

Christmas: A Personal Story

The Christmas Season is often the most difficult time for separated dads and families. There are many dads and grandparents who will not see their children during this holiday. It is also a time when disputes and conflicts over parenting access are common.

Thoughts

1. Please prepare yourself for all possibilities and guard against any erratic behavior by yourself or your former partner.
2. Reach out to friends or relatives and ask for their support. Many of us find that 'reaching out' to be difficult. .
3. Focus on making your time with your children the best time possible. Depending on the place your family is in the separation process, many children of all ages are going to be struggling with two Christmas homes, divided families and loyalty tug-of- wars.
4. Don't spend more than you can afford. Older children know your reality- younger children enjoy simpler things. Partner up with other family members for larger purchases.
5. If you have a new partner and a second family- enjoy and appreciate the gifts that they provide- of love, support and new Christmas traditions. I learned and my children learned that there are many different ways to celebrate the season. See this as an opportunity to create new traditions and not imitate the old.

A Christmas Story (A Personal Story)

For three years, the Christmas season was without a doubt the most difficult time of years marked by difficult struggles. My close relationship with my oldest daughter had become distant and we were in danger of long lasting damage. I was in deep despair and at a loss as to how to change what had taken place.

It unexpectedly occurred on Christmas Eve at about midnight. My Santa came not down the chimney but with a simple knock on my door. I hesitatingly answered and found my daughter with her boyfriend. They were quickly ushered in and for the next two hours we talked and talked about her life, the life that I had missed sharing for some time. The past did not matter, the present and future did.

What happened that Christmas Eve was based on the courage of my daughter to change what had gone before. Her own resolve to take a bold and unpredictable step that changed our lives forever had been encouraged by her boyfriend's mother (bless her).

My Christmas message is that each of us has to be prepared to create or seize that unpredictable, courageous moment through our own actions or the boldness of our children. I believe that joyful experience can and will happen for every separated parent or grandparent, often at the most unexpected time. I can point to three of these life-changing events, one with each of my children. They are such that you just know that what you have struggled to achieve is now possible.