PRACTICAL WAYS TO CREATE MEANING

Increase pleasure and meaning this season by learning from the past
(5-minute assessment; Resource list-Option 2)

Time: 20-25 minutes; adaptable to 30- to 45-minute activities

Audience: Adult audiences such as civic groups, congregations, parents, library patrons

Preparation: 1) Set up computer and projector and test run the youtube video. It is often important to run the video one time before an activity, 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. 2) Print copies of the handout Assessing Your Holiday Activities handout for all participants (http://www.uni.edu/ceee/sites/default/files/Education/five-minute_assessment_activity.pdf). 3) Print copies of the RYH Resources List handout for all participants (http://www.uni.edu/ceee/sites/default/files/Hometown/resource_list_1.pdf), or write the url on a white board. 4) Check out resources from the library and invite participants to review them before and after the session.

Supplies needed:
Computer, projector and screen or white wall; white board; 3 x 5 notecards; Handouts as listed above.; The Gift of Nothing, by Patrick McDonnell

Learning objectives: At the conclusion of your session, participants will be able to say: I can…

- Name at least one thing during last year’s holiday season that provided me both meaning and pleasure.
- Name at least one thing during last year’s holiday season that didn’t give me much meaning or pleasure.
- (Name the change) for the coming holiday season, and within the next week I will do (name action) to help me make the change. (See examples under activity, “Commitment to Action,” below.)
- Retrieve additional information about topics such as gift-giving, entertaining, communicating effectively and sustainability.

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<th>3-4 min.</th>
<th>Welcome/Icebreaker</th>
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<td>Welcome participants and introduce yourself.</td>
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<td>Show the PBS Happiness Store video found at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-otqBglCYyc">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-otqBglCYyc</a>. (2 min.) Explain that the video helps remind us that quality is often more important than quantity.</td>
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After this icebreaker, explain that this session is part of a state Reclaim Your Holidays initiative, a program of the University of Northern Iowa Center for Energy and Environmental Education in partnership with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Two grant programs in Iowa—the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act Conservation Education Fund and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Alternatives Program—have provided support for this project. You can find out more about this initiative—and get many more ideas for reclaiming holidays and celebrations—at ReclaimYourHolidays.org.

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<th>6-7 min.</th>
<th>5-Minute Assessment</th>
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<td>Introduce the book, The Pursuit of Happiness, by Tal Ben Shahar. Explain that, in the book, Ben Sharar theorizes that we need both the “experience of meaning and the experience of positive emotions” (pleasure) “…to lead a fulfilling, happy life” and that this is a lifelong process. (italics by RYH)</td>
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<td>In this assessment exercise, which uses a tool adapted from The Pursuit of Happiness, common holiday activities are listed. Explain the activity by reviewing with participants the instructions at the top of the Assessing Your Holiday Activities handout.</td>
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<td>Distribute the handout, and allow participants five minutes to complete it.</td>
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Commitment to Action
Ask participants to share with an elbow partner the following three things (and have these items written on the white board as well):
1. one thing they discovered,
2. one thing they will change for the coming holiday season, and
3. one thing they will do in the coming week to help them successfully make the change(s).

It will help participants if you share a few examples of Commitment to Action statements (shown below) and write one on the white board for participants to see. Distribute small notecards (3 x 5 or 3 x 5s cut in half) and ask participants to write down their Commitment to Action statement and place it in their wallet or another place where they will be reminded of this.

Example 1: I will use more local foods during the coming holiday season, and within the next week I will go to my local farmer’s market and buy some honeys and wines to give as gifts to help me make the change.
Example 2: I will give more meaningful gifts, and within the next week I will go to ReclaimYourHolidays.org to get gift ideas and start making a list to help me make the change.
Example 3: I will sing more in the coming holiday season, and within the next week I will find out the dates of upcoming community sing-alongs and caroling events to help me make this change.

After a few minutes, ask as many as time permits to share their Commitment to Action statements with the entire group. (Research shows that publicly stating the actions they plan to take helps participants commit to taking those actions.)

Conclusion
Conclude by encouraging participants to check out the website (ReclaimYourHolidays.org) where they can find many similar tools as the ones used during this session. Other tools include handouts on gifts and entertaining. They can also find resources to help them save money and live more sustainably. Several resources provide how-tos on communicating effectively with friends and families about gift-giving and other challenging issues that sometimes crop up during the holiday season or at celebrations.

Read The Gift of Nothing, by Patrick McDonnell, to participants.

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.

Extension: Resource List
The goal of the Resource List Activity is to direct participants to books that they can check out at their local library to help them have more meaningful and pleasurable holidays and celebrations. Distribute copies of the Resource List or write the url on a white board so that all participants can access the list at home. Summarize two or three of your favorite books from the list. Highlight books that you think are most appropriate to the audience to whom you are speaking.

References: