible for providing this hope.

(And go see *Jersey Boys* – it's definitely worth the money and your time!)

To find out more about Hope After Divorce, click [here](#).



Patricia Bubash received her M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Working with students and families has been her true calling for over thirty years. For more than twenty years she has presented workshops at the community college on a variety of topics relating to parenting issues, self-esteem and issues relative to divorce. Patricia is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Missouri and, a Stephen Minister. She

submits a variety of articles related to relationships, marriage and divorce to several internet sites, and, frequently, is interviewed on internet radio stations. Volunteerism, writing and family are most significant in her life. Patricia writes for DivorceSupportCenter.com, HopeAfterDivorce.org, CupidPulse.com, and FamilyShare.com. She can be reached at patriciathecounselor@successfulsecondmarriages.com. Follow Patricia on www.facebook.com/patriciathecounselor.

Co-Parenting Teenagers in the Summertime



 By Lisa LaBelle

Co-parenting and planning summer visitation with teenagers can be challenging and emotionally draining. Hopefully, plans can be worked out peacefully with your ex-spouse – consider Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillippe for a celebrity example – but

there are many who are not so fortunate. The error comes when parents choose to not give their teenagers a voice in planning their time. They don't stop to think about the consequences that occur when their teenagers aren't able to participate in activities and events that are important to them, through no fault of their own.

The solutions are simple. Here are some tips to help with co-parenting during your teenager's summer plans:

Related Link: [Keep Talking to Your Kids After Divorce](#)

Give your teenager a voice:

It's important to sit down one-on-one with your teenager and simply ask what they want their summer to look like. Does your teenager have scout camp, sports camp, music and art classes, academic work, dance camp, team sports, or a summer job? Remember it's not about you; it's about your teenager. Next, have your teenager write out their summer goals, responsibilities, and commitments. Give your teenager a voice in both the verbal and written word.

Be your teenager's true advocate:

Listen to your teenager and offer supportive input. Do your best to work around their activities. Talk with your ex about your teenager's summer commitments peacefully. Encourage your ex-spouse to come and attend any events too. For example, it may be a scout camping trip that he could chaperone with your son or coming to cheer for your teenager in a dance competition.

Encourage your teenager to use their voice:

Encourage your teenager to respectfully use their own voice with both you and your ex-spouse. It's important for your teenager's self-worth to speak directly to both parents concerning their summer plans. It may take some time for your

ex-spouse to adjust to your teenager making their own plans, but it will increase mutual respect.

Be supportive of your teenager *and* ex-spouse:

You, as the custodial parent, will have the role of being supportive to your teenager and your ex-partner as they work out their summer plans. If your ex attempts to bring you into the decision-making process, you simply remind them you are there to offer support, cheering them on in making their plans “together.” After a few times of responding in this peaceful, supportive manner, your ex-spouse will not feel the need to reach out to you for assistance.

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

Remind your teenager you’re there:

Verbally remind your teenager that you are there to be a support as they make summer plans with their other partner. Knowing you are there will naturally build confidence in your teenager’s ability to communicate directly with your ex-partner. You are there to be the main support and to reinforce the importance of your teenager’s voice as plans are being made.

As a co-parent, stay close to your teenager, cheer them on, and encourage them to use their own voices for all summer and year-round planning. The results will be worth it. Communication between you and your teenagers will increase, and a long-lasting, healthier relationship will be the outcome. Your teenager’s own self-respect will improve knowing they do have a voice and that they matter.



Lisa LaBelle is co-founder and co-executive director of Hope After Divorce and Divorce SupportCenter.com. She holds a B.S. degree in Education, and is completing her master's degree in clinical mental health counseling with an emphasis in marriage, child, and family therapy. Lisa is a family and child advocate. She is co-author and co-editor of Hope After Divorce and Divorce Experts Weigh In. Lisa is the co-host of the Life After Divorce CL3 Agency blogtalk radio show. She is a contributing expert for DivorceSupportCenter.com, FamilyShare.com, CupidsPulse.com, and Newport Lifestyle Magazine. You can contact Lisa by visiting www.divorcesupportcenter.com.

10 Date Ideas for the Married Couple with Kids



By Sanetra Richards

Finding time to go out on dates with your spouse can be difficult. The both of you may have hectic work schedules that always seem to get in the way. And it is not just the two of you ... the kids are also in the equation! No matter how hard you may try, planned or spontaneous dates rarely ever happen. Even if you do actually go out, you constantly find yourself worrying about the kids – is the babysitter reliable, what they are doing, and should you hurry back home. Well, fret no more! Cupid has 10 suggestions to help you and your spouse get

away from your routine and schedule some date time for each other:

1. Every day alone time: Who says you can't have a date every day of the week? Believe it or not, it's possible! Join your partner in something that is a part of their daily routine, whether that means an early morning workout or late evening planning session. Quality time with your partner can make a huge difference, especially if you are doing something that brings you together at the start of each day and/or at the very end. Maybe even put the kids to sleep at an earlier time just to have that hour or so to wind down together.

2. Weekend getaways: A short vacation is not only what you may need individually, but also as couple. Work can definitely become overwhelming and you just want a day (or two, maybe three) to sit back and enjoy each other's company, without the pressure and stress of work interfering. A trip to a cabin or a resort sounds nice, right?

Related Link: [Date Idea: Spice Things Up](#)

3. Amusement park: Married couples tend to become accustomed to the the following routine: work, kids, sleep, repeat. Sometimes it's easy to forget what fun feels like. An amusement park is a great place to channel your inner child. Take your spouse on a date to a nearby theme park – enjoy the roller coasters, attractions and games, but most importantly don't forget to laugh!

4. Dance night: What better way to show off your moves than dancing? Schedule a night for dancing it up at your local club. Try something as sassy as salsa or as precise as square dancing. The goal in all of this is to simply have fun.

5. Fishing: Envision a nice day out by the lake, relaxing in a chair, with a fishing rod in the water awaiting a tug. Hardly any disruptions besides the noises of nature and sound of the water. You and your spouse will temporarily be worry-free.

Related Link: [Date Idea: Hot or Cold Night](#)

6. Park picnic: One of the most classic (romantic) dates of all time is a picnic in the park. Create a basket full of you and your partner's favorites, maybe take an activity you will enjoy (frisbee, kites, etc), and voilà! Maybe even consider bringing the kids along and making it a family day.

7. Pick a hobby: Choose an activity that the both of you love to do together. Perhaps yard work, such as gardening or mowing, is therapeutic – use this as a bonding experience and call it a date!

8. Pamper & Polish: Every once in a while, your sweetheart deserves a little TLC (tender, love, and care). Why not be the one to give it to them? Schedule him/her a session at a local spa or create your own at-home spa. If you would rather channel your inner romantic and set up your own spa, here are a few tips: make sure the environment is set nicely – well-lit and scented, relaxing music, and full of peacefulness. Then, give them the best massage they could possibly imagine (with the help of your favorite scented oil). They will appreciate the thought and touch.

Related Link: [Date Idea: Be a "Cheap" Date](#)

9. Comedy show: Laughter is good for the soul, right? Search for tickets to your favorite comedian's show and ask your honey to join you for the night. Get a few laughs in while enjoying the evening.

10. Road trip: Hop in the car and GO! A road trip entails lots of jokes along the way, singing songs on the radio, sightseeing, etc. Make a day out of it – travel down the roads with the most scenery. Take photos to capture the memories and most importantly, enjoy the ride.

Cupid's Weekly Round-Up: Being a Better Parent



By Shannon Seibert

Being a parent is the hardest job out there. There isn't a rule book that gives explicit instructions, and there isn't a how-to guide for every experience your child will go through. It's tough, but it's a blessing. With that thought in mind, we've pulled together five articles from our partners to instill confidence in your parenting skills:

1. There is no such thing as perfect: If there were a dictionary for parenting vocabulary, the word "perfect" wouldn't be found on a single page. Don't stress about being the perfect role model who always makes the right decisions and says the right things. One important lesson for children to learn is that it's okay to make mistakes. Rosie Pope embraces this idea and calls herself "a work in progress!" (CelebrityBabyScoop.com)

2. Yelling doesn't always work: They pull your hair, bring dirt into the house, and rub mysterious substances all over your pristine white walls, and you wonder how you'll get through the day without a meltdown. Patience is a virtue that kids enjoy to test. Instead of yelling at your children when they begin pushing your buttons, here are three things to try to avoid raising your voice. (GalTime.com)

3. A strong relationship is positive encouragement: Kids learn by example. By having a loving relationship with your

significant other, it will stimulate positive life-learning for your children. Avoid having major confrontations in front of your children. In turn, your kids will be more likely to have caring relationships of their own as they grow older. (YourTango.com)


4. Teach your kids to love learning: Education is such a beautiful gift to give to a child. Inspire your kids to want to learn more about the world. Read books aloud, help with their homework, and teach them to ask questions. But don't allow them to rely on you as their only resource. Encourage them to acquire knowledge independently, making the information more meaningful. (GalTime.com)

5. A healthy lifestyle can bring the family together: It can be difficult to get your children to munch on carrots instead of chips. Get creative in the kitchen and get your family moving with group exercise to form lasting bonds with each other. Pull ideas from these tips to work on healthier living. (YourTango.com)

Have any tips for being a more confident parent? Tell us in the comments below!

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



 By Michele Sfakianos, RN, BSN for [Hope After Divorce](http://HopeAfterDivorce.com)

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.

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.

Hang Tough – You’ll Get Through It



 By Janeen Diamond for Hope After Divorce

“When depression sets in, bring on the sugar! Right?”

I don’t know about you, but for me, the winter months are often the hardest to get through. Sometimes, it feels like all I can do is grit my teeth and survive! The snow falls, which is great the first several times, but then it starts to get annoying. The sun rarely shines because of the inversion, and, no matter what I do, I’m freezing all the time.

Such is life. So many of the experiences we encounter remind me of the cold weather. And sometimes, we just have to hang in there and keep the faith that there’s something better waiting for us when it’s all said and done.

Related Link: [Cupid’s Weekly Round-Up: Fixing Your Relationship](#)

Maybe you’re going through a divorce. Maybe you have financial pressures that are holding you back. Maybe your kids are giving you grief. But no matter what, just remember: This too

shall pass. Here are a few ideas for hanging tough and coming out the other side in one piece:

Keep yourself healthy and hydrated. When depression sets in, bring on the sugar! Right? Well, try to practice moderation with the chocolate and eat more vegetables instead. You'll feel a whole lot better and may even beat the blues. I notice that, when I don't drink enough water, I start to feel run down and tired. Staying hydrated is an easy fix that we sometimes don't even think about.

Slow down a bit. Sleep a little more, and work a little less. We sometimes put a lot of pressure on ourselves to take care of things that really aren't all that important in the grand scheme of things. If you feel you need a nap, take one. If you want a day of doing nothing, do it.

Related Link: [How to Get Over the Relationship Blues](#)

Look for the positive. Winter may be rough, but the freshly fallen snow is beautiful. You may be in the throws of divorce, but soon, you'll be able to begin a new life. You may be feeling financial pressure, but you're always free to look for a new opportunity to help you rise above it. Your kids may be causing trouble, but it's all part of discovering who they are – and one day, they will make you proud.

One thing is certain. Winter will end, and spring will begin. And there is definitely nothing more beautiful than watching the grass become green and the flowers start to blossom. I've come to realize if the grass were always green and the flowers were always in bloom, we wouldn't be nearly as grateful as we are when we can watch the transition happen right before our eyes. So hang in there. Things are about to change!

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



Janeen Diamond was a newscaster for KUTV News until 2001. Since then, she has been actively producing commercials and special programming through her company, "Your TVSpot." She has hosted several television and internet productions and has been a spokesperson for many products and companies. She authored her first book, "Save Your Marriage in 30," hoping to help families have greater success and live happier lives. She is co-creator of "Teen Impact TV," a website for high school students to give them a creative and emotional outlet. Janeen is a contributing expert for HopeAfterDivorce.org, FamilyShare.com and LAFamily.com. Follow her blog, <http://saveyourmarriagein30.blogspot.com/>.

Single in Stiletto Show: Best Dating Tips for Single Moms



In this week's [Single in Stiletto](#) show, founder Suzanne Oshima talks to author and lifestyle expert Kerri Zane about

dating as a single mom. Zane knows from personal experience just how hard it can be for single moms to enter the dating world. In 2001, her 12-year marriage fell apart, leaving her feeling scared and unsure about the future. During her post-divorce journey, she learned how to forgive herself, how to listen to her intuition, and how to embrace her power to make her own choices.

Related Link: [Would You Date a Single Parent?](#)

Now, Zane wants you to live happily ever after too. In this video interview, she answers questions like: When is the right time to start dating again? How do you balance dating and parenthood? How do you tell a new guy that you have kids? And how do you handle men who don't want to date single moms?


For more information about Single in Stiletto's shows, click [here](#).

For more videos from CupidsPulse.com, check out our [YouTube channel](#).

Cupid wants to know: What's your best dating tip for single moms?

How to Date when You're a Single Parent



 By April Littleton

Being a single parent has its challenges – especially when it comes to dating. When you're raising children on your own or

co-parenting, getting back into the dating pool is hard. You're not sure how your kids will adapt to someone new hanging around. Plus, is it even worth it to try to give your heart to someone else? Cupid has some tips:

1. Take your time

You don't have to rush into a relationship with anyone. You have your kids to think about and they don't need to be introduced to a new person every single week. When you're ready to start dating again, take it slow. Don't worry about what other people think. You start to date when you feel like it's the right time, not when anyone else says you should start testing the waters again.

2. Explain to your kids

When you do start to see someone new, you need to prepare your children for the situation. Whether they are too young to understand what you're telling them or not, you still need to let them know you're going to spending some time with her person who isn't their mother/father. Reassure them that the new love in your life isn't there to take the place of their other parent, but you're simply hanging out with someone else on a romantic level. Your children will have plenty of questions. Try your best to answer each one of them honestly without getting into any specific details about your love life.

Related: [The Do's and Dont's of Speed Dating](#)

3. Introduction

You obviously don't need someone who you've only been dating for a short time to meet your children. However, if things get serious between you and your new potential love interest, you need to start thinking about introducing your honey to the other important people in your life. Make sure your new

boyfriend/girlfriend already knows about your kids (that should have been one of the first things you told them when you first started dating) before you set up a date for the whole gang to meet. When the day does come for the outing, make sure you keep the activities fun, short and to the point.

Related: [How to Handle a Clingy Partner in a Relationship](#)

4. Be courteous

Be careful how much PDA you should – especially in front of your children. Everyone will need to adjust to you dating someone new, so make sure to avoid any situations that could be uncomfortable and/or hurtful to your kids. Also, your new partner might not be too fond of the idea of the two of you sharing serious affection for each other in public anyway.

5. Keep your past where it belongs

Your ex shouldn't be involved in any part of your love life. Don't bring him/her up unless the reason has something to do with the children you have together. If you want to develop a serious relationship with the new man/woman in your life, they don't need a constant reminder of the feelings you and your former flame once had for each other. You need to start living your life for you and your kids. Who you date has nothing to do with your ex and vice versa.

Do you have any additional advice for a single parent who's dating again? Comment below.

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.

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.

Top 3 Non-Negotiable Questions You Need to Think About Before Filing for Divorce



By Mark Baer

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Some married couples live together with their children. When those children grow up and move out of their parents' home, does that mean that they are no longer a family? Some married couples with children don't live together because of their work commitments and for other such reasons. Does that make them any less of a family? Religious beliefs aside, some couples such as Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell have children together, but were never married. Aren't they still a family? Married couples with

children sometimes divorce. Does that mean that they are no longer a family? If you think about it, the nature of their relationship changed from being married with children to being unmarried with children. I'm afraid that when a couple has children together, their marital status does not control their status as a family.

Many may define a "perfect" family as one in which the parents are married and in love with each other. I opted to use the word "perfect" because that was the term and definition used by a minor child of divorce, who was interviewed in a documentary film by Ellen Bruno titled "SPLIT." While his family may not be "perfect," as defined by him, I promise you he still considers it a family.

What do you want your family to look like in the future?

Like it or not, if there are children of the relationship (regardless of their age), the family still exists after the relationship ends. The manner in which you end a relationship determines whether your family will be functional or dysfunctional from that day forward. Life is like physics – for every action there is a reaction – cause and effect. As I like to say, outcomes are determined by the way in which the "game" is designed.

Parents are correct in the notion that causing the children to take sides can be extremely useful in their divorce game of chess. However, unlike chess, divorce is not a game and children are not pawns. Parents need to understand that what they do, say and how they act toward the other parent has long-term consequences. The things people do with or without the assistance of their attorneys have consequences that will last for generations to come. "When you start a court case, you are starting a war," says Justice Harvey Brownstone. Parents should always remember that the casualties in such a war are the members of the family itself, including the

children, who become collateral damage.

Related: [5 Ways to Turn Your Relationship Around](#)

What type of attorney, if any, do you want?

While it may be expressed in many different ways, the selection of an attorney is the most significant factor in determining how a case will proceed. While an attorney's competency is extremely important, the selection process should not be limited to that aspect. After all, the attorney's personality and overall philosophy with regard to family law are of great importance.

It is not prudent merely to consult with an "experienced family law attorney." I have been trying desperately to educate the public that they need to consult with "competent and caring" family law attorneys. By the way, assertiveness is part of their competency. However, they should not be seeking out lawyers described as "sharks," "pit bulls" or "aggressive." The involvement of such attorneys typically leads to suboptimal results, destroys families and costs a great deal of money in the process. People must never confuse aggression and assertion. Words have meaning.

Remember, while you might win the battle, you can still lose the war. When families are involved, destructive behavior has consequences that can be felt long after the "case" is over. Is it the attorneys or the clients, their children and their families that get to live with those consequences? The personality and philosophy of the attorneys involved in a case have far more impact than people realize. Please keep this in mind when selecting your "teammates."

Related: [Five Secrets Truly Happy Couples Know](#)

Which divorce process is right for you?

When people think of divorce, they typically think of

litigation, which is the “default process.” What that means is that their case will be litigated, unless they “opt out” of that process. Other available processes are DIY (do it yourself), mediation, collaborative divorce, lawyer-to-lawyer negotiation, arbitration (keep in mind that certain types of matters may not be arbitrated in family law), private judging (if permitted in any particular jurisdiction). Unfortunately, family law is not spandex and there is no “one-size-fits-all.” However, people should consider certain things before making a decision regarding process.

First, litigation is an adversarial process in which both parties play to “win.” When a family is involved and both spouses are playing to “win,” the family dynamic is destroyed. An unfortunate byproduct of litigation is that it exacerbates the level of conflict, increases distrust and breeds paranoia. Doesn’t it make more sense to resolve family matters in a process that is designed to reduce the level of conflict and rebuild trust?

Second, a significant problem with mediation is the fact that the term itself is vague. Mediation could be evaluative, facilitative or transformative. Which of those approaches does one mean when they refer to mediation? It should also be noted that mediation is unregulated in most places, including California. Thus, a person can practice as a ‘mediator’ without ever having received any formal training. It is therefore strongly advised that you do your homework before selecting a mediator.

Third, collaborative divorce is an interdisciplinary team approach to family law. It is based upon specialization of labor, not duplication. In addition to the parties themselves, the team consists of attorneys, mental health and financial professionals. Collaborative teams are no different from any other team in that they are only as strong as their weakest member. Collaboration only works when the professionals involved are like-minded individuals who actually trust one

another.

Related: [Finding Your True Destiny After Losing Love](#)

Fourth, lawyers do serve a necessary and useful purpose in family law matters and for society as a whole. For one thing, they warn of unforeseen “what- ifs.” Furthermore, words have meaning and the difference between “may” and “shall” could substantially change the meaning of a provision. Lawyers are wordsmiths in that regard. Moreover, divorce is a legal process.

Fifth, unless a matter is decided by a judge or arbitrator, the couple involved makes the ultimate decisions. According to a new study conducted at UC Davis, people had a clear preference for mediation and other forms of consensual dispute resolution over those forms of dispute resolution in which they relinquished their decision making authority.

Mark Baer assists people in becoming independent of their spouses or significant others with integrity, by evaluating and facilitating solutions that are respectful to each other and their families. He accomplishes this by providing a thoughtful, creative, and caring environment. His vision and experience equip people with a new set of skills that strengthen and empower them to better cope with future challenges.

Cupid's Weekly Round-Up: Staying Warm With Family



 By Maria Darbenzio

With temperatures remaining on the low end of the thermometer, it's easy to want to stay snuggled by the fire drinking hot cocoa. Although that sounds like a pretty great way to spend your day and night, it's smart to have some other ideas to help you stay warm with your loved ones this winter. Take a look through these articles from our partners for some great suggestions:

1. Take a trip: If the weather is getting to you and you've just about had enough, take a break from the cold winter air. Considering how busy you are between work and family, you deserve a vacation! Try somewhere warm where you can bask in the sun while your children play in the sand. Check out these famous families that have been doing just that. (CelebrityBabyScoop.com)

2. Be careful: You're off to the beach and ready to spend your day soaking up the sun. Even though Valentine's Day is right around the corner, not everything has to be red. So make sure to keep your skin and eyes healthy by lathering on that sunscreen and wearing your shades. (GalTime.com)

3. Arrange your gear: If you can't take a trip to somewhere hot, be sure to bundle up before going outdoors. Stay organized this season by keeping all of your cold weather gear sorted neatly. The last thing you want is to be headed out the door in a rush with only one glove. (GalTime.com)

4. Stay happy: No matter what your plans are, spend each moment with your family in pure happiness. Let them know how much they mean to you. Taking time to have fun and get away from a hectic schedule is the perfect way to spend this winter, whether it be in your own backyard or on a sunny beach somewhere. (YourTango.com)

5. Appreciate the little things: Eric Micha'el Leventhal once said, "There is no greater treasure in this world than somebody who loves you as you are." Learn to fully appreciate

where you are in life and celebrate your relationships. Check out some of these other awesome quotes about gratitude. (YourTango.com)

How do you plan on staying warm for the rest of winter? Tell us in the comments below!