



Navigating the Holiday Season with Children

Now that you've explored this holiday season and what you'd like it to look like, it's time to think about how best to manage this season if you have children. Because children are so frequently a part of the holidays, we wanted to provide a guide for you to consider in navigating the holiday season with children after sexual betrayal.

Questions to consider if you and your partner are working to restore your relationship

If you and your partner are working to restore your relationship after sexual betrayal and you are navigating the holiday season with your children, consider the following questions:

1. What holiday traditions would you like to preserve for the kids / family this year? What traditions need to be modified? What would you like taken out this year? Is there anything new you would like to add to your traditions this year?

2. How will you communicate these changes to your children? If you haven't disclosed any information about the sexual betrayal, you will most likely need to share something with the kids, as this holiday season will most likely look different than those in years past. Consider what you'd like to say, and how you'd like to say it. For example, *"Daddy broke a promise and lied to Mommy, so Mommy is feeling sad. Daddy is trying to tell the truth now because he feels sad that he broke a promise and lied to Mommy. Even though we*

are sad. You didn't do anything wrong, and you didn't cause this. We are doing things differently this year, but we love you very much and nothing will ever change that." Note, it's important for the betraying party to be the one to initiate disclosure to children. Also, because every situation is unique, we recommend talking to a professional before disclosing to your children. What would you like to communicate to your children this holiday season?

3. What are your family expectations this holiday season? Do you know what your children(s)' expectations are? If so, list them here and talk about what is realistic to meet this year. If the expectations aren't realistic, how will you communicate any changes to your children?

4. Often times, the holidays are a time focused on kids. If you and your partners are working to provide a holiday experience like you may have had (or wanted to have had), how will you make this happen post discovery / disclosure of sexual betrayal? What

ways can you and your partner work proactively to manage triggers for the sake of the kids? What supports will you need to make this happen?

5. It is common that gifts are a big part of the holiday season for many families. Will there be any changes in gift traditions for the kids? Have you considered who will be buying gifts and what the budget will be? Don't assume it will be the same as other years. Will there be any difference in gift traditions or expectations for each other? If you decide to change gift giving with your partner, the kids will likely notice and possibly guess reasons for that. Remember, if home has been tense, and more gifts are given to make up for that, kids will likely wonder about that too. What would you say to the kids to explain changes? What supports will you need to make this happen?

6. You may be traveling this year or having others travel to you. If this is the case, we recommend completing the travel guidelines exercises to follow. As you prepare for

travel, you'll also need to prepare the children for any differences this holiday season. What are the differences this year and what would you like to communicate with your children about the changes this year verses previous years? You may need to work with a trusted counselor, coach, or trusted support for this.

7. It is common that gifts are a big part of the Holiday season for many families. Will there be any changes in gift traditions for the kids? Have you considered who will be buying gifts and what the budget will be? Don't assume it will be the same as other years. Will there be any difference in gift traditions or expectations for each other? If you decide to change gift giving with your partner, the kids will likely notice and possibly guess reasons for that. Remember, if home has been tense, and more gifts are given to make up for that, kids will likely wonder about that too. What would you say to the kids to explain changes? What supports will you need to make this happen?

8. If you have adult children, things will also be different this year. You'll need to consider carefully what you communicate to your children, how much you and your partner are ready to share, and what you'll share. What would you like to communicate to your adult children about what's different this year and why? Again, we recommend that the betraying party take the lead on this conversation and share enough information without sharing too much detail. You can always leave room for further questions should your children want to know more information. Consider working with a safe professional to help you navigate this conversation. Write your thoughts on what you'd like to be different this year and what you'd like to communicate with your children:

9. Do you have any other needs this year to consider based on your unique situation? Write down any further needs, boundaries, or requests from your own situation to be addressed:

Questions to consider if you are separated or divorced / divorcing

If you and your partner are separated or no longer in a relationship this holiday season, you still need to create a plan for how you will navigate this season as parents to your children. Though the holidays this year may be different than those in years past, you still remain parents to your children. Because you are parents together, it's important that you and your partner carefully consider how best to parent together, especially during a difficult time like the holidays.

Consider the following questions. As you work through these questions separately from your partner, determine the best way to communicate your answers to these questions and any other unique issues that relate to your situation. You may need to work with a therapist or mediator to help you navigate this process. For more helpful tips, read Katie Sanford's article on *Co-parenting in the Midst of Sex Addiction Discovery*: <https://www.banyantherapy.com/co-parenting-midst-sex-addiction-discovery/>.

1. Though you won't be in a committed relationship with your partner this year, what holiday traditions would you like to preserve for the kids / family this year? What traditions need to be modified? What would you like taken out this year Is there anything new you would like to add to your traditions this year?

2. How will you communicate these changes to your children? If you haven't disclosed any information about the sexual betrayal, you will most likely need to share something with the kids, as this holiday season will most likely look different than those in years past. Consider what you'd like to say, and how you'd like to say it. For example, *"Daddy broke a promise and lied to Mommy, so Mommy is feeling sad. Daddy is trying to tell the truth now because he feels sad that he broke a promise and lied to Mommy. Even though we are sad. You didn't do anything wrong, and you didn't cause this. We are doing things differently this year, but we love you very much and nothing will ever change that."* Note, it's important for the betraying party to be the one to initiate disclosure to children when

possible. Also, because every situation is unique, we recommend talking to a professional before disclosing to your children. What would you like to communicate to your children this holiday season? Even if your relationship won't be continuing as a couple, it can still be very helpful for the children to understand what's happening and to see your commitment to them as parents.

3. How will you manage this conversation since you and your partner are no longer in a committed relationship? We recommend you work this out with a trusted guide.

4. What are your family expectations this holiday season? Do you know what your children(s)' expectations are? If so, list them here and talk about what is realistic to meet this year. If the expectations aren't realistic, how will you communicate any changes to your children?

5. Often times, the holidays are a time focused on kids. Though you and your partner may not be together this year, you may be working to provide a holiday experience like you may have had (or wanted to have had). If you are trying to create a special holiday experience for your children, how will you make this happen post discovery / disclosure of sexual betrayal and post dissolution of your relationship? What ways can you and your partner work proactively to manage triggers for the sake of the kids? What supports will you need to make this happen? How will you manage the triggers, pain, and other feelings/reactions that surface for you this year as you co-parent?

6. It is common that gifts are a big part of the Holiday season for many families. Will there be any changes in gift traditions for the kids? Will you be buying separate gifts? What will be the budget? If you are still buying gifts together, who will shopping for them? Will you have the kids open them with both parents present or not? If the family is still opening gifts together, what do you want to do about gifts for each other and how will you explain changes to the kids? If you are not having the kids open gifts with both parents present, be sure to avoid having the kids be the delivery of gifts between

parents. That may be a violation of boundaries and puts the kids in the middle. What will you say to the kids to explain changes? What supports will you need to make this happen?

7. You may be traveling this year or having others travel to you. If this is the case, we recommend completing the travel guidelines exercises to follow. As you prepare for travel, you'll also need to prepare the children for any differences this holiday season. What are the differences this year and what would you like to communicate with your children about the changes this year verses previous years? You may need to work with a trusted counselor, coach, or trusted support for this.

8. If you are on a therapeutic separation this year, you'll also need to determine how to navigate this with your children. Look at the questions above: What would you like to communicate to your children about your separation and why things are different this year? How can you reassure your children during this scary time that you are committed

to them and that though you don't know what the future holds you are working to continue healing yourselves and your relationship when possible?

9. If you are on a therapeutic separation, are there any other needs that you and your partner need to address this holiday season? If so, write them here and how you can address these needs together and with your children:

10. If you have adult children, things will also be different this year. You'll need to consider carefully what you communicate to your children, how much you and your partner are ready to share, and what you'll share. What would you like to communicate to your adult children about what's different this year and why? Again, we recommend that the betraying party take the lead on this conversation and share enough information without sharing too much detail. You can always leave room for further questions should your children want to know more information. Consider working with a safe professional to

help you navigate this conversation. Write your thoughts on what you'd like to be different this year and what you'd like to communicate with your children:

11. Do you have any other needs this year to consider based on your unique situation to address as co-parents to your children? Write down any further needs, boundaries, or requests from your own situation to be addressed and how you will address them in a safe, amicable way:
