



PRACTICAL WAYS TO CREATE MEANING

Understanding the reasons to “Reclaim Your Holidays”

Time: 10-12 minutes

Audience: This presentation is targeted toward Friends of Nature Center groups, Solid Waste Agency Boards, other boards and/or leaders with whom instructors periodically educate about current issues.

Preparation: 1) Create posters of the three to five statistics found in Attachment A, and post them on the meeting room walls to generate interest in the presentation topic; 2) Set up computer and projector and test run the youtube video. It is often important to run the video one time before a presentation, and then keep the laptop on, so that the video is downloaded to the memory of the laptop. This will allow it to run smoothly; 3) Make copies for all participants of the Gifts of Experience handout, found at http://www.uni.edu/ceee/sites/default/files/Hometown/give_gifts_of_experience.pdf.

Supplies needed:

Computer, projector and screen or white wall; Dry-erase board; Copies of the Gifts of Experience handout

Learning objectives: Participants will:

- *Understand the connection* between holidays and environmental protection
- *Understand one type of programming* conducted by staff members/volunteers

<p>3 min.</p>	<p>Welcome/Icebreaker Invite participants who come early to look at the posters on the walls.</p> <p>Show the PBS Happiness video found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-otqBgCYyc. (2 min.)</p> <p>Then, welcome participants, introduce yourself, and ask them, “if the video strikes a chord with you—share why.”</p> <p>Optional: Simply explain that the hope is that the video, produced by the Public Broadcasting System, helps remind viewers that more stuff doesn’t necessarily mean more happiness...and that the opposite might be true. For example, the pony pencils, for the little girl in the video, were <i>one</i> thing she knew she loved. If we were all able to winnow things down as she did, our holidays might be much easier, more satisfying, and more environmentally friendly.</p> <p>The Reclaim Your Holidays initiative, directed by the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy and Environmental Education, is being used to help Iowans create meaningful, environmentally friendly holidays. Naturalists, recycling coordinators, extension specialists, wellness coordinators, librarians, and congregational leaders are among those helping to create conversation about this issue.</p> <p>The posters (see Attachment A) on the walls outline additional reasons we are involved in such an initiative.</p>
<p>5-7 min.</p>	<p>Give gifts of experience</p> <p>Explain that many resources are available on the ReclaimYourHolidays.org website, including tips for reducing environmental impact and making the holidays more meaningful. One such resource is <i>Give gifts of experience to satisfy friends and family</i>. Distribute copies of this handout (found at http://www.uni.edu/ceee/sites/default/files/Hometown/give_gifts_of_experience.pdf) to all participants and share several example gift ideas. As time allows, ask several participants to share a gift idea and/or story about what they’ve done in the past to have more meaningful and/or greener</p>

	<p>holidays. Be prepared to share a personal story if audience members don't speak.</p> <p>Take a minute to show participants the website so they see the types of resources you as an educator are using, as well as resources that are available to the general public.</p>
<p>2-3 min.</p>	<p>Inspiration/Conclusion</p> <p>Acknowledge the many winter holidays that people celebrate, depending on their religious and personal beliefs. Then conclude by stating that you'll share a story about one person's idea of a meaningful Christmas holiday from the book, <i>Unplug The Christmas Machine</i>, by Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli. (Paragraph breaks are Reclaim Your Holidays'.) Instructor tip: Remember to be sensitive to the fact that some participants may celebrate holidays other than Christmas, but that you hope the story is meaningful to everyone.</p> <p>“In early December, when Jim was driving his family home from a school crafts fair, he stopped the car so a bent old man could cross the street. Jim watched the man's slow progress for a moment, and then made a quick decision.</p> <p>“Without saying a word, he pulled the car over to the curb, reached for a package of cookies he had bought at the fair, jumped out of the car, and ran after the old man.</p> <p>“As Jim overtook him, the old man became alarmed.</p> <p>“He wheeled around and drew back his fist, as if trying to defend himself.</p> <p>“Jim quickly said that he wasn't going to hurt him.</p> <p>“When the man realized that Jim had something to give him, his eyes filled with tears and he asked Jim why he was giving him a present.</p> <p>“Jim was surprised to hear himself say, “Because it's Christmas and I love you.”</p> <p>“As the old man accepted the cookies, Jim felt tears coming to his eyes, too.</p> <p>“I was overcome with emotion for this stranger,” he told us. “That moment captured the true meaning of Christmas for me.”” (<i>Unplug the Christmas Machine</i>, p. 107)</p> <p>Thank participants for engaging in the session, invite them to continue thinking about how they can create a more meaningful holiday, and wish them a happy holiday season.</p>

References:

Robinson, Jo and Jean Coppock Staeheli, *Unplug the Christmas Machine*, New York: William Morrow, 1991.

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Attachment A

What the research shows

Make and post three posters (or write the statistics on a white or black board) ahead of the presentation.

- 1) Relationships with family, peers, colleagues, neighbors, and community members have proven over and over to be the biggest determining factor in our happiness, once our basic needs are met. (Richard Layard, *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*; London: Penguin Press, 2005, p. 34-35.)
- 2) When our money is invested in experiences, the thrill stays with us longer than when our money is spent buying products. (Retrieved July 11, 2011 at <http://www.physorg.com/news189277732.html> in “Study Shows Experiences are Better than Possessions,” Cornell University.)
- 3) Between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day, Americans generate 25% more waste per week than during the rest of the year. This creates an additional 1.2 million tons per week, or an extra 6 million tons, for the holiday season. (The ULS Report, 4th Quarter 2009: Volume IX, Number 4.)

If you wish, include these statistics:

- 4) Each additional 5 hours of television watched per week by consumers led to an **additional** \$1,000 of spending per year. (Juliet B. Schor, *The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don’t Need*; New York: Harper Perennial; 1999, p.49-50.)
- 5) In the past 50 years, humans have consumed more resources than all previous history...and the US, with 5% of the world’s population, was responsible for about 1/3 of the world’s total consumption from 1975-1995.” (Retrieved 4/5/2011 at the Environmental Protection Agency website, <http://www.epa.gov/osw/inforesources/pubs/vision2.pdf>, p. ii.)