



Reduce The Stress Of Holiday Parenting



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Unbelievably, the holiday season is once again upon us. This is a time when one reflects upon family more than other times of the year. A time when we look to old and comfortable memories of our childhood. Unfortunately, when one is faced with a breakup of a marriage, or other relationship, where children are involved, these times may be difficult and painful. As practicing matrimonial attorneys,

my partner, Mary Cay Trace, and I, each with almost a quarter century experience, can tell you that these times are difficult on your children as well. We all want to spend as much holiday time with our children as possible. And, unwittingly, often parents add to the stress on the children by arguing over how and where the children will be spending time during the holiday

season. One way to avoid a portion of the stress upon the children is to have some certainty as to when and where the children will enjoy holidays.

The courts routinely defer to the holiday schedules agreed upon by the parents. That is, where there is an agreement, the courts will not second guess the parents who are deemed to be acting in the best interest of their children. Too often, however, the

parties cannot agree on how the holiday time will be spent and this becomes a traumatic experience for the families, especially children. For this reason, the Family Courts, in conjunction with the Matrimonial Bar, have devised what is often labeled a "Holidays and Special Day Parenting Time Schedule". While not all counties follow the same schedule, the court has come up with a "bottom line" schedule where the parents cannot agree. In fact, the holidays are alternated annually with one parent enjoying a

particular holiday in odd calendar years and the other parent enjoy-

ing the same holiday in even calendar years.

The Current Gloucester County Holiday Schedule:

ODD YEARS	EVEN YEARS	HOLIDAYS
Father	Mother	New Year's Eve Day, December 31 st , 6:00 p.m. to New Year's Day, January 1 st at noon.
Mother	Father	New Year's Day, January 1 st , noon to 6:00 p.m.
Father	Mother	Martin Luther King Day (unless child in school)
Mother	Father	President's Day
Father	Mother	Good Friday, 10:00 a.m. to Easter Saturday at 4:00 p.m.
Mother	Father	Easter Saturday, 4:00 p.m. to Easter Sunday at 7:30 p.m.
Father	Mother	Memorial Day
Mother	Father	July 4 th
Father	Mother	Labor Day
Mother	Father	Columbus Day
Father	Mother	Thanksgiving Day
Mother	Father	Christmas Eve, December 24 th , 6:00 p.m. to Christmas Day, December 25 th at noon.
Father	Mother	Christmas Day, December 25 th at noon to December 26 th at 6:00 p.m.

SPECIAL DAYS

Father's Birthday day to father (4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., if it falls on a school day).
 Mother's Birthday day to mother (4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., if it falls on a school day).

Mother's Day to mother
 Father's Day to father
 Child's birthday to be alternated

Halloween (trick or treat) – Each parent shall have the child(ren) for trick or treat purposes as scheduled in their community. If the parents live in the same community or if the communities have designated the same date and time for trick or treat, then the parents shall alternate on a year by year basis, with father having child(ren) on odd years and mother having child(ren) on even years.

JEWISH HOLIDAY

ODD YEARS	EVEN YEARS	HOLIDAYS
Mother	Father	Rosh Hashanah
Father	Mother	Yom Kippur
Father	Mother	Chanukah – First Night (remaining 7 nights to alternate between parents, i.e., if even year, Mother has first night, and she shall additionally have the third, fifth and seventh night, and Father shall have the second, fourth, sixth and eighth night)
Mother	Father	Passover – First Night (with other parent having the second night)

No matter what your present circumstances are, please find it in your heart to allow your children their own happy holiday memories. Either agree on a holiday schedule or follow the court schedule. Do not make your child be part of a "tug of war" during the holidays or, worse yet, make your child choose between her two loved parents. Happy holidays everyone.

Thomas J. Jenkins is a partner in the law firm of Trace and Jenkins, LLC located in Woodbury, New Jersey. The firm's practice concentrates in the area of Matrimonial and Family Law ranging from divorce, custody, adoption, civil unions and domestic partnerships, domestic violence and all related matters. Tom brings a broad range of experience and skills to the firm, and as such superbly compliments Mary Cay Trace, his partner at Trace and Jenkins for the last 7 years. By most estimation their practice is one of the fastest-growing matrimonial firms in Southern New Jersey, and Tom has been central to the firm's success.

Tom has been Certified by the Supreme Court of New Jersey as a Matrimonial Law Attorney and is a Qualified Divorce Mediator.

Tom Jenkins is a member of the New Jersey State Bar Association, Gloucester County Bar, Camden County Bar Associations and Association of Trial Lawyers of America – New Jersey Section. Tom serves on the Early Settlement Panel of Gloucester, Camden, Cumberland and Salem counties as well as being appointed to "Blue Ribbon Panels". Tom has lectured for the Children in Court and People in Transition programs in Gloucester County.

Tom graduated from Kings College in Wilkes-Barre, PA, with a B.A. in 1972 and Rutgers School of Law in Camden, NJ, with his J.D. in 1983.

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