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How to Split Time Between the Grandparents During the Holidays

by Amy Hatch (Subscribe to Amy Hatch's posts)
Nov 28th 2010 9:00AM

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Deciding where to spend the holidays can cause stress to a family. Credit: [alancleaver_2000](#), Flickr

It's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year, but tensions over how to split your time up between all the grandparents during the holidays can add an extra dose of crazy to an already hectic season.

We all want to spend time with our extended families at the holidays, but an increasingly mobile society means most people will [have to travel](#) a significant distance to make that happen. So, just how and when do adult children decide to set boundaries when it comes to holiday gatherings?

Things can get especially dicey when one person has strong feelings about where to spend that special day, says Susan Pease Banitt, a therapist based in Portland, Ore.

"Healthy couples draw the sacred circle around the two of them and do what is best for the couple," Banitt says. "Unhealthy couples have someone still triangulated into their family who fails to put their spouse first."

The solution? Set your boundaries from the get-go and recognize that most people understand that as children grow up and start their own families, they may not come home every year, Banitt says.

You can, however, take the sting out of that decision and offer to visit the grandparents at another time close to the holidays, or invite them to your home for a celebration of the holiday that doesn't fall on the actual calendar date.

If that sounds easier said than done, you're right. But there are plenty of folks who've made the move and lived to tell the tale. [Stress management](#) expert Debbie Mandel points out that it's impossible to be "mathematically equal."

"You need to factor in accommodations, cost of travel and need -- is one set of grandparents lonelier or more frail than the other," says Mandel, author of "[Addicted to Stress](#)." "It is best to discuss this at a family gathering by calling a family meeting to write down a schedule which might include alternate years, or alternate holidays or half a holiday here and half a holiday there -- or have both sets of grandparents come to you."

When all else fails, divide and conquer. Just ask split-holiday survivor Sam Feinstein of Silver Spring, Md., who puts it this way: "I always have, and as far as I can tell always will, split the holidays," he says. "Instead of trying to hit both grandparents in one break, I always hit one side of the family for Thanksgiving, and then the other for Christmas. As far as I can tell, this is why they



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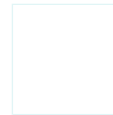
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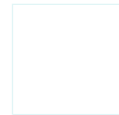
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