

How divorced parents can keep Halloween sweet for their children

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Trick-or-treating, dressing up in costume and having fun are all most children want to do on Halloween, but for some divorced families it can be a challenge to figure out how to make the night a treat and not a fright. Baylor College of Medicine's Dr. Sandra Gonzalez gives her tips on how to do this.

"Many times the arrangements as far as who spends time with whom on holidays and certain days of the week is dictated in part by the courts through a custody or co-parenting agreement so you know in advance who will have the children," said Gonzalez, assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at Baylor. "One of the biggest tips I can offer in any situation though is to coordinate details in advance. Both parents should communicate information like who is buying the costume, where the [child](#) is going, who they are going with and what time they are going to go. You should share this information with the child as well so they can feel more comfortable about the situation."

Although some parents choose to split the time on Halloween, this arrangement often does not work and actually can be more stressful for the parents and, most importantly, for the child because they may feel torn between two households. Unless the child is accustomed to this arrangement and they do well with it, Gonzalez recommends that alternating who has the child each year may be more appropriate.

"For the parent who does not have the child for Halloween, I recommend

establishing another tradition that they can do on a different day that is related to the holiday and is something that they can do every year that the child will remember," Gonzalez said. "It is also important, as a courtesy to the other parent, to share that information, especially if both parents want to do the same thing and feelings may be hurt as result."

Gonzalez explained that it is important for parents to prepare themselves when they know they will not have the child on an occasion like Halloween. This could mean making sure that you have plans with friends or family members. Having other plans can make coping with the sadness you may feel about not being able to spend that holiday with your child every year a bit easier.

In some cases, if the parents get along well, they may make the decision to celebrate as a family, which can be a very good option as long as it does not cause undue stress on the child and there is not a conflict that can be internalized by the child. However, Gonzalez cautioned that there needs to be some clarity provided on the part of the parents to the child to explain that this is something that, although you are doing it as a family, does not mean that you are going to reconcile.

Often extended [family](#) members want to see the child on Halloween as well, Gonzalez added, so it is important to communicate what the plans are with them so they are not surprised at the last minute or disappointed that they are not able to see the child.

"Regardless of the situation, communication and advanced planning are essential in order for a holiday, in this case Halloween, to be as stress free as possible for all involved," Gonzalez said.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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