



HOW

NOT TO

SURVIVE

CHRISTMAS

**BLENDED
FAMILY EDITION**

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This word shapes our mindset. It changes our mood, we get upset, over-sensitive and we feel like this only happens to us. We become victims of our own 'tragedies'.

I get that sometimes spending a weekend with stepchildren, dealing with the ex, or celebrating Christmas with our families can be exhausting and stressful, but the word 'survive' is overused - so many articles start with '**HOW TO SURVIVE...**

...a breakup.
...another day at work.
...the weekend with the stepchildren.
...divorce.

Read these out loud -

'How am I going to survive Christmas this year?!'

And now -

'I want to create a fun and calm Christmas for everyone'

Feel the difference?

I learnt from my mistakes, I'm sharing them here with the basic but powerful tools that helped me (and others) to create a strong foundation for my marriage, our blended family and relationships outside it.

Life is what you make it.

Christmas can be a very bitter reminder of broken hearts for the parents, on the other side, stepparents can feel like they don't have any rights, or that they need to fight for every little thing.

It took me nearly two years to start deeply working on myself, and I wish I'd started earlier. I held onto my resentment for so long that it became toxic, not only to myself but also in my relationship with my now-husband and other people in my life.

For some time, I felt that I was taken advantage of, that I got into this relationship without any emotional baggage, and, in comparison my husband would have to have rented a storage room to fit all of his baggage in. Looking back, I repeatedly said 'This is not fair on me!', it was how it felt, nothing was fair.

I was also dealing with a great deal of envy towards his ex-wife, you can read more about this later in this book.

On top of that, I struggled to find the right balance and my place as a step-mum. It was easier to be a victim, blaming my husband, his ex-wife and basically everyone else for my own mistakes and struggles. We would argue nearly every day because of me.

***"Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die."
- Malachy McCourt***

It's dangerous because it can intoxicate the person, feeling angry can also lead to a false sense of power and unhealthy forms of expression. It's dangerous because growing resentment can turn into hate.

*My husband's input was this Yoda quote "**Fear** is the path to the dark side. **Fear leads** to anger. Anger **leads** to hate. Hate **leads** to suffering"*

I remember how I turned my own insecurity into dominating my now-husband. Everything had to be my way and I was always right. I was a horrible partner, but, luckily for us, I hit rock bottom. I realised, after a few nights of crying myself to sleep or waking up with a panic attack, this is not how I want to live. Resentment is a common emotion, but problems arise when we're unable to forgive.

I contacted a life-coach friend of mine, asking for help. I let go of the resentment within a few phone calls. It still sometimes creeps in, but I recognise it quickly and deal with it on the spot, using the tools that I'll share with you in this book.

When I let my resentment go, I realised that, without understanding my husband, and him understanding me, we wouldn't have been able to create a great future for our marriage and also a loving future for my stepdaughter. I was coaching my husband on letting go of his resentment, and anything in its' way, to create a co-parenting relationship with his ex-wife.

Who am I to talk about step parenting issues if I don't have any crazy drama going on?

We don't have major dramas going on because we've worked on ourselves, we've learnt to understand and respect each other, we've let go of any unwanted feelings and toxic behaviour. But we do have issues, life is not always perfect. We deal with any issue with respect, and that's the key for creating a strong foundation for us as parents and stepparents.

Schedule, Planning, and Feeling Lonely

Every year families planning their Christmas parties discuss arrangements (around May if not earlier), but, when it comes to blended families, Christmas can be a real nightmare. Time planning includes: two parents, two sets of grandparents, other family members, stepparents and their families.

It takes a lot of patience, compromises and understanding, not to turn the most wonderful time of the year into a war-zone.

Parents

Let's be very honest here, parents can't expect to have Christmas exactly their way every year, especially if they're not willing to make the schedule work during the year.

Some parents are using the schedule to punish their ex-partner and we're right back with resentment. In this case, Christmas is not the real issue. There is still something (or a lot) between the parents that they need to figure out or forgive.

Let 'it' go!

Letting resentment go can be very difficult, because it triggers fear of losing part of the identity, especially if it has been held onto for a long time.

People don't realise that while they think they're punishing their ex, they are slowly poisoning themselves and punishing their children. Little humans may not show signs of being affected by their parent's behaviour, but it usually hits them later in their teenage years.

Just like me back then, it was easier to show anger, because it's easier to appear angry than tell the truth, and acknowledge that I was feeling disappointed, jealous, confused, or hurt.

The Number One for successful co-parenting, is to deal with the past to create a bright future.

If a judge decided your schedule, you need to suck it up, and work on the relationship with your ex, so you might be able to change it in the future.

Stepparent

For stepparents, Christmas can be the cherry on top of the cake when it comes to their schedule, and making compromises. Some stepparents feel like they've been taken advantage of, or they're making sacrifices.

They might feel like they don't have any rights because it's the parents who are deciding the schedule.

It's your responsibility to speak up because you have rights too.

I was very excited about our first Christmas, but it felt like I had no say, everything was planned already, and I was 'just' invited. All that time I had on my mind;

'Is this how every Christmas will be?'

'Will we ever spend Christmas with my family?'
'What's he going to think of me if I tell him I don't want this every year?'
'Will he ever be willing to not be with his daughter at Christmas?'

I'm originally from the Czech Republic, and I couldn't imagine not being able to spend Christmas with my family again. I put a brave face on and had a little cry inside but when we were back home, I asked how we're going to solve this.

I know it's my responsibility to stop overthinking and speak up. I remember I was very clear, maybe even demanding, that this is not going to work if we won't be able to go to Czech with our future family for Christmas. I had to communicate my boundaries and stand up for myself.

We made a system that works for both of us, which is - as long we don't have kids, I'm happy to stay here every Christmas, so we can be together with his daughter. But as soon we have a family, we'll spend every other Christmas with my family in the Czech Republic. My now-husband didn't expect me to spend every year with his family and I never expected him to spend every year with mine.

I could see how my new clients and other step mums were giving up on what's important to them without having conversations with their partners. They think this is what they need to do, that there is no other way around it. It's typical stepparent guilt to be scared to speak up because it makes the stepparent look selfish or not understanding. It takes time and practice to get rid of the stepparent's guilt, but it always comes back to having an open conversation with the partner.

Feeling lonely or like an outsider

Most arguments around the Christmas schedule come from resentment, feeling lonely, or like an outsider. Being a single parent or stepparent definitely isn't anyone's plan, so it's understandable, many people experience a tsunami of unwanted feelings.

There are two ways to deal with this:

A. Same old, same old - if nothing changes, nothing is going to change.

B. Self-development - changing your mindset, approach, asking for help, therapy and life coaching.

TOOLBOX

Find a quiet place without distractions, ask yourself the following questions and write the answers, be specific.

What do I need to give up?

(blaming my ex for breaking up our family, making my partner's ex wrong for making our life difficult etc)

How will my future look like if I don't give up these things?

(depressing, sad, angry, anxiety, nasty etc.)

What impact this future would have on me, my life, my children, my partner/family?

(arguments, ending up at court, losing my children, break up etc.)

What is possible for me if I let go of the resentment?

(freedom, fun, start my own business, do XYZ that I always wanted to do but I was holding back etc.)

How would being 'resentment free' change my child's life?

Giving up years of anger, hate, broken heart and promises, is not easy, it hurts. It's part of us and we feel weirdly comfortable with being victims. In order to create a great future, we need to deal with our past.

Many people try to find help and answers in self-help books, but lasting change needs help from outside to get the real work done. There is something we don't know or see about ourselves that we won't find in a book. We need someone else to help us discover it.

The Parents

Spending Christmas without children could be heart-breaking and many parents struggle with putting a brave face and faking it until they make it. Pretending that everything's 'puppies and rainbows' in front of children never works, sooner or later it ends up in a massive breakdown and often in front of children.

These breakdowns are ugly and nasty, we act in a way we wouldn't normally and they're very confusing and upsetting for the children too. They can feel stressed, anxious or blame themselves for what's going on.

Children can become extremely protective and loyal to one parent, usually, it's the parent that struggles the most. They know which parent is more unhappy, sad, or mistreated. This loyalty

can, unfortunately, lead to sabotaging their relationships with the other parent or refusing to see him/her.

In our house, honesty is the best policy. We don't put a fake smile on in front of my stepdaughter if we're mad at each other. We have an age-appropriate conversation with her about what's going on. We share our feelings, how the situation made us feel and what we need to do to resolve the issue.

TOOLBOX

I use and recommend the following steps for effective communication in any relationship:

1. I feel
(excluded, disrespected, the bad guy, unloved, unfair, controlled, ignored. But also loved, strong, happy)

2. When
(you say or do xyz, I had a bad day at work, someone yells at me).

3. Because
(it hurts me, makes me small, I can't afford it, I don't know what to do).

4. What I need.....
(hug, leave me alone for a minute, acknowledgement, your help).

Create your own Christmas if you don't have your children this year

This is easier said than done but I asked co-parenting parents what they do when they don't have their children for Christmas:

- Make plans with friends or family
- Create new traditions for yourself (including food). Who said you need to buy Christmas dinner for one? Have whatever you want even if that's a bowl of cereal for dinner, have what YOU love and enjoy.
- Do what YOU want even if it's redecorating or cleaning.
- Go on a mini holiday.
- Don't stay all day inside, go for a walk to clear your head.
- Be careful with drinking, one too many will make you feel even worse.

What I would add to the list:

- Create a support group for single parents in your area. You can organise a party, dinner or a simple thing like taking a walk together. Make sure the group is a positive space and it doesn't turn into a witch hunt.
- Find the right support way before Christmas, hire a life coach or go to therapy. Dealing with the resentment and the past will make the holiday season easier.
- Find inspirational and positive podcasts to listen to.
- Take a break from social media if seeing pictures of your children with the ex or other happy families is upsetting.

Creating plans for Christmas without children takes time, it's not easy to figure out what works. The key is to never give up and keep trying.

Stepparent

The first Christmas we spent together, I felt like a complete outsider, I did their traditions, watched their movies and after his daughter got picked up, we rushed to see his family and it started all over again.

I had a proper breakdown one year, I missed my family, our traditions and movies. I got so mad at myself that I didn't speak up earlier, the silver lining that we created a plan on how to make everyone happy.

Feeling like an outsider is so common for stepparents, together with scarcity about speaking up. I was worried to ask because what if he said 'no' to me? Would we break up over this?

And, to be honest, if he wouldn't agree on every other Christmas with my family, I would break up with him, it was and still is a deal-breaker for me.

***Any type of family is based on a couple, not on children!
The couple is the most important relationship in a family.***

I had to put aside my stepparent role when we talked about our future Christmas plans. It wasn't about his daughter. It was about me and my husband. If I would feel like I don't have any say or rights in this relationship I would have walked away a long time ago.

Stepparents have rights, but it's their responsibility to speak up and create a good balance with their partner. Most of my step-mum clients tell me "I've tried to speak to him about it, but we ended up arguing. It was terrible!"

TOOLBOX

Are you having the same conversation and arguments all over again without being able to reach a verdict or moving on?

Here are **THE THREE STEPS ON HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION** (in any relationship and any situation)

1. Give up expectations

Most people go into a conversation with a set idea what they want, how they want to get it, and, most importantly, that they must get it no matter what.

With this mindset and approach, we're getting ready for being mis-understood or even verbally attacked. This is where we go wrong because what is the best defence? Good offence!

- We're defending and justifying ourselves
- Making the other person wrong (sometimes even before we have the conversation).
- We don't really listen to what the other person is saying.
- We're trying to win the argument no matter what.

To change the mindset and approach:

Create the purpose of this conversation. Why do I want what xyz? Why is this important for me? For example - I want a peaceful and fun Christmas for our blended family.

Share the purpose with the partner and repeat it to each other when the conversation starts going down hill.

2. Start listening

Feeling like the conversation is not going anywhere? It might be because there is no listening.

We prefer to listen to our internal voice more, it's that annoying voice that we think is right or we make it so strong that it twists everything we hear. It's always on, we can change it, decide not to listen to it, but it takes practice. I remember I used to stare at my husband's lips, it might look silly, but it helped me to focus on what he's saying.

Also, when we focused on the past and compared it with other conversations from the past, it didn't go well. These issues were just the tip of the iceberg, we're bringing all of the upset with us into one conversation.

It takes practice to fully listen and to be present in a conversation. The secret is, to leave any judgment and other issues out of it, taking small steps, noticing how our internal voice is affecting us.

3. Clarity

We all know that the way men and women communicate is very different. Be crystal clear, men don't read between the lines and they don't read our minds. On the other hand, they need to learn to stop us and let us know they're getting lost in our verbal vomit.

Watch your language! The number one issue for my clients has always been their communication. We all can get triggered by some words or by the tone of the conversation.

It doesn't necessarily mean the other person is trying to hurt us, but we take it that way. It took me some time to see what triggers my husband, but now I can tell because his face and body language changes.

I know I said something that triggered him, I didn't mean it but somehow, I upset him. When this happens the first thing, I do is to ask him what I said that made him upset, I also speak up when he says something that triggers me.

***It takes two to tango and these two had a teacher who helped them.
Sometimes it takes a bit of life coaching to understand how our communication
affects our life and relationship.***

Traditions and Beliefs

Co-parenting parents might find this part difficult because they:

- A. argue over who will be doing XYZ with kids.
- B. have a different system of beliefs and traditions.

I talk about the resentment a lot in this book and there's a reason for it. By working on getting rid of resentment many of my clients were able to create a new system that works for everyone.

Making compromises with the ex is not easy but I hear co-parents say, 'I do it for my kids!'. Do you? Really? Without being rude here, I coach my clients to stop focusing on children for a minute and think why they do what they're doing, what is truly behind their decisions?

It's also crucial to understand the other parent in order to reach an agreement that is not maybe perfect, but it is fair.

We have my stepdaughter for Christmas Eve and the morning of Christmas day, after she has opened her presents, she goes to her Mums. We've created new traditions so that it doesn't feel like we're missing out on something.

Different beliefs or traditions can be brought into a co-parenting relationship by stepparents. For example, in the Czech Republic, our Christmas dinner consists of soup, fish and potato salad.

On Christmas Eve we open presents after dinner. I even explained to my stepdaughter that I don't believe in Santa because, in the Czech Republic, a baby Jesus brings presents. We both respect each other's beliefs and both guys bring us presents every year. Sometimes kids need to be treated as grown-ups, trust me they like it.

I understand that in some cases a different belief system is much more complicated, but it all comes back to RESPECT. My husband and his daughter respect and enjoy Czech traditions,

and we never had any issues from anyone else. Why? Because we respect other people's beliefs, and just because they might do something else, it doesn't mean we need to do it in our house and vice versa.

Stepparent

Every family has different traditions, different movies they love to watch, some families love to go for a walk, and some stay all day inside the house and play board games. Stepparents should never give up everything for their blended family. It's time to create new traditions and to make compromises.

I used to feel guilty because my husband already had to make compromises with his first wife, and here I come with my list. Thankfully I gave up this guilt pretty early on because there was one tradition, I wasn't ready to give up.

Sorry love, but the Christmas tree is mine, it has always been and I'm not changing it any time soon! Yes, that is right! I decorate the tree in our blended family and don't care what my stepdaughter thinks about it. I put a Czech movie on, and it doesn't bother me that they don't understand.

And why? She is not always here when it's time to put the tree up, plus she gets to decorate her tree with her mum. She doesn't need to decorate two trees because her parents got divorced. Does this sound selfish? Maybe, but it's my tradition that I'm not willing to give up. I already had to make a compromise when the tree goes up. In Czech, it's 24th December and I agreed to do it around 15th December. Shocking right?!

Please note that I had an age-appropriate conversation with my stepdaughter about it and she's cool with it. She actually enjoys watching Czech movies and guessing what's going on.

Never put a happy face on for too long! It will come back and get you!

Money and Presents

Parents

Every year parents spend quite a bit of money and time to make Christmas extra special for their children and it's understandable. However, many parents, after their divorce, turn the Christmas into a competition, who will buy bigger and better presents, have the best decorations in the house? The best food? treats? dinner parties? and the list go on.

TOOLBOX

Be honest and think about these questions for a few minutes.

Do I know how much money I spend on Christmas in total?

What I would normally do with that kind of money?

If I had an extra £.... what would you rather spend it on?

Am I doing it out of love, guilt or I want to show off?

Am I doing all for kids or to make me feel better?

Children don't want to be a part of their parent's games. They want to have a great time with them and not be pressured to pick a side, especially during Christmas.

Another common issue is ***'Where the presents stay/go?!'***

This one is a tricky one! Parents had one idea and kids went 'Can I take it to my mum/dad?'

So what to do now?

- Having an age-appropriate conversation why the present must stay in this home.
- Let them take the presents to show the other parent but it needs to come back.
- Not being petty about little presents and put yourself in your kid's shoes. How would you feel if your parents will come with terms and conditions?

At the end of the day, the presents were for children.

Stepparent

For the first Christmas I went full-on with presents, nothing crazy expensive but I got her a few presents. Year after I got her just a small present, last year I re-decorated her room as a Christmas present (again nothing expensive, but I did all the painting etc). And this Christmas? Well, I don't know yet but it's going to follow these rules:

- Don't feel obligated to buy an expensive present because that is the right thing to do, or you think it will make you more lovable.
- Don't buy bigger and more expensive presents than the parents just to because you can, or you want to show off.
- It's ok to buy one small present.
- Giving experience and memories is better than the stuff that will be forgotten.
- Never buy presents out of guilt!

You might not be able to change Christmas this year, but you can work on issues that will help you to get the Christmas you want in the future.

It's never too late to change things around and start from scratch.

Creating or getting involved in toxic behaviour

Certain behaviours do nothing but hold us back, drag us down and make us suffer. Toxic behaviour includes:

- Participating or creating 'drama'.
- Negative self-talk with focus on all the negativity in life. Not being able to see the good things.
- Validation and approval: a need for someone else's approval and justification for your feelings and actions.
- Stuck in the past: not being willing to let something go, keep bringing old issues into any conversation.
- Being the victim and seeking attention: 'why me, again?!' 'This could happen only to me!' 'No one else is going through what I'm going right now'
- Manipulation: using children as a 'weapon', blackmailing or threatening with legal actions
- Taking things personally: every comment, question or answer is a possible threat and attack
- Blaming others: not taking responsibility for own mistakes, misunderstanding or miscommunication.
- Dehumanising others by calling them (fill-up the blank).

But also: people pleaser, perfectionism, selfishness, judgment, arrogance, being competitive, stubborn, insincerity, cruelty, jealousy, envy, lying, and cheating.

People have the power to suck the joy and happiness of other people's life and replace it with stress, anger, sadness, and other unwelcome feelings. Some toxic behaviour is easily mistaken with 'support' and it can be difficult to see the difference. There is a very thin line that we need to pay attention to when our support system (friends, family and social media) is not helping us to feel better. For example:

- Validation: 'what a d*ck/bitch, yes you should take him/her to a court', etc.
- Re-living the past: 'oh and don't forget what he/she did last time! I would never forgive him/her breaking the family and leaving you alone'.
- Victimising and blaming others: 'You poor thing, I don't know what I would do being in your place!?' or 'You didn't do anything wrong; she/he should say xyz to you!'

But let's be honest, we have all had, or still have, some kind of version of toxic behaviour. The real problem begins when we let this type of behaviour take over. It has a negative effect on your mental health and wellbeing.

***Children can pick up our behaviour, energy and body language.
But often they suffer in silence.***

Getting rid of toxic behaviour & boundaries

The only way to get rid of it is re-setting or creating boundaries. Personal boundaries are an essential part of any healthy relationship. When we set your boundaries, we set basic guidelines of how we want to be treated.

I often hear from my clients

'She doesn't respect that I'm Her mother'

'My stepchildren can be very mean to me, and my partner doesn't say or do anything'

'My partner tells me that my kids are awful to her, but I don't know what to do, what if they stop coming here because of her'

'The kids are doing whatever the hell they want; they don't respect anyone!'

These are just a few examples I hear nearly every day and it's clear that we struggle with:

- Never setting our boundaries
- Fearing re-setting them
- Not respecting other peoples' boundaries

It's our responsibility to speak up if we feel like someone is crossing the line. We don't need to necessarily talk to that person right away, especially if we need to re-set the boundaries first. It could be very overwhelming, or maybe it's better to take a little break to rethink the situation.

I had arguments with my husband in the past because I thought he didn't have my back in co-parenting. I had to take a step back to re-create our conversations and I realised that we both didn't properly communicate what is and isn't acceptable.

Before re-setting boundaries, you need to ask yourself:

- Have I ever communicated my boundaries with my partner, the ex and kids?
- Have I ever created boundaries for myself?
- Do I respect other people's boundaries?
- What I can be responsible for?

TOOLBOX

Relationships in which the boundaries are not in existence or disrespected:

.....

Reasons why this happened - What can you be responsible for?

.....

Why it's important for me to re-set or create the boundaries in these relationships? What would be the purpose and outcome?

.....

To communicate your old or new boundaries use *I feel, when..... because..... What I need is*

Sometimes we're in a situation when the other person is just not having it. In this scenario, I always recommend finishing the conversation, stop texting and putting the phone down. Walking away is not sign of losing, it's about knowing when to stop before making the conversation even worst.

WARNING for Re-setting and creating boundaries

- It'll take some time, so be patient.
- Be consistent with your new boundaries.
- Some people won't react to it well or won't like the new you. Don't give up!
- It's ok to say 'no'
- Keep them simple and take it step by step, especially if you're changing a lot.
- Always stay calm! Be responsible for your own emotional reactions rather than blaming other people.
- If it appears you need to compromise, be flexible, but take it slowly and don't agree to anything that doesn't feel right.

- Let people know what you're up to and don't blame them for any miscommunication from the past.

Having new rules and boundaries can be overwhelming for everyone including ourselves. It does take time and practise but it's worth the effort.

Feelings

Envy vs jealousy

I see it in my client sessions, I also experienced it myself because I confused envy with jealousy when I started dating my husband.

Envy is a two-person situation whereas jealousy is a three-person situation.

Envy is a reaction to lacking something:

'It hurts to see that she's not having the family vacations'

'I wish I was his first wife, so that I could give him the first child'

'I don't want him back, but I really miss having a family'

Jealousy is a reaction to the threat of losing something (usually someone):

'I'm going to lose him because he'll always choose his kids over me'

'What if he decides to give his family a second chance?'

'What if my children will love her too much?!'

'They have a better life what if my kids choose to live with them'

Envy and jealousy are not the same emotions. Envy usually doesn't contain a sense of betrayal and resultant outrage. Jealousy need not contain an acute sense of inferiority (if the rival is not enviable).

Why it's important not to mistake these two?

In the first year of our relationship I was jealous of his ex, well I thought I was jealous. But in fact, I envied her.

- I was envy because she was his first wife, I'll never have that.
- I was green with envy because she gave him the first child and I never will be able to do that.
- I hated the fact that our wedding wouldn't be his first one.

As soon as I understood the difference between jealousy and envy, I was able to work on myself more effectively. I understood where my insecurity was coming from and how to deal with it. It also helped me improve my relationship with my husband and the way I saw his first wife.

Love

They are so many types of love so blended families and parents should be generous. Stepparents are not trying to replace the parents, they even might find it difficult to love them.

And it's ok not to love your stepchildren

I still remember my husband's face when I told him that I'm not sure if I love his daughter. This may sound horrible but at the beginning, I didn't love his daughter.

What I'm going to say doesn't really make sense, but I didn't know if I was 'allowed' to love her. Why? Because she is not MY daughter, and what if she gets too close to me? Will that hurt her mum?

The pressure was on! I felt like a horrible person for not loving her. I could see how my stepdaughter and I were trying to figure out each other back then. She said many times 'I don't want to upset my mummy' even about a small thing. So, I panicked and built a little protective wall between us.

Getting this off my chest helped me to understand that instead of thinking about it as loving someone's else child, I needed to look at it as loving MY stepchild for who she is.

I wish I knew back then that I don't have to love her, and she doesn't have to love me. We treat each other with respect and in a way, we love each other. Love has different forms, meaning and stages.

Some stepparents find it difficult to love their stepchildren because there is too much drama going on. Children can be naughty, rude, even violent and it's hard if not impossible to love someone that doesn't treat us right. It takes time, patience and making sure we have our boundaries in place.

Empathy - Put yourself into other persons shoes

For many people this is the last thing they want to do because it's easier to hate someone, calling her/him names, make him/her small, and generally make the other person wrong. But as soon as this happening to us we have a problem with it.

No matter how we feel about the other person (the ex or the new partner), no matter what that person said or did to us we need to take a minute and put ourselves into her/his shoes.

If we don't agree on the parenting style. We need to understand where the other person is coming from and to understand their background, childhood and belief system. Just because we do things differently it doesn't mean the other style is wrong.

I hear a lot of people labelling others with titles such as narcissistic, highly conflicted, toxic or nasty. Let's just stop and think here for a second. How is this going to help us? Will this solve our problems?

Not really, because first we need to look at it from a different perspective and to understand why the other people do what they do.

Are they still heartbroken, hurt, angry?

Are they going through difficult time?

Have I not intentionally crossed the line?

I had to put myself into everyone's shoes to fully understand how and why to change my mindset and approach. I was thinking about how I would feel if I was going through divorce, being a single mum but even single dad. I had to understand how my husband was feeling when he is the one in the middle and has two women to deal with.

Putting myself into other people shoes literally saved my relationship and completely transformed our blended family life.



As you can see being part of a blended family at Christmas is not about survival. It doesn't matter if you're a parent, stepparent, partner or child.

It's about finding and creating peace within yourself, because once you do those around you will find the same, then your blended family will truly have a great Christmas and even better New Year.



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