



**FAMILY RENEWAL RESOURCES PROJECT**  
parenting forever, through whatever

## **A Christmas Message Kids 'n' Dad Shared Support**

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### *An End of 2017 Update*

*Kids n Dad Shared Support has made it through our 12th year (Sept. 2005).*

A reminder of our recent move to our new location and contact mailing address and contact info;

Kids n Dad Shared Support  
c/o Treehaus Collaborative  
79 Joseph St.  
Kitchener, ON N2G 1J2  
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The move to our new location brought about significant downsizing and in doing so a 12-year journey down memory lane. Time and energy are no longer on my side, but I continue to have the passion to help children, parents and grandparents. I am now taking it year by year in the way that I try to bring about change to a system that lacks imagination in the way it supports separating families.

In the past year a local Family Court Justice described the social service **system as broken**. He could have included the judicial system as well. The 'strange' aspect of this headline story in the Record was that no letter from the social services rebuked his stark description and his comments were left standing. So we are left with two options-agreement with his perspective or indifference from the **silence** of the social service and legal communities. The Justice went even further to suggest that the system is only going to get worse.

A second Record headline story saw the Justice fine a local lawyer \$100,000 for any number of failings during proceedings in the specific case. The Justice was harshly critical at the end of a case that took an almost 4-year journey through our courts in front of different judges. Again, I was left feeling thankful to the justice for his condemnation but angry at his unwillingness to criticize the manner that professionals in robes failed to

protect this specific family and countless others from similar legal tactics. I have attached 2 letters to the editor on this case.

I offer these two stories from our community to set up an essay written in October by one of our dads. Please take the time to read it through to the end and think about the consequences of a failing judicial and social service system as described by a local justice that drew zero public rebuke. Yet it is in my view the ultimate story about the meaning of Christmas and being a lifelong dad. They can try to take it away from us by extraordinary means, but it is who we are until our last day.

**Attached: Letter to God from a proud father**

### **A Personal Story:**

In early October Elaine and I went to Banff for a conference that she was attending. Like my nostalgia journey from the KND move, the lead up to and the actual trip to Banff had a similar outcome. I was eleven years of age when I was last in Banff. The trip was the third successive, mega family holiday that my parents took us on before building a cottage on crown land. The first was to the Maritimes, the second to California and the third to western Canada. Limited vacation time demanded a driving schedule of 500 miles per day (no kms in those days) on indifferent two-lane highways. Washroom breaks only could be countenanced when the car required such.

My grandfather joined us on these family journeys and on the last trip to Western Canada my severely, mentally ill grandmother accompanied us. The hope being that a trip that saw us visit long, lost siblings would bring her some happiness and improvement. We were a 1950's version of the first Grunewald's summer vacation.

My father/ grandfather purchased a new, two tone Oldsmobile for the trip- every car was downhill for my dad after that. He died in the mid 1990's driving a Kcar with only an AM radio.

My father purchased the newest movie camera to document our journey in 3-minute reels. The last minute was usually of his eyes as he fumbled his way to change the film. It became his trademark. He gave me his mechanical gift of 'fumbling'.

The trip jarred me into remembering all the gifts of my parents that I underappreciated and undervalued forever (until now); yet in significant and small ways they became part of my parenting DNA. We teach our children even when we are just living life. We teach them even more in the way we handle life's inevitable struggles. Occasionally our efforts are recognized, but more often they just become part of the journey- without an asterisk.

My childhood trips and the magnificence of my parents' efforts to provide enrichment and imagination to their two sons' lives became part of my return trip to Banff almost 60+ years later. On this trip I spent several hours by the Banff Springs Golf Club watching the extraordinary elk on the beautiful fairways with the magnificent mountains in the background. Time stood still as I journeyed my way through childhood to

adulthood to parenthood to grandparenthood, with each stage of life connected by bonds of love and caring that give life purpose and meaning.

Below are some parenting tips offered as ways to make it through the season.

N.B. Letter to God from a proud father

The attached essay was written by a dad who has been part of the Kids n Dad Shared Support family for almost 10 years.

### Season Greetings

The following are guidelines for newly separating or changed families during this joyous but often difficult season.

- Guard against any erratic behavior by yourself or your former partner. Your children need to be children- not spectators or referees.
- Make sure that a parenting plan for the holidays is understood and followed. Few separated parents can negotiate on the fly. Given the preceding, try to be flexible at a time when spontaneity and children go together.
- Reach out to friends or relatives and ask for their support. Many of us find that 'reaching out' to be difficult. Be honest with what you need from your family and friends and don't be afraid to ask for their support.
- Focus on making your time with your children the best possible. Depending on the time and place of your family in the separation process, many children of all ages (toddlers to adults) are going to be struggling with two Christmas homes, divided families and loyalty tug-of- wars. It is a time to build a new normalcy and calm for everyone.
- Don't spend more than you can afford. Older children know your reality- younger children enjoy simpler things. Partner up with other family members for larger purchases.
- Children from blended families notice disparity in gifts. Try to balance whenever possible.
- Blended families may have to deal with a disparity because the other parent has different means available to them e.g. no other children to buy for. While this is life and difficult to control parents need to be sensitive to the problem and try to work it through with the child if necessary.

- Children are not the sole possessions of one parent or one side of their extended family. A parent can be the best parenting model through their generosity of spirit.
- If you have a new partner and family, enjoy and appreciate their gifts of love, support and family. Blend old and new Christmas traditions. (see attached article)

*Send your children to the other parent's Christmas celebration with your love!*

*A Christmas Get Together*

**Please join us at Kids 'n' Dad's new location to celebrate the season!**

**Location: Treehaus Collaborative  
79 Joseph St.,  
Kitchener, ON**

**Time: 6:00-8:00 PM on Thursday, Dec. 15**

Kids 'n' Dad will provide the pizza and beverages. Bring a dessert or whatever or nothing for all are welcome for conversation and friendship.

If possible, let us know if you are planning to attend. It will help us plan the food order..

Barry