

Relationships



On Detroit.MomsLikeMe.com

Today's topic

Are Christmas bonuses a thing of the past? Here's what local moms had to say:

"My DH hasn't received anything in years."
-- last2know

"I used to get one... Working for corporate means no bonus. We do get a lunch on the company plus receive our paycheck ahead of time so the last minute people can shop."
-- coco958

"No, they're not entirely a thing of the past. Dh's firm gives them & he got a bonus this year. My brother's company also gives them, & he too got one this year. My brother did say the bonus was half of what it was last year, but he was very thankful to have gotten one at all."
-- Bethifoody

"None of the companies I've worked for have done Christmas bonuses. (I'm 36, and have worked for a couple of medium-sized businesses and large corporations since college.)"
-- notshyviolet

"I got a Christmas bonus from DH last night after dinner---- clean your minds, you crazy girls---he made a comment about how I was irreplaceable, and although I am a SAHM, I was worth more to the family than his income."
-- HappyMomof4girls

BABY'S 1ST BIRTHDAY



Kozlowski family photo

Tracy Kozlowski, 38, of Warren submitted this photo of her daughter, **Alyssa Kristine Kozlowski**, who turned 1 on Dec. 19.

Thanks to all who shared photos of this milestone birthday in 2010. This will be the last 1st Birthday Baby we feature. As always, come visit **Detroit.MomsLikeMe.com** to share photos and connect with more than 10,000 moms from across metro Detroit.

— KRISTA JAHNKE

Breaking up is hard to do during the holidays

BUT EXPERTS SAY BEING AROUND FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES CAN HELP



RICK NEASE/Detroit Free Press

By ERIN HILL PERRY
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The thought of being alone during the holidays is frightening. For three straight months, couples are everywhere: Thanksgiving dinner, the malls, and of course, the place no one dare enter without a date — New Year's Eve parties.

Some have the strength to cut their losses — even if that means watching “Dick Clark’s New Year’s Rockin’ Eve” alone. Others try to stick it out in a not-so-great relationship simply for the sake of having someone on their arm — or because they want a gift.

Shirley Bavonese, a licensed family and marriage therapist and codirector of the Relationship Institute, says staying in a toxic relationship through the holidays is about safeguarding feelings and holiday memories.

“People want to get through the holidays with a partner because holidays are about love, closeness and companionship,” she says. “When people break up around the holidays, it seems magnified.

“They feel scared, and they feel very ambivalent around the holidays because there is so much attention being put on couples. If they are on the brink, they think, ‘Well let’s just stick together so that it’s not such a focused time.’”

KenJuan Roberson, 20, of Redford remembers the feeling.

He and his girlfriend of three years called it quits in September 2009. Their

problem wasn’t poor communication. They simply grew tired of breaking up to make up.

“We both did a lot of stupid stuff, being young,” he says. “We knew it was time.”

With September being so close to the holiday season, they refused to be alone and spent Thanksgiving together.

“I think it was just because we were so used to being around each other,” he says. “Even after we broke up, it was something we both wanted.”

TAKE TIME TO HEAL

Breaking up is hard to do, no matter when you do it. A year is full of birthdays, holidays and anniversaries. But when any seemingly special day becomes an excuse, it’s time to drum up your courage.

Holiday season or not, there are instances when two people just need to part ways. For instance, when physical abuse is present or when someone has refused to seek treatment for addictions to drugs, alcohol, gambling or sex.

Moving on can be difficult, but it may be easier to cope with a breakup during the holidays than any other time because there are more opportunities for the brokenhearted to be around people who care about them. Bavonese recommends stepping into a situation where they are needed.

“Really engage in giving when they really don’t think they have anything to

give,” she says.

And remember, there is much fun to be had alone and with friends. People should use the new year to find time for themselves, whether it’s regular visits to the spa or gym, rediscovering an old hobby or starting a new hobby. Also, there is no rush to jump back into the dating scene. Taking time to heal is imperative.

A month of healing for each year you were with your partner is reasonable, Bavonese says. If you were engaged or married, it could take longer for you to be ready to date again.

Roberson has been with his current girlfriend for about four months, but he remains close to his ex, who, he says, is like his best friend.

“That was my first real girlfriend,” he says. “What we had, it was something different. I never experienced it before, and we shared a lot. Even till this day, if my girlfriend asked me to stop talking to ‘the ex,’ I wouldn’t.”

And how should you handle a holiday breakup? Do it with respect, as you should any time of year, Bavonese says.

Ending a relationship face-to-face is the most reputable approach — so skip e-mail, Twitter and text messages. A good, old-fashioned conversation gives respect to the person and honors what the couple has gone through, Bavonese says.

■ CONTACT ERIN HILL PERRY AT ELHILL@FREEPRESS.COM OR 313-222-6428.

While I’m away, readers give the advice.

ON GAUGING THE HEALTH OF A MARRIAGE: I have a simple metric for making a determination. Marriages need love, trust, honor, respect and desire. The people in them also need to embody the adjective forms of those



CAROLYN HAX If one of the persons stops being those things, or stops working to be those things, the marriage will suffer. — D.R.

ON WARMING TO FLAWED PARENTS: We were brought up by a loving mother, and a father who was cranky and cold. All three of us longed for a doting dad. I finally decided he suffered, for whatever reason, from Tiny Little Heart Syndrome — there was only room in it for my mother.

Over the years I observed that the doting-dad/daddy’s-little-girl relationship was not always a healthy one. Too much of a good thing can be as bad as too little. I also learned over the years that while our father was unable to relate to children, he was talented and ethical and funny and a rock we could depend on, and I know he did the best he could.

We had a wonderful friendship as adults, and my life was the better for his being part of it. Why was he the way he was? I don’t know, but I do know that when he died at 89 I loved him with all my heart, and still miss him terribly. — Md.

ON GRIEVING FOR A GRANDCHILD NOT PLACED FOR ADOPTION: My daughter became pregnant at 24 and, at the urging of her friends, made the decision to keep her baby. We are a close, middle-class family who were prepared to be supportive of her choice and to be there for her and her child. She talked herself into it because that’s what others told her she ought to do.

Through the years, I have frequently been the primary caregiver, been there financially when things were difficult, and have been the one who has done homework, volunteered at school, and known all my grandchild’s friends. I’ve basically been the parent, and while I adore my grandchild, had adoption been the choice, I know it would have been the best one for this child. Two parents who love this child and wanted this child so much, contact with the bio family if the bio family wants it, no regrets every day because you know you kept the baby to make others happy, and knowing you’ve done what is really best for your child.

You have to understand, it isn’t because I resent what I have needed to do; it is all about this child’s life.

What no one thinks about in these situations is that women who “aren’t ready to be mothers” aren’t lying about that; they really aren’t, and now, many grandparents are doing the job they had thought that daughter (or son) would step up and do. We’re ready to be grandparents, not the parents.

If I had it to do over again, I would take my daughter out for a long drive and beg her to reconsider the decision to keep her child, not for my sake, but for her child’s sake.

— **Anonymous**
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