



**Winter 2022:** Christmas can be a difficult time for families of a different faith or those who are co-parenting but make sure you let your child know they should be celebrated at all times!

## Co-parenting at Christmas

### Make plans way in advance

Christmas is a time for families to come together and share the magic and the memories. Which is why it's a really difficult time for parents who are separated or divorced. Conversations to sort out arrangements are fraught with emotion. It's often very hard to come up with a solution that pleases everyone. Is it ever really possible to have a truly happy Christmas after separation? The key to co-parenting at Christmas is all about communication and compromise.



### Try different communication channels

Sometimes your relationship has broken down to such a point that you find you can't talk together without arguing or letting emotions get in the way. If so, it's important to find a new way forward. It might be easier to communicate through email rather than face to face. Or you could try mediation so that an impartial professional can help you talk.

### Consider what your children want.

Often very young children will worry about whether Santa knows where to deliver their presents. As long as you reassure them about these kinds of details, they will cope. Older children might have a preference for where they spend Christmas and why. Listen to them and see if you can find a solution that works best for you all.

### Consider the extended family too

Whatever arrangements you discuss, do consider how you will keep opportunities for your children to join in festive days with their extended family. Once again, this might mean making compromises but it's worthwhile. It allows them to build strong family bonds and spend time with all their relatives.

### Share the Christmas between you

There are many ways to come to an agreement about who will see the kids and when. All will include some compromise and sharing of those special days.

### Be realistic about this Christmas being different

A common worry for separated parents is that Christmas after a break-up will no longer be perfect. It helps to reset your expectations of Christmas. Yes – it will be different, but you can still make it magical for the children. You can still carry on with your Christmas traditions with the kids. Or if they are no longer possible, (or difficult to do without your partner), then you can create new ones that you can hopefully all enjoy for years to come.

### Be prepared for feeling sad about the changes

Christmas after a breakup can be hard. It's OK to not be OK. Allow yourself to feel sad and to have a cry if you need to. Then plan in some things to take your mind off it all.

### Once you've agreed a plan present a united front

Once you've agreed to a schedule then work together to make it the best you can for your children.

### Don't try to out-do each other

It's tempting to spend more and do more to try and compensate for the fact that Christmas will be different this year.

### Make plans if you spend Christmas without the kids

If you won't be with your children on Christmas Eve or Christmas day, make other plans so that you don't feel lonely and upset.

## Families of different faiths

The holidays are a wonderful time of the year for most families but not everyone celebrates them. For a family that is not Christian and does not celebrate Christmas, the holidays can be a very frustrating time.

Non-Christian children often feel left out, and do not understand why they should not be allowed to celebrate or participate in the festivities. During Christmas, the differences from their friends and fellow classmates stand out significantly. Children may question why their friends get visits from Santa, exchange gifts and participate in other holiday events like Christmas plays.

As a parent when your family does not celebrate Christmas, it is important to remember that while Christmas is a religious holiday, it has become more of a social tradition, with families who are not extremely religious or Christian often celebrating simply to allow their children to feel included. It is important to let your child know that your family traditions are equally important. It is also helpful to surround them with other non-observing children and community members at this time, so that they feel validated and accepted.

Make sure to celebrate your own holidays. Build your own traditions with them and when you can, celebrate with others of the same faith.

Encourage your child to invite a friend to join in their unique festivities when appropriate. Volunteer to share information about unique cultural traditions at their school if possible. Your child will have a sense of pride getting to explain your traditions to someone who has not been involved in them before, just like their friends explain their own Christmas traditions to your child.

Christmas can be a difficult time for families of a different faith, but make sure you let your child know their differences should be celebrated!

## THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PERFECT PARENT

Perfect parents don't exist. There might be parents who look like they've got it all together. But we never know what's going on behind closed doors (or behind an Instagram filter). Even those we know well probably don't tell us everything going on in their lives. If we spend our time comparing our 'work in progress' with everyone else's 'finished product', then we're always going to feel inadequate – we will never be able to match up. Ditching comparisons can help to set us free.

There is no such thing as a perfect parent, but there are parents who are trying to do their best for their children in the face of all sorts of adversity. We are not alone. Our best is good enough.



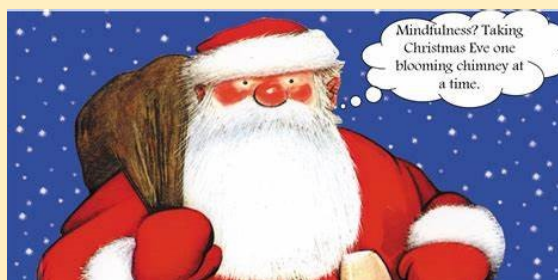
## How can you use **mindfulness** to cope with holiday stress?

In an effort to be more productive, we often try to do multiple things at once. I'm often multi-tasking even though I know it doesn't actually accomplish more. It usually just means that I'm only partially paying attention to each task and then the quality suffers. This is true whether I'm writing, reading, cooking, or watching TV.

Staying mindful, or present-focused, can help you enjoy the holidays (and everyday life). Fully attending to your feelings and activities can decrease anxiety, depression, and stress.

Mindfulness can restore the pleasure of life's ordinary and extraordinary moments.

- 1. Do less.** Most people think they need more time in order to get everything done. The holidays are stressful with all the extra commitments and errands. Instead of trying to figure out how to cram more into every day, try doing less — less shopping, less cooking, less wrapping, less travelling. Giving up some of the things about the holidays that drain you and stress you out allows you to more fully enjoy what remains. You can be less busy and more present.
- 2. Enjoy the process not just the outcome.** Try to slow down and savour the process of baking with your kids, decorating the house. Let them make them all uneven and messy. Don't make it just about the finished product, but about spending time, building memories, and connecting.
- 3. Step away from your phone/computer/TV.** They are a distraction and make it nearly impossible to be truly mindful and present.
- 4. Take the opportunity to really connect with others.** Mindfulness allows us to deeply connect with our friends and family. When we give our full attention, listen with interest, and engage as if we really want to be with them, they will share more, smile more, and allow us to really know them.
- 5. Spend time alone.** I think about spending time alone as an opportunity to connect with myself. Alone time is the easiest way to pay attention to your feelings, your physical and emotional needs. If you're uncomfortable being alone, start with five minutes and work your way up to 20 or 30 minutes. You may actually find you're a pretty cool person to know!
- 6. Try something new.** Doing something new increases mindfulness because you're more likely to pay attention and focus on the novelty. There are so many new things to try that may bring new life to your holiday – a new recipe, a different church service, a different type of family gift exchange, hosting a different type of holiday party.
- 7. Get out from behind the camera.** Well, a compromise. I think photos usually boost happiness, so I'm not against taking photos. But, don't spend so much time behind the camera, trying to get the perfect shot, that you miss out on what you're doing and why you're doing it.
- 8. Play.** Don't be too busy to really play. Play with your kids, your dog, your partner. Adults need playtime too! Think about what's fun for you (sometimes remembering what you liked as a child can help) and make it happen. No excuses!
- 9. Practice gratitude every single day.** Gratitude can be a mindfulness practice that you do internally by noticing and saying to yourself, "I'm so happy to have this job." Or "I really enjoyed having coffee with John. That was a real treat." But like a lot of things, gratitude is even better when it's shared. Try actually saying, "John, I really enjoyed our conversation. I'm so glad you're in my life." Thank you notes are wonderful as well. When gratitude is expressed, it's a gift to both the receiver and the giver.



You have a choice in how you spend your holiday season. It doesn't have to be a massive to-do list and stuffed full of things that you simply do out of obligation or tradition. **Mindfulness** is an effective way to cope with holiday stress. Most of them are simple and free!



Make decorations out of furnishings!

Festive recycling tree



Cone gnomes and cone trees



Personalised gifts: cheap and cheerful chocolate bars!



**Holiday Parenting Tip:**

Make sure you are stocked up on batteries for Christmas morning  
(Unless you want to see your child's joy go from a 10 to a 0 in less than 60 seconds.)

FB / My Little Villagers      www.MyLittleVillagers.com



Easy festive cupcakes

**HOW TO REMOVE PERMANENT MARKER FROM EVERYTHING**

KitchenCraftyFun.com

- CLOTHES – USE HAND SANITIZER
- WALLS – USE TOOTHPASTE OR HAIRSPRAY
- WOOD – USE RUBBING ALCOHOL
- CARPET – USE WHITE VINEGAR
- FURNITURE – USE MILK
- WHITE BOARD – USE DRY ERASE MARKER OR PENCIL RUBBER ERASER
- CERAMIC OR GLASS – USE 1 PART TOOTHPASTE WITH 1 PART BAKING SODA



Use Sharpies to personalise glassware

**Personalised picture cards**

THEBESTIDEASFORKIDS.COM

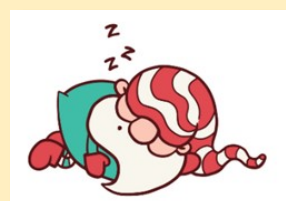
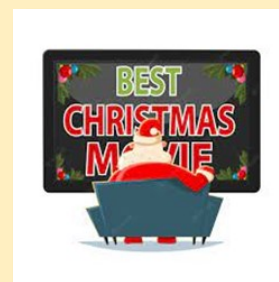


## Teens: Take time to relax

The long break we get from school is the perfect time to indulge in some self-care.

Being a teen is hard and emotionally draining so any time we have to ourselves can be used to look after ourselves. Here's some ideas:

1. Watch your favourite Christmas films with your family - remember that Christmas is the perfect time to spend some quality time with your family and snuggling down with a good film is the perfect why to do this.



2. Sleep! Parents need to remember how important sleep is for teens, our brains are developing so much in these years and sleep is essential to this - if your teen feels they need to catch up on sleep over the break, let them!

3. Bake something! Spend a day making something from scratch and make your favourite sweet treat to share with your family. Don't worry about making it perfect or getting it right, just enjoy the process.

4. Making a physical reminder of Christmas memories could be a good way to remember to be present and have a nice time with your family - making a scrap book or using a disposable film camera to make memories could be a positive way to spend time at Christmas and have something you can keep forever.



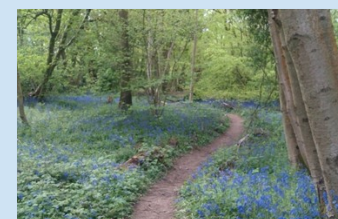
## Get productive!

Set yourself one task to finish over the Christmas period (for children and teens this could be before they go back to school, and for parents this could be before new year).

Achieving something, even something small, can help us feel better about ourselves and give us the motivation to keep pushing through the hard times.

For example:

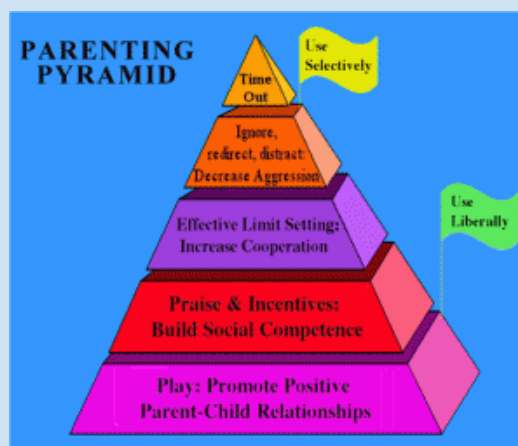
- Finish that book you've been meaning to read. Give yourself a date to finish, or a certain number of pages to read each day.
- Do that art project you've been wanting to do.
- Finish that DIY project you know needs to be done in the house.
- Learn that song on your instrument you've always wanted to be able to impress your friends with.
- Fix that piece of clothing that's had a hole in it for months.



## Family walks

One of the best ways we can practice mindfulness is by going on a long walk. The cold weather and possibility of snow makes walking at this time of year particularly magical - wrap up warm and get outside!

[Top 5 Walks around Reading](#)





## 5th December is International Volunteer Day!

Why is volunteering important?

Volunteering is important as it offers essential help to worthwhile causes, people in need, and the wider community. Indeed, many organisations and charities rely on the generosity of volunteers as often they're only part-funded through government or local councils, and cannot afford to pay salaries for all their staff. In fact, many charities depend almost solely upon teams of volunteers to help them thrive and do their work.

But did you realise just how important volunteering could be for the person doing it? In fact, volunteering is beneficial to the doer for a whole host of reasons, including stress reduction, combating depression and providing a sense of purpose.

If you're feeling lonely, isolated, or simply want to widen your social circle, volunteering in your local community is an important – and often fun – way to meet new people. In fact, one of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity together, and volunteering lets you do just that.



## Wellbeing apps for kids

### Under 5s: CBeebies Go Explore: Learn

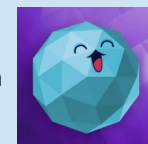
- Helps children learn a variety of topics including wellbeing in a hands-on way
- Helps with numeracy and literacy skills, also helps children practice wellbeing exercises like breathing techniques



[CBeebies Go Explore app](#)

### Ages 4 to 12: Mindful Powers

- Skills-based approach that helps children build a healthier relationship with life, stress and anxiety
- Empowers kids to bring calm to their lives
- 10 progressive and interactive voice-guided sessions
- Kids sooth their own 'flibbertigibbet' who is agitated



[Mindful Powers™](#)

### Age 9 plus- Three Good Things

- Encourages users to write down three things that went well for them each day
- Advice using the app 10 minutes per day
- Encourages child to practice gratitude



[Three Good Things](#)

To contact the BB4K team, please email us at [BB4K@pactcharity.org](mailto:BB4K@pactcharity.org) or find out more about us here on our website: [pactcharity.org/bb4k](http://pactcharity.org/bb4k).

*Please note: the BB4K team will not be working between Christmas and New Year.*

**Wishing you a merry Christmas from BB4K and everyone at PACT!**

