

POSITIVE PARENTING
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DECEMBER 2006

GIVING GOOD GIFTS

Our grandson Hayden is three years old this Christmas. Our granddaughter Erica is ten months old. I want to see wonder and delight on their faces ... and I want them to see the same on mine! What will it take to make that happen? Will you join me in the resolve to do Christmas differently this year?

For this season, in which we celebrate God giving Jesus Christ, the best of all gifts, let's reevaluate our gift giving. How can we mirror giving good gifts, in the midst of a consumerist culture?

Turn off the television and don't read the cascade of catalogs that arrive. Don't stroll through the stores, wondering what you want. There is only one goal of advertising: to make you dissatisfied with what you already have. Don't feed that green-eyed monster. Don't invite dissatisfaction into your home.

But isn't that almost un-American, to not shop 'til we drop, stressed about what to give the people who have everything already; exhausted from entertaining, shopping, cooking, and decorating; and arriving at December 26th, weak with relief at having run the month long marathon and dreading next Christmas?

But this is more than a list of "don'ts." What do you have to give that passes on the legacy you intend, that models the values you hold dear?

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

SIMPLIFY AND DOWNSCALE – The list of those with whom we exchange gifts can take on a life of its own. Talk now about sharing time, rather than giving a tangible gift. (Bonus: nothing to eat, wear, dust ... or to exchange!) Give simpler gifts.

HOMEMADE – Do you have a special recipe for cookies, appetizer, cocoa mix, bread, or snack? Or, how about a collection of favorite recipes? If you knit, paint, or do needlework, share your gift. Every parent and grandparent loves some refrigerator art by their favorite young artist!

FRAMED PICTURE – A picture of you and the recipient or of you and your family is always appreciated.

HONOR WITH A PHILANTHROPIC GIFT – Give a gift to a charity or cause that reflects the interests, values, or passions of the receiver.

COUPONS FOR TIME TOGETHER AND/OR SERVICES – Think about Giving the gift of a leisurely day together or deliver a meal, do a load of laundry, run errands, or give a backrub.

TICKETS FOR A SHARED EVENT – Is there a movie, concert, play, or art exhibit you'd both enjoy? Give tickets or a promise of that shared experience.

MEMBERSHIP – For families you love, give a membership to the zoo or arboretum or museum (science, art or children's). You are giving them the gift of time and experience together.

SOMETHING YOU ALREADY OWN – Once, a friend gave me a sweater of hers that I had admired. I was thrilled! At 16, my grandmother gave me a beautiful necklace of hers, and watched me wear it for the next 14 years. I still cherish it, as part of her legacy. An older friend gave her adult children some of her treasures as Christmas gifts. There was pleasure in the giving and the receiving.

GIVE LESSONS OR CAMP – Here is something that kids love and don't expect. Think about an interest, sport, or skill in which they have expressed an interest. Camp will make memories for a lifetime.

DO SERVICE TOGETHER – Shovel snow for a shut in neighbor, visit a friend or relative in a nursing home, serve a meal at a soup kitchen, or plan a mission trip together. This captures the meaning of the season.

BAKE OR SHOP OR WRAP TOGETHER – We all do these things over the Christmas season. Turn a chore into a memorable time by doing it together.