

Tangled in Tinsel

By Suze Hargraves

I'll admit it. I'm not graceful. In some places it's actually illegal for me to walk and chew gum at the same time. I once tripped over a phone cord in my office and managed to take out the computer monitor, two phone systems, and a lamp which hit my boss in the head and knocked her out. I've sprained both my ankles at the same time...twice. I can trip over dust. I'm not alone though. Lots of people are clumsy. In the spirit of the holiday season, today I'm going to look at some holiday mishaps you can prevent. Some of these are based on research. Some are based on personal experience. Betcha you'll be able to guess which ones are which.

1. When taking a turkey out of the oven it's a good idea to clear the kitchen of children and animals. Also, don't long oven mitts, pull the oven rack partially out of the oven, cover the whole pan with foil and then remove it from the oven. Avoid slippery splashes, painful burns and tragic accidents with a few simple precautions.
2. A festive table setting is always beautiful. If you're lighting candles at the dinner table, wait until everyone is seated to light them. Tablecloths have a tendency to slide around a bit when several people are sitting down at once. Flying lit candles and fiery tablecloths will not add to the ambiance of your carefully planned meal. Nor will the ensuing fire extinguished meal or table. Trust me.
3. Pets are a part of many people's families, but they're not always a safe addition to holiday parties. Festive feisty Fido plowing into family elders or small children and sending them sprawling could result in serious injuries. Keep over-exuberant pets away from your guests to avoid accidents.
4. Secure the tree. I'm serious. That little stand is not enough. Cats, dogs, children and party guests all have clever ways of falling into, climbing up, burrowing under and otherwise usurping the most mechanically sound Christmas tree stands. Use a hook in the wall or ceiling and some fishing line to avoid a tinsel laden catastrophe.
5. Have a place for your family and guests to put dripping boots and shoes that will not create a slip and slide scenario in the hallway.
6. Garland on the banisters does look pretty, but it shouldn't prohibit guests from using the hand rails.
7. Leave lights on in bathrooms and hallways. Just because you know your way around in the dark doesn't mean your guests do.
8. De-ice walkways and steps. Watching your sister slide down the front steps, presents flying, hat askew, velvet skirt and patent leather shoes in the air as she lands unceremoniously in a snow bank may be hysterical, but honestly, it's not something you should actually plan.
9. Provide munchies (healthy ones of course) to your guests from the moment they arrive to the time they leave. People tend to consume a bit less alcohol if they have finger food easily available.
10. Of course if your guests are drinking you're going to take their keys because friends don't let friends drive drunk. If you've got one of those friends that insists, although unable to stand upright, that they are "fine" to drive here's a handy plan: Get their keys and move your party animal friend's car to another street. It's very difficult to drive a car you can't find. They might be quite upset with you, but not nearly as upset as family and friends would be to lose a loved one to drunk driving. Offer a ride home or a place to sleep.

Stay safe this holiday season by using common sense to make sure that your home and loved ones stay in one piece. Never underestimate the ability of people such as myself to find a way to get tangled in the tinsel. Your smarts will help everyone have a safe and happy holiday season.

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