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## KEEPING YOUR MARRIAGE ON TRACK AT CHRISTMAS

It's meant to be about families spending quality time together and goodwill between all men.

Try telling that to a divorce lawyer though – January is their busiest time of year as they cope with the fall out of fragile marriages that have cracked under the pressure of Christmas.

Penny Raby from Marriage Makeover, based in Pershore, says there are three main reasons why marriages suffer at Christmas.

“Unrealistic expectations, added responsibilities and a change from the usual routine all contribute,” she explains.

“Firstly, many people have a very romantic idea of what Christmas should be like, but in reality it doesn't live up to expectation.

“Additionally, if a marriage is already struggling, couples think Christmas is the perfect time to fix things. That can heap on extra pressure and invariably things go from bad to worse.”

She also believes the responsibility of a big family occasion can be the tipping point.

“Other than carving the turkey, it is the wife who will usually be responsible for organising the majority of Christmas,” she says.

“There's a lot for one person to organise – shopping, presents, decorations, cooking, etc. If Christmas isn't a success, the finger of blame can sometimes point at the wife.

“Thirdly, without the normal distractions of work and school, the time a family spends together can be more intense - a potential recipe for disaster.”

However, Penny has three top tips to help keep relationships on track:

1 – **democracy rules** – let the whole family decide what type of Christmas they'd like and try to include everybody's ideas

2 – **don't expect perfection** – be realistic and remember that sometimes silly hiccups can actually make Christmas memorable for the right reasons

3 – **keep it real** – there's no rule that says you have to spend all day, every day together. Try to stick to some of your normal routine

Further information at [www.marriagemakeover.co.uk](http://www.marriagemakeover.co.uk)

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