



MONAST
LAW OFFICE

Workers' COMPanion

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www.monastlaw.com | 614-334-4649 | 5000 Arlington Centre Blvd. Bldg 2, Suite 2117, Upper Arlington, OH 43220-2913

WRANGLING THE FAMILY for the Holidays

Though we don't usually go away for the holidays,

planning months in advance to get all the kids home sometime around Christmas is its own kind of adventure. When you combine a blended family with a whole host of the kids' significant others and in-laws as well as various church activity schedules (Pete sings at eight services over three days!), the logistics get more than a little complicated. It's looking this year that we're going to have to celebrate the week before the actual holiday just to make it work — which is totally fine with Amy and I as we are just grateful for the opportunity to spend some time with all our family under one roof.

The real gift around the holidays is the fact that our entire family actually enjoys getting together, a feeling that I know isn't shared by all families. Whichever day we end up celebrating, we all take turns opening presents, making sure whoever's tearing open their gift has everybody's full attention and gets the appropriate "oohs" and "aahhs". A few years ago, we started the tradition of getting a goofy gag gift for the kids, a kind of veiled comment on whatever boneheaded move they've made in the past year. Maybe if we know one of the boys has developed an inappropriate scratching habit, he'll get a little bottle of hand sanitizer. Or, in the case of my son-in-law Robby, who's a youth pastor, a sign emblazoned with the double entendre he unknowingly uttered in a sermon in front of a host of snickering high school kids. We all get a chuckle or two out of these, all in good fun. Hey, if you can't laugh at family, who can you laugh at? Afterward, we'll relax and hang out over the course of the day until it's time for the honey-baked ham (does anyone eat ham other times besides on Christmas and Easter?).

It was a little different back in the day. When I was growing up in Joplin, Missouri, I remember the town being decked out just like the little city in "A Christmas Story." The windows of the Macy's where my mom worked glittered with lights illuminating whatever

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train set or must-have toy was the rage that season and featured Santa and his mechanical reindeer in mounds of cotton serving as snow. My Cub Scout troop was always part of the Christmas parade. We'd pile into the back of some flatbed truck, and freeze our tails off in the bitter cold. It seems it was always so frigid that, by the end of the event, our feet would feel like ice blocks dangling on the ends of our legs no matter how much we stamped them.

When my kids were younger, it was always a great joy to see their childlike wonder around the holidays. Magically, flour left out in front of the fireplace always had boot prints in the morning, coming from the chimney, and the cookies and milk the kids would leave out for the big man were always gone. They'd wake up and inspect their findings, totally wide-eyed that Santa had really been there. How wonderful to relive Christmas through your children!

These days, as I've gotten about as round as Santa, I'm content to sit around with our family, unwrap a few presents, and crack a few jokes here and there. It means a lot to all of us that we're able to take time to slow down and celebrate being with one another during the busy season—that's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown!



-Jim Monast



3 CREATIVE GIFT WRAP ALTERNATIVES

There's something magical about seeing a stack of presents wrapped in bright, multicolored paper. However, that enchanting scene quickly evaporates a few hours

later when all those wads of wrapping paper and plastic bows are chucked unceremoniously into the garbage. What if we told you there are countless ways you can still enjoy wrapping and unwrapping presents, without all the waste? Here are a few creative gift wrap alternatives to consider this holiday season.

Brown Paper Bags With the holiday season comes holiday shopping, and if you opt out of plastic grocery bags, you're sure to have a surplus of brown paper bags in the pantry. Drop a present into the bag, tape it shut, and you're good

to go. Add some simple lace or a ribbon for an old-timey feel or get creative with stamps and hand-drawn artwork. This wrap job lets your imagination run wild.

Old Maps and Calendars These days, pretty much every phone has a built-in GPS, so you probably won't need the map from your 1999 road trip anytime soon. If you still have an old map, why not use that for wrapping? The unusual designs guarantee your gifts will be one of a kind. And don't worry if there are notes scrawled across the paper. Old events or directions will add some unique flair to the presents.

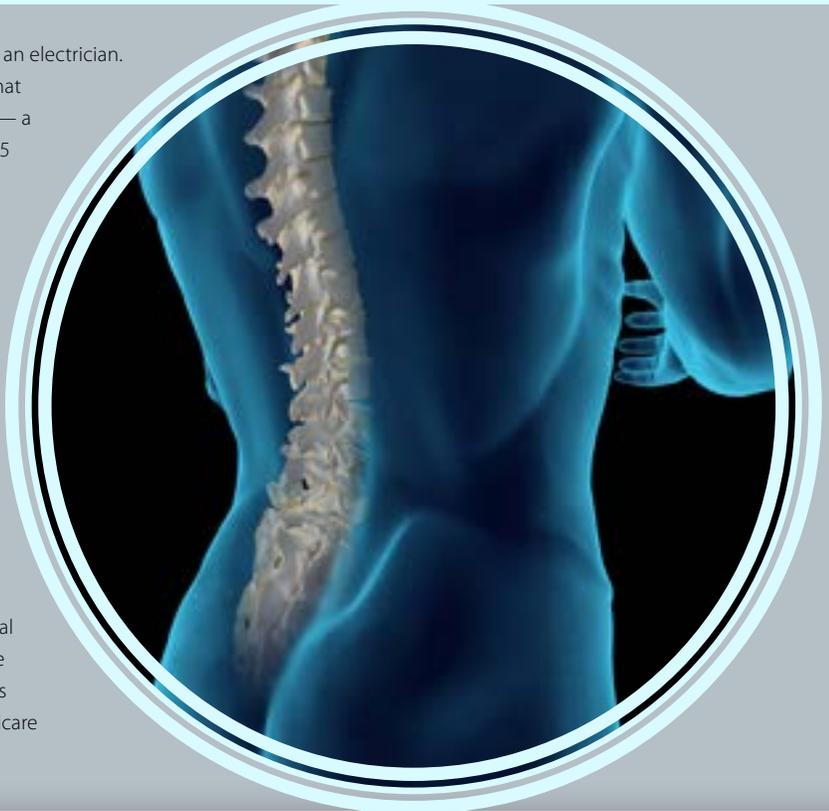
Furoshiki Fabric is an excellent substitute for wrapping paper. You can use a scarf to create two gifts in one or pull out scraps of fabric from old projects. The traditional Japanese practice of furoshiki is all about wrapping goods in fabric. Described as "functional fabric origami," you'd be amazed at how a few well-placed folds can turn your gift into a work of art. Learn how to wrap anything, from boxes to bottles, at ceas.ku.edu/furoshiki-instructional-videos.

You don't have to follow the same gift wrap habits year after year. After the effort you put into finding just the right present, you should be able to make your gift wrap just as special. Find a method that's uniquely you and get started!

James W.

IMPRESSIVE CASE RESULTS

James W. sustained two industrial injuries while working as an electrician. The first happened when he suffered an electrical shock that jolted him off a 15-foot ladder. This resulted in two surgeries — a posterior fusion at L5-S1 and artificial disc replacement at L4-5 with an anterior fusion at L5-S1. After he returned to work, he developed pain and numbness in both hands from performing repetitive work as an electrician. He underwent bilateral carpal tunnel release and bilateral ulnar nerve release procedures. He attempted vocational retraining to return to work but was unable to continue. We were successful in having him granted lifetime permanent total disability compensation by the Ohio Industrial Commission and suggested he also apply for Social Security Disability. Social Security denied his application initially and upon reconsideration. Prior to a hearing scheduled before an administrative law judge, we submitted a prehearing memorandum summarizing the voluminous medical record and presenting the limitations resulting from James' failed back syndrome and spinal epidural fibrosis. The administrative law judge granted a fully favorable on-the-record decision without need to attend a hearing. This resulted in nearly three years of back benefits, as well as Medicare coverage for James.



HAVE YOU BEEN OFFERED A FAIR SETTLEMENT?

In Ohio, the workers' compensation system provides medical care and wage replacement benefits for employees who suffer job-related illnesses and injuries. In most cases, these benefits are distributed in bi-weekly payments.

However, for some injured workers and their families, receiving compensation every two weeks is not necessarily the most beneficial arrangement. At times, it can be more advantageous to agree to a lump-sum settlement.

In such a settlement, the injured worker, the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC), and the employer reach an agreement that provides one large sum of money to the worker, instead of bi-weekly disbursements. But, as you can imagine, how much a particular claim is worth is often the subject of heated debate, and it can feel almost impossible for the injured worker to determine if he or she is getting a fair deal.

If you're offered a settlement, there are a few factors to consider:

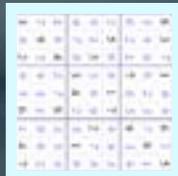
- **What type of benefits are you receiving?** Different kinds of benefits carry different implications in a settlement. For example, permanent disability benefits are more complicated, as they're likely to continually affect an injured worker and their family well into the future.

- **Is it likely that your benefits will continue?** In some cases, it may become apparent that the benefits are likely to be discontinued. If so, a settlement might be the best way to maximize your compensation.
- **Do you have specific needs right now?** Is there a compelling reason to want or need a settlement? For many people, bi-weekly benefits serve their purpose just fine. That said, there are certainly circumstances in which a settlement can help address immediate, necessary issues.
- **Are you good at managing money?** Receiving a large lump sum requires a certain amount of self-control and successful money management. For some, a bi-weekly payment is a much easier way to stretch the funds to their fullest extent.

We know that the answers to these questions can be difficult to find, as they involve long-term calculations, medical opinions, and the uncertainty of the future. Luckily, we can help you make sense of this complicated process, ensuring you get either the settlement or installment compensation you deserve. Call us at 614-515-2595, and ensure you're well-protected from the start.

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ANSWERS



ABBY'S APPETIZERS EASY HOLIDAY PARTY CHEESE FONDUE

*Scrambling to find something for the holiday potluck?
This fondue is sure to impress!*

Recipe inspired by PinchofYum.com.

INGREDIENTS

- ¾ cup dry white wine
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- Salt to taste
- 1 (8-ounce) package sliced Swiss cheese
- Foods to dip (apple slices, bread cubes, roasted vegetables, etc.)

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, whisk together wine and cornstarch.
2. Chop cheese slices into small, uniform pieces.
3. Rub clove of garlic all over the sides and bottom of a heavy-bottomed pot, then discard.
4. Heat wine mixture over medium-low heat in the pot until thick and bubbling. Add some cheese and slowly whisk. When nearly smooth, add more cheese and whisk gently. Repeat until all cheese is melted. If mixture seems too tight, add 1 tablespoon wine.
5. Season with salt and serve immediately. Keep pot on low heat to keep the fondue dipable.



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GIVE UP THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS ... And Look for Meaning Instead



How many books have you seen with the word "happiness" in the title? A lot, right? It's such a popular topic because the pursuit, journey, and, ultimately, achievement of happiness is supposed to be the key to a fulfilling life. Happiness is the ultimate human condition; reaching it is our purpose and will bring us contentment.

Frankl, this meant providing therapy to others in the camp. As Frankl puts it, once a person finds meaning, they know the "why" of their existence, and they will be able to bear almost any "how."

In the years since "Man's Search for Meaning" was written, it seems we've forgotten a lot of its advice. The Centers for Disease Control found that four out of every 10 Americans do not have a satisfying life purpose, and yet, 60 percent of Americans say they are happy. What gives?

It comes down to the pursuit of happiness versus pursuing meaning in life. It's the difference between "I'm going to buy this dress because it will make me happy" and "I'm going to volunteer at a shelter because it will be meaningful." Happiness involves satisfying an immediate need, whereas finding meaning focuses on making choices that give us a sense of purpose. Even more telling, the Journal of Positive Psychology found that meaningful acts usually involve giving, but reaching happiness often means taking. Because of this, leading a meaningful life, while often more challenging, is also more satisfying.

Is it possible that the pursuit of a meaningful life will lead us to happiness? Absolutely. Just don't expect it to be an everlasting condition. Think of happiness the way psychologist Frank T. McAndrew does: "Recognizing that happiness exists — and that it's a delightful visitor that never overstays its welcome — may help us appreciate it more when it arrives."

But before you pick up that guide to happiness, there's some new data you need to pay attention to. Turns out, we've been focusing on the wrong goal. More

and more research is supporting the benefit of pursuing a meaningful life over a happy one.

Viktor Frankl could be called a leading expert on the topic. Frankl lived through the Holocaust in a concentration camp and saw firsthand how humans deal with unhappy circumstances. As a respected psychiatrist, his observations became the basis for his book, "Man's Search for Meaning." Frankl found that the people who stood the best chance of surviving the horrific experience were those who saw some sort of meaning in their lives, even under the bleakest circumstances. For