



Andrew M. Ayers

AndrewMayers.com

877-262-9377

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The Holidays Are Here! How We Spend Our Christmas

Christmastime is here, and like a lot of people, we're looking forward to having a holiday that's a bit closer to normal. Last year, our celebrations were pretty pared down and involved a lot of Facetime calls, but we're hoping to see most of the family in person this time around.

Since we have three kids, Christmas tends to come to us. The pandemic threw a real monkey wrench into last year, but this year we should be able to see more of our family at the holidays.

My brother and his wife are another story, because by the time you read this newsletter, my first nephew will have been born. While the invitation to visit us for Christmas is still open, we understand that they're likely to have their hands full! They'll probably spend the holidays at home, and we'll see them another time.

On Christmas Eve, we do ribeye steak for dinner and then let the kids each open one small to medium-sized present. We also fire up the Santa tracker on TV for our kids, who are aged 6, 9, and 11. The oldest two will probably grow out of it soon, but they love to ask a lot of questions about Santa, so the tracker gives us a concrete way to tell them, no, Santa isn't here yet!

Of course, the kids also like to get up super early — think 5 a.m. We have to hold them off until closer to 8, because not everyone stays with us at the house (or wants to get up at that hour!). Once everyone has arrived and the gifts have been torn open, we have a hearty breakfast to get us through the rest of the day.

In years past, we used to put a Christmas hat on our cat Oriel and take silly pictures. I'm not sure she ever enjoyed it, but she was both pretty old and pretty tolerant, so she dealt with it. Last year we didn't have any pets in the house, and now we'll have two. We'll

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see how dressing them up goes — I suspect our dog, Stella, will cooperate, while our new cat, Luna, will not!

We're also interested to see if either pet manages to take out the tree — Stella through general rambunctiousness, and Luna through attempting to climb it. As a street cat in Mexico, Luna probably didn't see a whole lot of Christmas trees, so we're not sure what she'll make of it, or how much trouble she'll cause.

I'm looking forward to all of us decorating the tree together (before it's potentially destroyed), even though we often end up waiting until the last minute and wind up with the last tree on the lot. We also like to make (and eat) a lot of Christmas cookies. Like my father, I'm a snickerdoodle person. I don't need anything fancy, just the old Betty Crocker recipe. Meanwhile, we often end up with a whole lot of peppermint bark — not necessarily because anyone enjoys eating it that much, but because the two boys love putting the candy canes in a bag and smashing them with a hammer!

I hope that you're able to get together with the people you love the most this year and have a joyous and safe holiday. Stay warm and healthy, and have a very happy holiday!

- Andrew M. Ayers

The Next Big Health Secret

Why Seeing an Attorney May Be Good for You!



Consulting with an attorney when you are facing legal trouble allows you to have an advocate and expert in your corner who is fighting for you and your rights. And according to recent studies, it may be good for your health too!

According to NPR, a 2017 study of Veterans Affairs offices in Connecticut and New York found that veterans who saw clinic attorneys reported improved mental health within three months after their initial meetings. Additionally, in Colorado, a five-year survey of 69 patients from 2015 to 2020 found that patients in Medicaid programs who saw attorneys at their clinics had a decrease in the amount of physical health problems they were facing.

While further studies are needed to corroborate this evidence, the message is clear: Finding solutions to your legal concerns through an attorney is healthy!

This idea has led to several states permitting Medicaid patients to use some of their health care dollars toward legal clinical programs.

For example, in Colorado, some chronically ill patients are struggling with immigration issues or problems as a result of losing their jobs in the COVID-19 pandemic. By consulting with lawyers — in addition to psychiatrists, social workers, and medical doctors — patients are lowering their stress levels, improving their physical well-being, and staying closer to their families.

But how does this work? To answer that question, we have to examine the toll stress takes on our bodies. Constant stress, like concerns about visitations or deportation, can cause our bodies to fail. This often leads to headaches, heartburn, a weakened immune system, insomnia, stomach problems, and more. These problems then compound into other issues, causing the body to spiral when intervention isn't possible.

However, when the source of stress is relieved, the side effects are eliminated as well. This can powerfully help people who are facing potentially life-altering legal situations.

So, while your attorney may not be able to perform heart surgery or help alleviate your knee pain, their expertise may be just what you need to feel better in the long run.

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What is libel?

Libel is a method of defamation expressed in print, writing, pictures, signs, effigies, or any communication embodied in physical form. Libel used to refer to things printed in newspapers and other forms of print media, but in our digital world, things like blogs, Twitter posts, and online publications can now be subject to libel lawsuits.

Tabloids have been a reliable source for drama and libel cases for years. Many celebrities have repeatedly sued them for publishing stories with false or untrue allegations. For example, the British tabloid Daily Mail published multiple untrue stories regarding Keira Knightley's weight, claiming she was anorexic. She sued the tabloid for libel and won. J.K. Rowling and Kate Winslet have also successfully sued Daily Mail for libel.

How does slander differ from libel?

Where libel is a physical form of defamation, slander is spoken defamation, whether it be on television, radio, or even just rumors spread around the water cooler at work. Like libel, slanderous statements need to be expressed as fact, not just opinion. Since slander is spoken defamation, it can be much harder to prove than libel. Not only do you have to prove the person said it, but you also have to prove the person was negligent with the truth. Politicians have to prove actual malice in addition to all the other stipulations regarding slander.



Just tell the truth.

If you are ever accused of defamation, the best defense is the truth. If you can prove what you said or wrote was truthful, there is no case. The bottom line is this: The easiest way to avoid defamation lawsuits is by simply telling the truth about people. If you're not sure something is true, don't spread it around. Find out the facts before needlessly ruining someone's reputation. Telling lies and spreading rumors can cost you big in the long run.

TAKE A *BREAK*



SPENDING THE HOLIDAYS ALONE? BOOST YOUR MOOD WITH THESE TIPS

Many Americans spend the holidays alone every year, and the pandemic has only made it more difficult for people to see their loved ones, as travel has become more restricted and strenuous.

If you're one of these people who are spending their first holiday season alone this year, here are a few strategies you can try to make the situation a little easier.

Don't hold yourself to the usual standards.

One of the best things about spending the holidays alone is that you can do things your way. You don't have to worry about meeting everyone else's standards. Instead, you only have to make yourself happy. Simply telling yourself that you are not going to have the usual holiday environment can slightly help, but redefining what the holiday means to you can remove a huge weight. Trying new things or looking toward the future are great ways to reduce the stress of spending the holidays alone. Keeping up with old traditions may remind you of what you're missing out on, so it can greatly help to create your own traditions.

Plan ahead.

If you know in advance that you're going to be spending the holidays alone, planning ahead can prevent negative feelings. While being spontaneous can sometimes keep things fresh, it could leave you with a feeling of hopelessness about what to do next. There's no need for your list to be extensive or highly detailed, but even just planning to watch a movie or cook some of your favorite dishes can give you something to look forward to.

Take care of yourself.

Just because you're not seeing people during the holidays does not mean you should forgo your basic needs. Stick to your regular hygiene habits and do not let them get away from you. The same goes for eating and sleeping. Staying clean, well-fed, and well-rested goes a long way toward improving your happiness.

As with all mental health advice, what works for some does not work for everyone. Do what you think will work best for you and help you keep your thoughts happy.

DIY HOLIDAY EGGNOG

Inspired by
TastesBetterFromScratch.com

Ingredients

- 6 egg yolks
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 cups milk
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg
- 1 pinch salt
- 1/4 tsp vanilla extract
- Cinnamon and whipped cream, for garnish

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar until light and creamy. Set aside.
2. In a saucepan over medium heat, stir together the cream, milk, nutmeg, and salt. Bring to a simmer.
3. Add a spoonful of the milk mixture to the egg mixture. Whisk vigorously and repeat, one spoonful at a time.
4. When most of the milk is whisked in, add the egg mixture to the saucepan.
5. Whisk until the liquid thickens slightly or reaches 160 F. Remove from heat and add vanilla extract.
6. Pour the eggnog into a glass container and cover. Refrigerate.
7. When the eggnog has thickened, pour it into glasses, garnish, and enjoy!





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Slander, Libel, and Defamation What's the Difference?

In a time when attack politics are at the forefront of media and politics, we often hear terms like slander, libel, and defamation. While the First Amendment gives us our freedom of speech, not all speech is protected. It's more important than

ever to understand the difference between slander, libel, and defamation and know how to ensure your speech does not cross into these areas.

What is defamation?

Defamation is the all-encompassing term that describes both slander and libel. When an untrue and damaging statement, *presented as fact*, injures a third party's reputation, it's defamation of character. For example, you can't hurt a person's reputation by simply saying they're annoying; however, saying they participate in illegal activities when they actually do not can be extremely damaging.

It should be noted that you cannot be sued for defamation for simply stating an opinion. However, if the statement is untrue and damages the person's reputation, whether it be written or oral, you could be sued for defamation.



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