

# holiday family traditions

by sasha sloup, attorney, snider, diehl & rasmussen, llp

The thought of Christmastime brings memories of crisp days, delicious smells, festive decorations, laughter, family and friends, and the magic of traditions. The traditions surrounding Christmas stir warm feelings in the hearts of many. Growing up, our outlook and perception of Christmas changes dramatically. As a child, we are gifted traditions from our parents, which, while we enjoyed them at the time, we really didn't anticipate the appreciation we would gain from them. Awaiting Christmas and receiving the presents that sat under the tree, tempting our curiosity over the days leading up to and the suspense of what Santa would bring was the most intriguing. As adults, we began to notice the magic behind what our parents were giving to us.

I have always loved Christmastime – it is my favorite time of year. As a child I loved the traditions my family inspired, decorating our Christmas tree together; Christmas Eve at my Grandparents' house with both sides of my family; on the drive home looking for Santa and his reindeer in the sky- thinking that every red blinking light (really airplanes) was Rudolph; opening one gift before bed-which was always new cozy pajamas; leaving cookies and milk for Santa and carrots for the reindeers (which they always ate and drank at least some of); lying in bed with my two sisters listening to every little sound believing they were reindeer hooves on the roof; and then waking up before the sun to see that Santa had left just what we had wanted! As I grew older, while the magic of Santa diminished, the gift of family and friends and traditions that my parents had passed on to me was realized. After becoming a parent, passing on the traditions to my son that I had experienced as a child and creating the memories and magic of Santa is priceless.

As parents, Christmas becomes both a wonderful time filled with memories, family and friends, but also stress as society and social media has passed on the pressure of being the “best parent” making sure your child gets “everything they want” and being the most creative with your “Elf of the Shelf” (ours is named Christopher). As well-rounded as each of our children are, they always want more and more, and we want to be able to fulfill that want as a parent. A child “wanting” something is good, as they should always strive to want more, but as parents we have to step back and be realistic. When you ask any of your friends about their childhood Christmases, it is not the gifts that they remember; they remember the memories and the traditions that were passed on to them.

Our children are amazing little humans and while they have expanding imaginations and grow like weeds, they are still children and only have the expectations of children. In our society, “family” has changed and many



families are blended families. As a family law attorney, I have seen the importance of family traditions: even when a family may live in different homes and celebrate Christmas with mom or dad individually, they are still a family, and the traditions that are passed on to the children create a sense of love, stability, and warmth.

Traditions are different to each person, yet they all hold that special meaning and importance to all of us. In our home we have many different traditions that we pass on to our son throughout the year, but it seems Christmas traditions have the most magic! Our son is four years old this Christmas, so we will be able to pass on additional traditions this year, because he is realizing the magic of Christmas even more so. One tradition we began when he was a baby, one that my grandmother did for all the grandchildren, is buying one ornament every year and write the year on it for him. When he grows into an adult-which hopefully does not come quickly- we will give him these ornaments for his Christmas trees that he can share with his children. We have also incorporated this tradition with many of our relatives and friends. Each year when we decorate our tree, we get to see all the ornaments my grandmother passed on to me from when I was a child, the ones we have given to our son, the ones received from our family and friends and fill our tree and home with memories and tradition.

As you are preparing for your Christmas, take a breath and reflect on what you remember as a child and Christmas. It is not the gifts – it is the traditions that were passed on from your parents, family and friends. That is what makes smiles on our children's faces and warmth in their hearts, it creates lasting memories that they will cherish as they become adults, as much as we all cherish the traditions and memories our parents have passed onto us. **HLM**