



## PRACTICAL WAYS TO CREATE MEANING

### Clear clutter with these gift ideas

*Most of us know the rushed unpleasantness of last minute shopping and the internal compromises made just to get a gift and get it wrapped...even if the gift doesn't seem like a good fit. As a gift recipient, many of us also have received unwanted stuff...things that end up in the Goodwill box or the trash within a month of the holiday.*

#### Clear the clutter

The clutter and waste resulting from these gift exchanges bring on stress and get in the way of just about everything—from family time to housecleaning. Below are some alternatives:

- Consumable gifts—Iowa wines, cheeses and breads or an assortment of jams and jellies or fair trade chocolates—are all great gifts.
- [Experiential gifts](#), like tickets to a game or passes to a show or zoo, won't add to the clutter, provided the recipient doesn't bring home tons of memorabilia. In fact, many families, friends and couples *choose not to give gifts, instead opting for something they can do together*. That may mean a road trip to Six Flags, a hockey game, a ski trip, stargazing, or any other experience. Even though a number of [studies](#) show that experiential gifts hold more value (and are remembered longer) than material ones, we don't need experts to tell us what we already know.
- Another option is to give a gift that allows the recipient to give money to a charitable cause they are passionate about. Simply write a check with everything filled in except the “pay to the order of” and give this *share check* to someone on your gift list.
- If your family celebrates the spirit of service during the holidays—or is open to the idea—numerous Iowa-based charities will appreciate your financial gift. A list of them can be found [here](#).
- To reduce the sheer amount of *stuff* generated during the holidays, give a green gift, like energy saving light bulbs or water-bill reducing showerheads. Check out [Practical Environmental Gifts](#) for more ideas.

#### Stuff-free gifts of kindness

Gifts of kindness can be given daily and will likely enrich lives far more than material gifts. Below are two lists: one to help you take care of yourself during the holidays and other times of the year, and the second to give you ideas of acts of kindness you can do for friends, family, and strangers.

##### Self-kindness

- Resolve for the day to be positive
- Acknowledge one trait you like about yourself
- Think of 10 things you are grateful for
- Read from a meditation book
- Laugh
- Breathe deeply
- Take a bath
- Sit in candlelight
- Forgive yourself for something you regret
- Forgive someone's unkindness to you

- Take a nap
- Watch birds
- Stretch and pay attention to the muscles that move
- Stand on one leg, and pay attention to the muscles required to hold you in position
- Take 5 minutes to listen to the sounds in your environment
- Take a nature hike
- Pay attention; be in the present moment

### **Kindness to others**

- Give someone a hug, and *feel* it as you hug
- On your daily walk, stop and talk to the elderly people you meet along the route
- Share some cookies, candies or fruits with a neighbor
- Tell a friend (or friends) 20 years older than you that you love them, and hold their hand
- Thank your mail carrier for good service
- Treat a friend to coffee
- Treat a stranger to coffee
- Tell someone how drop-dead gorgeous they look
- Email a co-worker to thank her for good work on a project
- Acknowledge a skill a co-worker possesses
- Ask a friend about his parents or children
- Remind a friend of what you like about him
- Remind a family member of what you like about her
- Tape an anonymous note to a friend's front door, complimenting a recent accomplishment
- Tell your boss what you appreciate about her
- Make eye contact and sincerely smile at a stranger
- Smile and allow a stranger to go before you in line at the coffee house
- Tip generously, and leave a handwritten note for a job particularly well done
- Feed an expired parking meter
- Pick up trash
- Give an energy bar to a homeless person

### ***Additional resources:***

- [Acts of Kindness, Inspiring Quotes](#)
- [Kindness = Mental/Physical Health](#)
- [Finding Happiness with Intentional Activities](#)

***Visit our [Facebook page](#) for more ideas and to contribute your own!***

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*For more information, visit [www.ReclaimYourHolidays.org](http://www.ReclaimYourHolidays.org).*

