

Surviving the Season

I am a sucker for the holiday charm that pops up in almost every store this time of year. I guess the marketing professionals know what they are doing. Twinkling lights, garland, and the constant streaming of music works immediately to put me in the spirit. But, at the risk of sounding like the Grinch, does it seem like those seasonal aisles are appearing a little earlier each year?

Pumpkins and candy corn make their grand entrance at the end of August, while turkey and pilgrim centerpieces and tinsel and candy canes are in stores before Halloween even begins. The holiday season is already a busy time, and the early arrival of these products makes me feel a little overwhelmed, reminding me of the impending personal deadlines for shopping, sending cards, and making travel plans.

As attorneys, our profession also

revolves around deadlines—judges set them, clients set them, and we set them for ourselves. These obligations are a necessary evil; they help move our cases and transactions along but at the same time serve as a slight irritation and reminder of the upcoming trial, hearing, brief, or closing that is just around the corner. And my practice does not necessarily slow down during the holidays.

Taking a step away from the rush can be helpful. Back in December 2012—on top of the firm party, cookie baking, and tree trimming—my husband and I decided to “test” our marriage by building a house. Construction was scheduled to be completed by Dec. 31, and I was bummed that my children were going to spend Christmas in our temporary living quarters, which at the time consisted of a quaint two-bedroom apartment containing two boys, two

dogs, my husband, and a very pregnant me. After trying unsuccessfully to convince my husband to dig all of the decorations out of the storage facility, I borrowed a tiny artificial tree from a friend, because—trust me—there was no room for anything larger, and put it up on a stool by the window with a big red bow. The tree had no lights, no garland, and no ornaments. It was pretty sad.

But as soon as my boys saw that tree, they lit up. It didn't need bling. Every day they made ornaments at school and placed them carefully on the branches. By Christmas, our tree was full—as was my heart. You would not have admired it on Pinterest or in any magazine, but this tree was perfect. And it was the first time I remember feeling relaxed during the holidays.

If you are overwhelmed with work, life, or a combination of the two this time of year—or at any other time—and you need someone to talk to, I encourage you to reach out to the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program. TLAP provides confidential help to all lawyers, law students, and judges facing mental health and substance abuse issues. It has been a welcomed friend to many lawyers at various times throughout their careers. You can contact TLAP at (800) 343-8527.

This year, I am committed to not feeling rushed. I don't know exactly how I am going to accomplish this task, but I think it will start with being realistic about deadlines. It also will require that I remember the importance of the season and not get derailed by the seasonal aisle. **TBJ**



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