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INFERTILITY

Surviving the Parenting Holidays

The Parenting Holidays

Because they celebrate the very thing we want most, Mother's Day and Father's Day can be especially painful to those who are infertile.

Coping with the Public

Because the focus is so specific, the impersonal aspects of these "parenting" holidays may actually be more difficult to handle than family gatherings. The flowers in church, the discounts at the ball game, the free drinks in restaurants make it seem that everyone is a mother or father; that those who are not parents simply don't belong. It is possible, though, to avoid most of these public celebrations of parenting without holing up at home feeling sorry for yourself. Some suggestions:

- **Consider Skipping Church Services**
Watching while each mother receives a rose, remaining seated while fathers stand to be recognized, listening to a sermon on the joys of parenthood can feel like punishment and that's not why you go to church.
- **Focus on Adult Activities**
Visit an art museum or an antique store, see a movie that's not for children, take a walk in the woods. Don't even consider a restaurant that advertises on these days; try a serious ethnic restaurant or one that's too formal for children.
- **Spend Part of the Day with Others Who Have No Children**
Go backpacking with another couple, or invite friends over for pizza and videos.

Celebrating with Your Family

If you live near your parents, plan ahead so that you can honor them without making yourself miserable. For instance:

- **Consider celebrating with your parents at another time.**
If the family party is just too much for you, ask your parents to come to dinner on Friday or Saturday, and spend the evening talking about the happiest moments of your childhood.
- **If you decide to go, consider letting someone else give the big family dinner.**
Keep your involvement to a minimum, even if you're the eldest, especially if you're the only sibling without children. Giving this kind of party can seem like penance for your childless state.

- **Keep the emphasis where it belongs.**

Ask each family member to share a favorite childhood memory at dinner, put together an album of family photos, write a thank-you letter to your mother or father.

Summary

- Consider Skipping Religious Services
- Focus on Adult Activities
- Spend Part of the Day with Others Who Have No Children
- Consider Celebrating with Your Parents at Another Time
- Consider Letting Someone Else Give the Big Family Dinner
- Keep the Emphasis Where it Belongs

Infertility: Coping With the Parenting Holidays was adapted from materials prepared by Ellen Asprooth and the Educational Materials Advisory Committee of the Ferre Institute, Derwent A. Suthers, editor.

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