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 Extension



**Gifts of Caring**  
 "He's making my list and checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty or nice."  
 These famous words to a well-known Christmas carol make us think of the gifts that "Santa" will leave under the tree. Perhaps we should take these words into consideration when we shop this holiday season and be "nice" in our gift giving. This year give some gifts that show you care, that you want to share your time and yourself with others.

The holidays give us the great opportunity to teach our children what caring is all about. Search for gifts that allow you to share time and build relationships.  
 "Rather than viewing gifts as 'products,' try seeing them as vehicles for bringing family members together," says Matt Kaplan, associate professor of intergenerational programs and aging.  
 Give a mixing bowl with chocolate chips, measuring cups,

measuring spoons, spatula, wooden spoon, and similar items in it. Include a coupon worth one cooking lesson and be willing to devote time to teach your child how to make chocolate chip cookies.  
 With today's busy schedule an evening at home with the entire family may be a rare event. A popcorn package with a coupon for an evening video session is a great gift for children. Just be sure you give the time to sit and enjoy the night together.  
 Give a model kit and a coupon for two hours of assistance in building the model. It is important to schedule this time together.  
 If your child loves the outdoors, give them a pair of mittens. Include a coupon redeemable for a snowman building adventure followed by a warm cup of cocoa inside.  
 Grandparents often find it difficult to buy gifts for grandchil-

dren. Why not try an alternate route by giving something you already own. You might let your grandchildren pick out a piece of crystal or jewelry. Another idea is to take your grandchildren on a treasure hunt in your attic. The "new find" could be brought home or kept at grandpa's for a special toy.  
 As adults, we need to be reminded to care for ourselves also over the holidays. Allow some time to soak in the bath or read a good book over the holidays. Schedule an afternoon or evening to meet a friend for tea and dessert. This could be during the holidays or in January when you can relax without the thoughts of all your holiday duties.  
 Plan for a visit to a local event, a play or concert with a friend. It's important to find time to relax and socialize. Caring for yourself is the most important gift you can give your family.  
 Give some humor over the holidays. Humor is a great stress re-

liever and relaxer. It is recommended that we laugh 20 times a day for good health. Exchange nominal good gifts with everyone. See who can write the silliest poem or decorate the craziest cookie. Happy times together become the memories that we share at family reunions and other gatherings.  
 Give as a family. Together the family might sing at a nursing home or cook and deliver meals to a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. You might help wrap gifts for a childcare agency. Local service agencies are always looking for volunteers. Locate one that meets your family's needs and volunteer as a family for a day.  
 "The essence of the great gift is that it helps us locate the 'we' not the 'me', Kaplan says. "Let's use this holiday season as a time to journey beyond our private worlds and feel — and be — closer to our loved ones."

## Holiday Ideas To Connect Young People With Elders

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — As the holidays approach, both younger and older people will be buying gifts for loved ones. But gift-giving doesn't have to be an inconvenience or empty ritual, says an intergenerational specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.  
 "Rather than viewing gifts as 'products,' try seeing them as ways to bring people together," said Matthew Kaplan, associate professor of intergenerational programs and aging. "In that light, the search for the perfect gift becomes a search for ways to share time and build relationships."  
 Gift-giving has become increasingly difficult, Kaplan explains. "Social scientists say

we're busier than we used to be and more of us are living apart. Even families who live under the same roof are spending less time together. This raises concerns about family cohesion, particularly between younger and older members who need it the most.  
 "This separation has a profound impact on our lives," he said. "Young people are in need of guidance and nurturing. 'Going it alone' also can be difficult for elders. When older people become socially isolated, they often experience more physical and psychological stress and decline."  
 Kaplan sees holidays as a great opportunity to bring older and younger family members together. "Choose activities that tie into what people — whatever

their age — have in common," Kaplan says. "Successful joint activities involve mutual interests, such as eating, talking, singing, dancing and crafts. Activities that accentuate shared membership in a family or community also work well."  
 Kaplan suggests some gift ideas that older adults and young people can give to each other, as well as gifts they can develop together for others.  
**Gifts from Old to Young**  
 • A family recipe.  
 • An heirloom that reflects a shared family heritage.  
 • A sewing, knitting or crocheting project. You each can complete segments of the overall item.  
 • A quilt made with a material

or design that has family significance. "Patricia Polacco in the children's book, 'The Keeping Quilt,' tells the story of a quilt made from material drawn from the clothing of four generations of family members," Kaplan says.  
 • Hand down a hobby, such as wood carving or coin collecting.  
 • A puzzle you can do together.  
 • Gather ingredients for a joint baking/cooking session. "This one's not for the fainthearted," Kaplan says. "Upon delivering the gift, you may be confronted with that baffled, disappointed, 'Huh, what's the big idea?' kind of look."  
 • A model kit. "Choose a level of difficulty that will stretch your recipient's problem-solving abili-

ties," Kaplan suggests.  
 • Seeds for a garden to work in together.  
 • A family album.  
**Gifts From Young to Old**  
 • Supplies to make a book about family history or identity. "You might include newspaper clippings, photos and stories that you write together," Kaplan says.  
 • An oral history or biography booklet based on an interview conducted with the adult.  
 • A computer game. "This is ideal for the computer-shy adult," Kaplan says. "But make sure you are around to help install the game and review the instructions."  
**Joint Giving And Co-producing**  
 • Make a presentation, sing a song, or play instruments together at a nursing home, a children's ward at a hospital.



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