

Merry and Bright

CUT THE STRESS FROM DECORATING THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Decorating your Christmas tree should be fun, but the process often turns into anything but. Between finding decorations, untangling lights, and trying to get the tree picture-perfect, the happy event can quickly become stressful.

Even if you love decorating the tree, you can likely make the experience (and the end product) even better. Here are the most common sources of frustration and how to fix them with minimal fuss.

BARE SPOTS

Whether your tree is natural or artificial, you need to fluff the branches. However, as important as this step is, you don't need to spend more than 10 minutes on it because let's face it: There are some bare spots no amount of fluffing will fix.

Luckily, tinsel garland hides a wide variety of flaws and might be the easiest solution. If you don't care for tinsel, tying large gift bows to the tree is festive and covers a lot of space. You can also buy fake twigs that have berries, look like real tree branches, or are covered in glitter. Stick them in the bare spots to fill out your tree, then save them for the next year.

LIGHTS

If you use an artificial Christmas tree, we strongly recommend buying one that is pre-lit. If your holiday just doesn't feel complete without a real tree in the house, hanging the lights can be one of the most frustrating parts of the tree-decorating process.

Get on the right track by setting yourself up for success. Instead of shoving your lights in a box or bag at the end of the season, wrap them around the outside of the box or around a clothing hanger instead. Getting your lights



hung properly around the tree can be a pain, too. This year, try hanging them vertically on your tree, from base to top and back again, until the tree is covered. It's easier to do and helps camouflage the cord.

BEADED GARLAND

Beaded garland always looks so much better in the store than it does on your own tree. No matter how much you fiddle with it, it just doesn't lay right or have the even, dramatic swoops you see in display windows. The true problem is probably that you've been hanging your beaded garland incorrectly.

You may think there can't be too many ways to drape beads over branches, but draping itself is the entirely wrong approach. Instead of simply wrapping the beads around the tree and hoping they fall into place, you should attach ornament hooks to the garland along the string. Use the hooks to gracefully hang your garland from the branches and marvel at the simplicity.

When your Christmas tree goes up this year, these tips should make the experience faster, easier, and more joyful. You can now use all that time you would have spent wrapping garland to wrap presents instead.

assets to dummy corporations, fake debt, purchases of items with cash, or other related actions. Even if your divorce is amicable, a forensic accountant could be extremely helpful. If your case includes specialized stock options or small business, their expertise will help determine actual value of the estate.

3. **Choose an attorney who specializes in high-asset divorce.** An ordinary divorce attorney won't know how to work with a forensic accountant to uncover hidden assets, or how to negotiate on your behalf so you leave the marriage with what is truly your fair share of joint bank accounts and shared debts. That's why it's vital to hire a lawyer who specializes in high-asset divorce — like those on our team at ADLG.

Ultimately, the ease of dividing high-value property will depend on the level of honesty and communication between both spouses. But a good lawyer and forensic accountant can help make even the most difficult divorce successful and protect your assets along the way.

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Your Guide to a Drama-Free Christmas

How to Keep Yourself AND Your Kids Happy

I think every parent can agree on this: Presents are the worst and the best part of Christmas. On one hand, I love it when my kids run to the tree and get adorably excited over a book or toy I've wrapped. There's nothing like the feeling of getting a gift just right! On the other hand, buying Christmas gifts is a minefield. Should you really get that thing they've been begging for? How much should you spend? How many presents is too many?

2. Duplicate gifts — If your child has been asking you for a specific present, they may have also asked your ex. Before you pull the trigger on a gift, check in with your former partner to make sure you don't buy the same thing.

3. Unequal spending — Divorce can lead to income inequality between parents, which can create an awkward situation on Christmas. This can also happen if one of you is more frugal than the other. To avoid embarrassment, consider talking to your ex about the amount you plan to spend and agreeing on a cap.

4. Opportunistic guilt-tripping — I hate to say it, but your kids know exactly how to push your buttons and hurt your feelings. They might try to make you feel guilty about your divorce to get more presents. If they do, remind yourself that you're the one in control of your emotions, and a pile of presents could actually be detrimental. It's easy to get lost in the relief of buying things and forget that excess stuff can undermine your child's growth, development, and path toward a fulfilling life.

Ultimately, the drama level of your Christmas will come down to how well and often you communicate with your former spouse. The more you talk, the better! It's also important to focus on the meaning behind your gifts. Personally, one of the best gifts I've ever given was hiring a professional photographer to photograph my father's artwork. He was incredibly touched, and now his talent is preserved forever. Prioritizing gifts like that will help you create a joyful holiday rather than a competitive, guilt-ridden one.

"Ultimately, the drama level of your Christmas will come down to how well and often you communicate with your former spouse. The more you talk, the better!"

These questions haunt every parent, but if you're divorced, the holidays become even more of a minefield. Suddenly, you not only have to worry about what you're getting your kids but also what your ex is purchasing! One wrong move can cause an explosion. To help you get through Christmas drama-free, I put together a map.

4 STICKY CHRISTMAS SITUATIONS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

1. A gift-giving contest — This is a divorce cliché for a reason. It's tempting to use the power of your wallet to compensate for the guilt you feel over your divorce, show up your spouse, or win your child's favor (e.g., by buying a full gaming setup when your ex forbids video games at home). Don't give in to temptation! No one "wins" a gift-giving contest. Trying to one-up each other will just make you look immature and your child feel spoiled.

-Sara Khaki

PROTECT YOUR WEALTH DURING DIVORCE

3 TIPS FOR DISSOLVING A HIGH-ASSET MARRIAGE

Every divorce is challenging, but the process gets much more complicated when significant wealth is on the line. Here at ADLG, our team specializes in high-asset divorces. We've helped Georgia couples successfully divide millions in cash, real estate, and other assets, so we know just how delicate negotiations can be.

If you're planning to end a high-asset marriage, consider this advice.

1. **Remember, equitable doesn't always mean equal.** In every Atlanta divorce case, the family courts must divide the couple's shared property and assets equitably — which means "fairly," not "equally." Often the courts believe equality is fair, but a lot of factors can influence that decision, including your/your spouse's behavior during the marriage and whether one or both of you have hidden assets.
2. **Hire a forensic accountant.** If you believe your spouse might be hiding valuable assets or income, a forensic accountant can help you prove it. They'll work side by side with your lawyer to uncover transfers of

Considering Divorce or Struggling Through It? Join Our Virtual Meetings for Guidance and Support!

Our complimentary divorce support groups and seminars are available online! Register for these upcoming events to gain knowledge, resources, and emotional support that will help you feel empowered while you go through major life changes.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER DIVORCE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING (VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUP)

When: Saturday, Dec. 11, at 10 a.m.
Register: AtlantaDivorceLawGroup.com/Happily-Ever-After-Divorce-Support-Group

It's always helpful to have a shoulder to lean on during the difficult process of divorce, but that is even more important during the Christmas season! It's tough to look around during the holidays and realize you need to build new family traditions and schedules. If you feel overwhelmed right now, we have good news: You can turn to our Happily Ever After Divorce Support Group for help.

These gatherings meet virtually once a month and include ADLG clients going through divorce as well as Kathleen Shack, the founder and CEO of Family Solutions Counseling, LLC. Kathleen specializes in marriage and family counseling, couples therapy, divorce coaching, and more, and her expertise — as well as comfort from your peers — will help you get through the holidays. To sign up, visit the website above.

CONSIDERING DIVORCE (COMPLIMENTARY WEBINAR)

When: Thursday, Dec. 16, at 7 p.m.
Register: AtlantaDivorceLawGroup.com/Webinars/Considering-Divorce

Some attorneys rush their clients into the divorce process as soon as they show interest in order to get a payout — but that's not us! Here at ADLG, our team wants what is best for you and your family, whether that's divorce, separation, or working through marital difficulties. If you're considering divorce but aren't sure whether it's right for you, our upcoming Considering Divorce webinar can help you decide.

This virtual meeting will be hosted by ADLG attorney Allen Russell, a family law specialist with nearly 30 years of experience. He'll walk you through things to consider before divorcing, how the divorce process works, what to expect out of a divorce, and the financial implications of separating. When the meeting ends, you may just have your mind made up!

Here at ADLG, we're not letting COVID-19 slow us down. Sign up for these virtual events to get the information and support you need without leaving home.



Rudolph, You'll Go Down in History

BEHIND THE EVERGREEN CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

You know Dasher and Dancer, and you definitely know Rudolph. Everyone's favorite red-nosed reindeer was first born as a 1939 short story, but he truly shot to fame when his tale was adapted into a song by Gene Autry in 1949. Rivaling even the song's fame is the Rankin/Bass stop-motion special that airs like clockwork every year around Christmas.

Generations have now grown up with Rudolph, so it may be surprising to learn that his journey to the small screen started as a General Electric promotion. The company had a running television special on NBC called the "GE Fantasy Hour," which they used to market their products directly to viewers. The better the story they told, the more viewers they got — and the more toasters they could sell.

The script introduced crucial new characters like Hermey the elf, Yukon Cornelius the prospector, and of course, Bumble the abominable snowman. GE hired innovative Japanese animators to create the film using stop-motion techniques that were highly advanced for the time. GE invested the modern equivalent of \$4.5 million into the production of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and the special first aired in 1964.

Those who are familiar with the film know that it ends with Rudolph enlisting Santa to save the Misfit Toys from earlier in the movie — but it didn't originally. The version that aired in 1964 concludes with Rudolph leading Santa's sleigh but forgetting all about his homeless friends. The backlash was swift, and viewers wrote in to express displeasure at the heartless resolution. GE decided the special had to be corrected and played again with the proper ending in 1965. And so, a tradition of annual airings was born.

Today, "Rudolph" is the longest-running Christmas special in history, and our favorite misfit deer shows no signs of slowing down after 57 years. The movie has transformed into a marketing bonanza, with new Christmas decorations, figurines, and toys being produced each year.

Though it's somewhat shocking to our modern sensibilities to see Santa bullying his reindeer employees and their children, fond childhood memories mean that parents continue to pass the special down to their kids. Even as we recognize its flaws, the dazzling animation and famous songs continue to bring joy and Christmas spirit to households around the country. Just as sure as Santa comes every year, so does Rudolph.



One of the most popular holiday traditions has become making and decorating gingerbread houses. The tradition began in Germany in the early 1800s and originated from Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel." Some shy away from the idea of making their own gingerbread house, but have no fear — if the Germans did it in the early 1800s, so can you!

To simplify things, many gingerbread houses come with baked pieces and a full decorating kit. This helps you have more time for the best part: the actual decorating! Each kit usually comes with fun candy and icing, so you can make something really kick-butt for the holidays!

Icing will be your best friend. Think of it as the yummy glue that holds everything together while also acting as a colorful trim for your gingerbread house. However, because it'll keep the house from falling, be sure to use a lot!

Spice drops also make for a great trim and "roofing," just use icing to hold them in place. Alternate between colors or use a variety to make your house really pop.

M&Ms are certainly a must-have for anyone decorating their gingerbread house. Not only are they delicious, but they also make for cute little accents all over the house and yard.

Mini cookies of your choice may also make a deliciously good-looking roof. Try layering them up for a dimensional look! And, for extra pizzazz, strategically place mini candy canes throughout the yard and on either side of the front doors and windows.

If you want to get really detailed, try using actual candy bars as fire logs in the fireplace. Just be sure to store your gingerbread house in a cool area so nothing will melt!

Whether you prefer a simple gingerbread house or a flashy one, any and ALL candy can be used! Get decorating and be sure to have a bite of candy along the way!

What Our Clients Are Saying!

"Jeanette Soltys was extremely helpful in putting my mind at ease for my case, and I just can't thank her enough! She was very prompt in seeing me, had looked over everything, and explained everything thoroughly. I was very relieved as I left the office. I will highly recommend her to anyone I know. Thanks again for all the help provided on my case!"

—Haley R.

Concierge Partner's Corner

Marsha Schechtman with Atlanta Behavioral Consultants



You've probably heard thousands of stories about couples who stayed together "for the children" — and there's a reason for that. Even when a divorce is the best move for everyone and the first step toward a happily ever after, it's still extremely difficult when kids are involved. Fortunately, experts like Marsha Schechtman of Atlanta Behavioral Consultants can make working through the process easier.

Marsha is a licensed clinical social worker who has been practicing in the Atlanta area for almost 40 years. She specializes in helping local families with divorce and child custody disputes, and has been a huge help to our clients!

Specifically, Marsha is an expert in co-parenting counseling, collaborative divorce coaching, collaborative child specialist counseling, parent coordination, divorce coaching, reunification therapy, and child custody evaluations and mediation. What a list! On top of all that, she also offers marital and couples therapy, and psychotherapy for kids and adults who are anxious, moody, or unable to sleep because of divorce-related struggles.

In short, if you're a parent and divorce has been tough on you and/or your kids' mental health, Marsha can help. She makes the difficult task of co-parenting feel doable, if not easy. To learn more about her and her work, visit AtlantaBehavioralConsultants.com/People/Marsha-Schechtman. You can book an appointment with her right there by filling out the "Contact Us" form and selecting her name under "Forward this message to."

CREATING A HOLIDAY MASTERPIECE

How to Decorate Your Gingerbread House Like a Pro