

## Divorce, 2012 Holiday Edition

Once upon a time, I told my then-husband I wanted a divorce a few days after Thanksgiving. That first December was hard. This is what I've learned since then about the first post-split holiday season, and I offer it to you.

1. **Let yourself be sad.** This time of year is chock full of bullshit about being filled with the wonder of the season at every second. You're allowed to be sad, and you have a reason to be sad. Maybe you didn't like this time of year anyway, even before the divorce happened. Maybe you always liked it before. If you liked it before, you'll like it again. Just not this year. This year sucks, and it's ok to be sad. You're feeling just what you need to be feeling right now.

2. **Look realistically at what you feel like your kids are missing.** If this is the first year without their parents together for the holidays, your kids are going to feel sad, and they're going to feel like something's missing. (No matter how many toys you buy them.) That's normal and ok. Next year will be better for them, because by then it will be regular and not scary to be with each parent separately. But this year they'll need extra hugs. This is the part that hurts in order to feel better.

3. **Think about what kind of family you want to be this time next year.** This year is tough because you're feeling the sting of not being the family you (thought you) were before. But next year at this time you'll be a new family, one that's honest and loving and true. Spend some time thinking about what you want next December to look like with your new improved family, and what you can do to get there over the next year.

4. **Think about what you're really missing.** Are you missing the actual relationship? Being in a relationship in general? Or the Holiday Fantasy Relationship? You might actually be feeling great not to be with your soon-to-be-ex, but it still hurts that no one's going to surprise you with a car with a big red bow on it. Figure out exactly what you're missing, and let the parts you're not missing drift out of your mind. And see if you can't get some of the stuff you are missing from family and friends.

5. **Consider wallowing.** Especially if you haven't let yourself wallow yet, now might be the time.

5a. **I made you a playlist:** [spoti.fi/Wcr00Q](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/Wcr00Q)

6. **Accept.** Accept help. Accept invitations. Accept hugs. There are a lot of people who love you. Let yourself be around them, even if you feel like crappy company. Brush your teeth and put on a clean shirt and go when someone calls you. Let people be your friends.

7. **Know that next year will be better.** I know, it's awfully Pollyanna-ish to say. But it's true. Everyone said the first year was hard but the second year was easier. And they were right. The third year is even easier. And by the fourth year this will just be a faded Rothko painting in your memories. Except that you'll be stronger and better and deeper and softer where it matters.

You can do this. Courage.