Gifts for Kids

After asking grade school students the same question every year for 16 years, teacher Erin Kurt shares his findings in the article, The Top 10 Things Children Really Want Their Parents To Do With Them (http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/the-top-10-things-children-really-want-their-parents-to-do-with-them.html).

Kurt says, “Year after year, in every country I taught, and in every type of demographic, the students were saying the same things and had the same message: It’s the small things that their mothers did that meant the most and that they remembered.”

This is a good reminder when we think about gifts for kids. A few from Kurt’s top 10 list include: “Come into my bedroom at night, tuck me in and sing me a song. Also tell me stories about when you were little...Give me hugs and kisses and sit and talk with me privately...Spend quality time just with me, not with my brothers and sisters around...Let me play outside a lot...Leave special messages in my desk or lunch bag.”

Each of those emphasizes family life and relationships, and is a gift in and of itself. Below are a few other ideas:

1) “Lacey,” composer of the website Natureal Mom, sets a great context for gifting to children. Check out her article about children’s playrooms at http://naturallymom.com/natural-playroom/. She’s interested in inspiring creativity and nurturing growth, and believes you don’t have to spend a lot of money to do this. At http://www.healthychild.org/blog/comments/top_10_natural_toys_holiday_gifts/, she gives 10 solid gift ideas for children’s gifts, ranging from musical instruments to toy pick-up trucks.

2) We all know, intuitively, that kids don’t need a lot of stuff. One parent says, “Years ago, I gave my nieces and nephews neon markers. Their mom said, ‘that was the best gift.’ The kids had so much fun with such a small present.”

3) Make skill-building activities your gift. A study by Eugene, Oregon’s Policy Interactive Research found that Americans believe it would be a good thing if we as citizens learned new skills and self-reliance. Gifts that build skills can range from the simple: Wrap the supplies to make homemade jelly bean bracelets (http://simplehomemade.net/super-simple-homemade-gifts-for-kids/) and then, upon giving the gift, make time to create the bracelets together. (This gift is for kids old enough to use a needle and thread.) Or, help a child make a life-sized self-portrait by tracing his or her image and helping cut it out. The child can then color the portrait.
4) Check out etsy.com for handmade gifts.

5) Think about what the kids in your life like to do in their free time. A art lesson might be just the ticket for a budding artist. A ticket to a professional ball game may be great for a baseball fan. Other gifts of experience include camps, a day playing outdoors, a birding trip, theatre tickets, rock climbing wall lessons, a day at the children’s museum, laser tag, and baking their favorite cookies with you. Kids do want to unwrap gifts, but those types of presents can be tempered by gifts of experience.

6) Books and music. Some of our favorites include The Quiltmaker’s Gift by Jeff Brumbeau and illustrated by Gail de Marcken, Agatha’s Feather Bed, by Carmen Agra Deedy, and recordings by Tom Pease (http://tompease.com/recordings).

7) Make a photo collage, tracing the history of the child’s/teen’s life.

8) Brainstorm with your child a few special things s/he could do for people and, without letting them know who is responsible, do those things! Then talk with the child about what s/he did, and how it made him or her feel. This gift can be incredibly rewarding…and a nice balance to the tangible gifts a child receives.

_________________

Reclaim your Holidays is a project of the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy & Environmental Education. Support for this project is provided by the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) Conservation Education Program and Iowa Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Alternatives Program Agreement Number 10-G550-41FL. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of IDNR. For more information, visit www.ReclaimYourHolidays.org.