

THE SLG ADVISOR

DEC
2025

Lessons From Italy

Liz and I took a two-week trip to Italy in late September to celebrate our 31st wedding anniversary. We'd talked about this trip for years, and when it finally happened, it was everything we hoped for and then some. But it also left me thinking deeply about life, work, and the lessons that come when you finally slow down long enough to listen.

Lesson 1: Don't wait decades to do the thing you've always wanted to do.

For years, we said, "Someday, we'll go to Italy." There was always a reason to put it off: work, the kids, bills, timing ... but looking back, we could have made it happen sooner. Maybe not the same luxury or length, but we could have done something. I wouldn't call it a regret, but it's a reminder: If there's something you've been putting off that feeds your soul, break it into smaller steps and start now. Time isn't promised, and dreams don't get better by waiting.

Lesson 2: The world won't collapse if you unplug.

This trip was the first time since founding my firm in 1998 that I took two weeks off without working. I was nervous before we left, but what I discovered was freeing. Everything ran smoothly. My team handled every challenge. When I returned, I had no fires to put out. I felt proud, and honestly, a little useless. But that's the goal of leadership, to build a team so capable that the place doesn't fall apart in your absence.

Lesson 3: True leadership means taking blame and sharing credit.

One evening, Liz and I had dinner at a small restaurant in Ravello. The chef, a well-known culinary star, visited each table. When he stopped by ours, he said something I'll never forget: "When things go right here, the credit belongs to my team. When something goes wrong, it's my fault to fix." That kind of humility and accountability is rare and powerful. It's how great leaders earn loyalty, respect, and trust.

Lesson 4: Life's best moments come when you're fully present.

Italy reminded me to slow down, savor meals, talk without rushing, and notice beauty in small details: a cup of espresso, the sound of church bells, the sight of Liz smiling across a candlelit table.

The trip was everything we wanted it to be. It was a celebration, a pause, and a mirror reflecting what matters. I came home rested, grateful, and more certain than ever that balance, trust, and presence aren't luxuries. They're essentials.

So, as this year comes to a close, here's my advice: Take the trip, make the call, share the meal, or simply unplug for a while. Life won't wait ... and neither should you.

-Len Spada



Cold Comfort

THE HIDDEN WINTER DANGERS IN AIRBNBS

For many of us, winter means packing up for a cozy weekend getaway: a ski condo in Vermont, a cabin in New Hampshire, or a “charming” Airbnb up north with a wood stove and a mountain view. But those rustic retreats can come with hazards most guests never consider until it’s too late.

I know I often discuss Airbnb injuries; you’re right, it’s a lot. But new seasons bring new safety concerns, and I’ll continue to harp on this topic season by season. Why? Because these cases keep happening, and a little awareness can save a lot of pain, frustration, and ruined vacations.

Airbnbs and other short-term rentals aren’t managed like hotels. Many are run by well-meaning homeowners who don’t fully understand the safety standards they’re supposed to meet, especially in winter. Here are four hidden dangers we see every year when the snow starts to fall.

1. Icy Walkways and Driveways

Not every host wakes up early to shovel or salt. Under Massachusetts law, property owners, including short-

term rental hosts, have a duty to keep their premises reasonably safe. A slip on black ice at a rental property can lead to serious injuries and legal questions about who was responsible for maintenance: the host, a property manager, or even a snow-removal contractor.

2. Faulty or Improvised Heating

Portable space heaters and fireplaces might make a rental feel “homey,” but they’re also among the top causes of winter house fires. And carbon monoxide (CO) buildup from unvented stoves or blocked chimneys is an even greater danger. Every Massachusetts dwelling is required to have working CO detectors, but that doesn’t mean every Airbnb does. Always find and test them when you arrive.

3. Decks, Hot Tubs, and Stairs

Moisture and freezing temperatures can turn wooden decks into ice rinks or weaken old railings. Many “rustic” cabins skip proper handrails or use steep, uneven stairs that don’t meet code. Add ski boots or wet shoes, and you’ve got a recipe for disaster.

4. Power Outages and Poor Lighting

Even finding the bathroom can be risky when the lights go out in an unfamiliar layout. Keep your phone flashlight handy and note emergency exits when you arrive.

If you’re renting this winter, do a five-minute safety sweep:

- Check stairs, decks, and railings.
- Test smoke and CO detectors.
- Ask who handles snow removal.
- Know where emergency contacts are posted.

A little awareness goes a long way toward keeping your getaway safe and your memories happy. And if something goes wrong, remember, even on vacation, you still have rights. At Spada Law Group, we help Massachusetts residents who are injured away from home, whether at a ski lodge, hotel, or Airbnb, get the answers and help they deserve.

-Len Spada

REVIEW OF THE MONTH



“My experience with Spada Law has been wonderful. Their attention and interest in helping were very clear. I received an excellent settlement for all the damages received, and the process lasted a few months. Very good, I recommend them!”

-Carlos Gordillo

THE BEST GIFTS DON'T COST MUCH

They Just Mean Everything

Every year around the holidays, I'm reminded that the best gifts don't come with a big price tag. They come with meaning.

My favorite gift, hands down, comes from my daughter. Every year, she gives me a wall calendar filled with pictures of just the two of us, one for every month. Some are from big moments, such as vacations or birthdays, and others are just random days that happen to be great for no special reason.

I told her years ago that she has to keep making those calendars until I no longer have dates to check off. It's a tradition that means more to me every year. Every morning, when I see my calendar at work, I get a small reminder of us and the fact that time is moving, but memories stick around.

If you're still searching for a meaningful gift this season, consider skipping the gadgets and opting for something simple. Here are five ideas that hit harder than anything you'll find online.

- **A playlist of songs that tell your story** with a handwritten note about why each track matters.
- **A short photo book** of shared moments, one for each month of the past year.
- **A candle labeled with a memory, not a scent** like "Sunday Mornings at Home" or "Our Italy Trip in a Jar."
- **A handful of "Open When" letters** to be opened during future moments for "when you need advice," "when you're proud," and "when you miss me."
- **A custom puzzle made from a favorite photo**, a memory you can literally piece back together.

The older I get, the more I realize the best gifts don't fade, wear out, or go out of style. They make you pause, even for a moment, and feel grateful for the people who matter most.

-Len Spada



Soft, buttery, and sweet, these cookies hold their shape beautifully for decorating and taste just as good plain. Simple to make and fun for the whole family, they're your new go-to Christmas tradition.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 large egg

DIRECTIONS

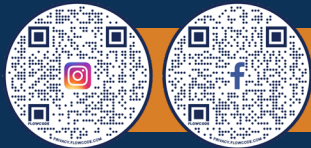
1. Preheat oven to 350 F with a rack in the center.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt, then set aside.
3. Using a stand or handheld mixer, beat the butter and sugar together.
4. Add vanilla extract and egg, and beat until well combined.
5. To the butter mixture, add flour mixture in 3 parts until fully incorporated.
6. Divide the dough into 2 equal parts.
7. On a lightly floured surface, roll into 1/4-inch thickness.
8. Use cookie cutters to cut out your favorite shapes.
9. Bake cookies on a parchment- or silicone-lined baking sheet for 10 minutes, or until the edges begin to turn golden brown.
10. Let the cookies cool for about 5 minutes on the baking sheet before transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely, then decorate with festive icing as desired.

Inspired by NatashasKitchen.com



INSIDE

1. Take the Trip — Don't Wait
2. The Hidden Hazards Lurking in Winter Vacation Rentals
Review of the Month
3. The Most Meaningful Gifts Are the Ones You Can Feel
Christmas Sugar Cookies
4. The Body's Natural Reset Button



Scan to follow us
on social media!

INHALE THE FACTS

DEEP BREATHING IS YOUR SCIENTIFIC SHORTCUT TO STRESS RELIEF

When you feel angry or stressed out, a few deep breaths can be more powerful than they seem. That inhale is like a reset button for your body, sending signals to your nervous system, slowing your heart rate, and quieting the mental storm. Deep breathing isn't just hot air; it's scientifically proven to be one of the simplest hacks for calming the mind and body. Inhale deeply, and let's explore what happens internally when you breathe back to balance.

Most of the time, you don't think about breathing; your body naturally handles this task as you go about your day. But when you control your breath, you trigger a rest and digest mode that slows your heart rate and sends more blood to your gut to help digestion. The brain manages breathing and heart rate in the same parts of the brain, and they work together. With each breath you take, your lungs expand and the pressure on your heart and blood vessels shifts. This rhythm directly links how you breathe and how calm or alert you feel. The slower and more relaxed your breath is, the less your internal systems are gearing up for a battle.

Deep breathing reduces stress and triggers your blood pressure and nervous system to relax. It doesn't just change your mental state; it can also ease minor physical pain, such as headaches or an upset stomach. Pain stresses your body out, so easing your aches will help your parasympathetic nervous system take the reins and focus on recovery rather than alertness.

To get the full benefits from this mindfulness technique, sit upright and take a slow, deep inhale through your nose. Place one hand on your belly and one on your chest to feel your rib cage expand and your belly rise as the lungs fill. Keep this up until you feel a wave of calm come over you.

So, next time you're feeling on edge, inhale and see why, sometimes, the simplest science is a breath of fresh air.

