

4 Ways to Keep Your Marriage From Injury During the Holidays

The Christmas season can be hard on relationships. I can't tell you how many times I've met with a couple after the holidays because of problems developed—or were exaggerated—between Thanksgiving and New Year's.

How can you protect your marriage this Christmas? Sounds like a good goal, right?

Here are four suggestions to keep your marriage from being injured during the Christmas season:

1. Plan a budget together. Agree upon how much you are going to spend—and stick to it. This may require compromise. There will often be one spender and one saver in a relationship—or two spenders. A good principle is don't spend in December what you're going to regret in January. Be wise on the front end.

2. Protect your family first. Even if it means saying no to some extended family events or time with friends, put your immediate family needs ahead of other obligations. Have time together as a family. (For years we did this wrong and we regretted it later. It wasn't until our boys were in high school and they could voice that they wanted more time with just us that we started to scale back our schedule.) As a couple, agree on where you'll spend your time before you spend your time anywhere this holiday season. You may have to support each other with the other spouse's families. (Wives speak to their families. Husbands speak to their families.) This doesn't mean your decision will be popular or that it won't be challenged, but your children will only be children for a few short years.

3. Build traditions that help build the family. We often get distracted by things that matter less. Find a way to celebrate the reason for the season together. It could be reading the Christmas story or serving at a homeless shelter or annually letting Linus from *Charlie Brown's Christmas* remind you of the true meaning of Christmas as you watch it together. The baby, who is a Savior, has been born—He is Christ the Lord. Lead your family to celebrate Christmas—the real Christmas—and you'll enjoy it even more.

4. When tension is outside, don't let it reign inside. The Christmas season can be so busy. It's hard to be everywhere we are expected to be. It seems emotions run abnormally high this time of year. People who don't see each other often are in close quarters with one another. It can lead to tense relations. There's often tension in the stores and on the streets and in someone's kitchen. Decide now that nothing will distract you from the closeness you have as a couple and as a family. Make this a celebration season that grows your hearts stronger as a couple and a home.

These are only a few suggestions. Do you have any? {eo}

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