

# Should you fight for your

By **LINDSEY AGNESS**

**WITH Christmas just around the corner, ask yourself – how are you feeling about it?**

Are you excited and full of anticipation or are you already feeling the pre-festive blues, wondering how you are going to get through another year without a massive bust-up?

Lindsey Agness, from Sandwich, set up The Change Corporation in 2005 and is now one of the UK's top people developers and motivational experts.

She offers some advice on how to make it through the festivities without a family fall-out.

Apparently, divorce lawyers the length and breadth of the country have their busiest day of the year on the first Monday back to work in January, as

the Christmas holiday takes its toll on thousands of relationships.

During the year, long working hours and travel away from home often keep a relationship going in a funny sort of way, as the issues between couples are disguised by the lack of opportunity to row. So when Christmas comes along,

it's a nightmare for anyone with an already shaky marriage.

There are just so many opportunities

for things to go badly wrong – from couples asking themselves 'who is that boring stranger?' to financial worries and the in-law factor. So I hear you asking yourself 'What can I do to get through Christmas with my partner?'

## Plan early

Don't leave it all to the last minute as it's an opportunity for things to go horribly wrong and put pressure on the relationship. Last year I shopped on Christmas Eve for my turkey, couldn't find one anywhere and so had to improvise on Christmas day.

Fortunately I only had my kids to worry about and they thought it was hilarious. You may not be so lucky! Agree now which in-laws will be coming for Christmas dinner.

If that's a challenge, maybe think about inviting both sets to share your turkey.

Or, if that doesn't bear thinking about, find a way of spending time with both sets at different times if that's feasible.

Also, there's still time to buy your partner a thoughtful present for a change rather than resorting to the store catalogues again or even asking someone else to buy it



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# marriage, or call it a day?

for you because you've run out of time.

For once, ask your partner what they would really like for Christmas and listen to what they tell you.

## What do you want?

What's going on in your own head right now regarding Christmas? Are you dreading it? Focusing on all the things that can go wrong? Already planning to leave before Boxing Day is done?

If we spend all our time focusing on what we don't want over Christmas, it will start to make us feel negative even before it's here.

For example, if we are thinking about 'not wanting to be miserable over Christmas' our minds cannot process the negative, so we end up giving ourselves the instruction to be miserable. Remember the saying be careful what you wish for.

Instead, visualise the kind of Christmas you do want. Think about what you want to see, hear and how you want to feel. That way you give yourself the best shot at actually having fun this time around.

## Keep busy

We know that one of the biggest pressures for a shaky marriage is spending time together at Christmas, so it makes sense to keep busy.

If that means finding the time to do some new activities together, all the better – though you might want to invite a few friends along too to take some of the pressure off you as a couple.



**SUPPORT:** Lindsey Agness offers advice

Remember why you got together in the first place and all the things that you used to enjoy – days out, long walks, pub lunch-

es, reading, watching DVDs, staying with friends. If you have kids, think of some nice family activities. Do whatever it takes to have some fun time.

Also, take some 'me time' for yourself to keep you sane, so long as you do this in smallish time chunks and still allow time for you both as a couple.

## What if it doesn't work?

More than 1.8 million couples will contemplate divorce during this Christmas period, according to the Family Mediation Helpline.

So if after all that advice, you are still pulling your hair out, then maybe it's time to pull the plug.

At New Year, people make resolutions about what they want for the future. So if your shaky marriage hits the rocks this year, take the time to reflect on what you want for the future.

There are a number of agencies to help you, such as Relate and the Family Mediation Helpline.

Move on only when you have asked yourself if you've done everything you could to save the relationship. If the answer is 'yes', then make sure you have the essentials covered before you do anything drastic.

For example, where will you live? How will you manage financially? Once you've worked out those important answers, then go for it.

• **Lindsey Agness is running Age with Attitude for mid-life women**

*who want to make a change in their lives, including their relationships, starting on Saturday, December 5, at The Chaucer Hotel in Canterbury. There are just a couple of places left. Readers should quote 'KOS' to get a 10 per cent discount. For more details see [www.agewithattitude.co.uk](http://www.agewithattitude.co.uk).*

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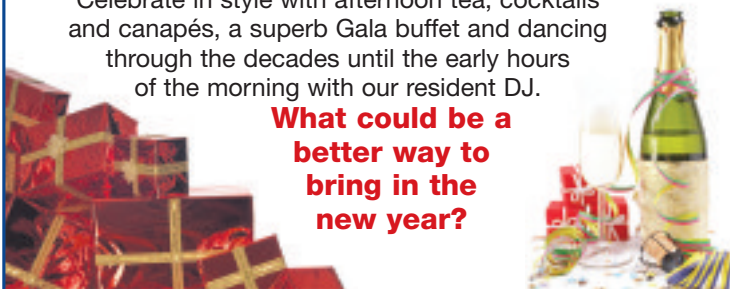
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