



Volume II Issue 11

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Healthy Relationships. Happy Marriages.

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(Deadline is January 9, 2009)
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### Quote Me!

Holidays are stressful and hectic for most of us: trying to find that "perfect" gift, preparing the "perfect" meal, and cleaning the house. And don't forget the holiday decorations, cards and traditions that everyone looks forward to this time of year. Yet remember, Holidays are NOT about gifts and "perfection" but are about the relationships and time spent with those you love.

**"I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody" -  
Bill Cosby**

## 2009 Regional Healthy Marriages, Healthy Families, and Responsible Fatherhood Conference on Best Practices

With an expanded number of workshops and nationally acclaimed presenters, such as Dr. Wade Horn, Dr. Gene Griessman as "President Abe Lincoln," & Jeanne Robertson, the 2009 Conference promises to be even more rewarding and insightful than the last. Special guest, Mrs. Riley, is scheduled to appear. Mark your calendars and join us at the **Montgomery Renaissance Hotel and Spa at the Convention Center** on February 3-5, 2009.

**CEUs in Social Work, Counseling, and Registered Nursing will be offered.**

**Register TODAY by visiting our website:**

**[www.alabamamarriage.org](http://www.alabamamarriage.org)**

ASK  
ACHMI!!

**Q:** How do I nominate someone for the awards to be given out at the conference?  
**A:** Visit [www.alabamamarriage.org](http://www.alabamamarriage.org) and click on the rotating flash for the Community Impact Award and the Alabama Child Champion Lifetime Achievement Award. If you have questions, please contact Roberta at 334-844-3227 or [roberta@auburn.edu](mailto:roberta@auburn.edu)



## CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOOK!

at

[www.alabamamarriage.org](http://www.alabamamarriage.org)

We've made a few changes to our website. Now you can go directly to the section of most interest to you, and it's just a click away. We will continue to grow the site and expand our offerings, so visit us often!

## *The Best Marriage I Know* 8th Grade Essay Contest

Do you think an 8th grader knows what a good marriage looks like? We have asked all 8th grade teachers to ask their students to write and submit an essay on "The Best Marriage I Know." If their essay is selected, the student gets \$100 and the teacher and the couple depicted get \$50.

Visit: [www.alabamamarriage.org](http://www.alabamamarriage.org) for details. Entries are due by January 9, 2009.

**GOOD LUCK!**

**I believe healthy relationships matter for teens.**

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree



**February**

is Healthy Marriage Month.  
Please let us know the activities  
you have planned!

**FEDERAL DISCLAIMER**

## Research Update

**Handling the Holidays as a Blended Family**

**By: Eugenia Parrett**

Blending families can be a difficult task year round, but holidays are especially challenging. The situations that can make life difficult for divorced and blended families get stirred up around holidays: who spends which days with whom, which family gatherings take precedence, and what family allegiances are due to stepparents and stepchildren as well as step-grandparents, step aunts and uncles, step-cousins, etc. In a study of 53 blended families by Baxter, Braithwaite, and Nicholson (1999), one-third of the participants reported that the celebration of holidays and special events was experienced negatively. For some, holidays were reported as stressful and difficult, with conflicting obligations to multiple family members or positive recollections of lost times from the past. The stress of holidays not only affects the adults involved, but the children as well. Instead of falling asleep with visions of sugar plums dancing in their heads, children may be kept awake by the anxiety of wondering how their holiday will go. Because of their often divided loyalties and the shuttling back and forth between parents, children may dread holidays and special events.

Experts recommend the following suggestions for helping blended families manage the challenges of the coming holiday season:

- **Avoid over-commitment:** This can be hard to do with parents, stepparents, and grandparents all in the picture. But ask yourself, "Do children really need three Christmas dinners?"
- **Plan ahead:** Discuss options and plan in advance of a particular holiday. Encourage family members to share their ideas, since this helps everyone voice their opinions and avoid unrealistic expectations.
- **Lose your competitive edge:** Don't go overboard on gift-giving. Some divorced parents may feel guilty and try to compensate by burying their kids in gifts. Others may find themselves competing to provide the best gift. This competitiveness damages family well-being and promotes an unhealthy air of tension.
- **Maintain a sense of humor:** It is tempting to bring the heaviness of the past into the present. Sidestep this tendency and focus on having fun!
- **Don't be afraid to establish new traditions:** Creating a holiday tradition as a blended is one way to draw people together and build a shared history. You can go caroling, see a holiday performance, bake cookies or buy a new Christmas ornament every year for each family member. The key thing is to do something together and interact with each other.

The holidays can be hectic for everyone. With a little planning, you can embrace the holiday season and rejoice in the love, support and connection of your family relationships.