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# Looking Back in Order to Look Ahead

BY DEBBIE MARTINEZ, DIVORCE COACH



**T**HE HOLIDAY SEASON IS BY FAR THE TOUGHEST TIME post-divorce. It is a time where we tend to lose hope, let our sadness rule our days and we forget the gains we have made in our lives emotionally since the Big D. Sometimes it takes looking back to see how far you have come. I found an old journal I kept during the painful days of my divorce and it had to do with the Christmas season. I want to share this entry because I know you will see yourself in my words, but there is a greater reason. It's to be the messenger that there is hope, a new life will find you, and all will be right in your world again. I looked back and I saw how very far I had come. You will too.

### December 6, 2008

No one ever told me how hard it would be to move on. How at every turn there is one more thing that sets you back. When money is tight, I think of how he has messed up the family, when the kids leave to go to his house or when they return with stories of what they did "over there," it produces a reaction within me I never thought possible.

The mind and heart are funny creatures. I'm not sure which one is ruling me because I don't love him any more, but at the same time, I am sad. Sad that my dream for my kids is over. Nothing brought this home more than when I pulled out the Christmas decorations. I had four little sweater ornaments, typical Hallmark style. One says "mom," one "dad," one "daughter," and one "son." This year I had only three and that's when I realized that I had packed up his ornaments when he left and gave them to him. The "dad" sweater was in the box. So each year three sweaters hang on the tree and each year three of something will be bought and take their place amongst the branches. The realization that there will never be a "dad" anything on my tree again made me very sad. Even if I remarry, there will never be a "dad" ornament. This, my friend, is the reality of divorce. It simply comes down to Christmas ornaments. The yearly reminder of vacations taken as a family and then the one or two you can pick out that you took with the kids after the divorce. Maybe I should split the tree – one side P.D. (pre divorce) and the other A.D. (after divorce). I sat there looking over the pile of Hallmark memories – new home, a pregnant mouse and each year's ornament the kids and I would pick out at the Hallmark store, our Christmas tradition. Yep, they were all there except the "dad" one's, our first Christmas and the kissing rabbits.

At what point do I look at the tree and see one big beautifully decorated tree instead of before and after memories glaring at me. Don't get me wrong, I'm not sad that "he" is gone; my heart is heavy that my dream is gone. And there is a difference. So, I go back to decorating the tree, with the Christmas music playing, pour myself a glass of wine and remember the memories as I carefully hang each ornament. Once they're hung, I look back and marvel at a big beautifully decorated tree. It's at that moment it hits me – it was the process of hanging the ornaments that was so painful, each one separate in my hand with time to reflect on the memory behind it, but once it was on the tree, it lost its pain. It became only one of a whole finished product – the decorated tree. That tree was me, all the pain and the happiness tucked into its branches made it beautiful in the end. I sit down after turning on the lights and take in how beautiful it looks, and I see something in that tree I've never seen before. I see hope.

*May you see hope this holiday season and in 2017!*

Debbie Martinez, MA is a certified, mindful life coach specializing in divorce (aka: heartbreak coach). She professionally coaches clients on how to avoid the breakup backlash and live better, not bitter. As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. She brings her formal training and life experience into her coaching practice to empower and educate clients through their divorce journey and onto new beginnings. You can contact Debbie at [debbie@thepowerofdivorcecoach.com](mailto:debbie@thepowerofdivorcecoach.com).



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