



“I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.”

Maya Angelou (Poet, educator and historian)

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The Season of Giving – December 2008

I sometimes resent the Christmas season. It seems time speeds up, the days overflow with ‘to dos’, money disappears with very little effort and the commercial push chokes me. No wonder it is called the ‘silly season’. It is easy to lose sight of the heart of Christmas spirit. For me that spirit is about giving, and it doesn’t have to be bought, or cost the earth. There are many things we can give without even taking out our purses – love, a smile, time, support, charity, understanding, a hug or even hospitality. Those things without the price tag are often the most precious, and it seems, the least given. Join me in this month of December and in fact the whole year in giving the gift of giving.

7 Gift Giving Laws for Husbands

By Jeff Herring

In my experience in working with couples, husbands can have a tough time picking out the right holiday gifts. So in the spirit of Christmas cheer, here are 7 laws of gift giving for husbands.

1. The Law of Black and Decker

Unless you have an express written request in writing clearly stating otherwise, never buy your wife a Christmas present containing the label Black and Decker.

2. The Law of Practicality

Practicality is a good thing. Just not at this time of year and definitely not the only gift. And pleading "Honey, I thought you needed a blender!" just will not cut it.

3. The Law of the Message

Consider the message you could be sending with your gift. One of the first gifts I ever got my ex-wife was a membership to the gym to which I belonged. I thought it would be fun and we could spend more time together. That is not the message she got.

4. The Law of You

Do not get something that you really want disguised as a gift for her. She will know.

5. The Law of Paying Attention

This is the first way to know what to get her for Christmas. Pay attention to what she notices, what she talks about, and what she wishes for, because these are great clues that can make you look real good on Christmas morning.

6. The Law of Asking

Here is another way to know what to get her: ask. And never, under any circumstances, even if you have it in writing, believe it if she says "Oh, you don't have to get me anything."

7. The Law of the Last Minute

Do not wait until the last minute to get the gifts. For some reason, this

Recipe tip

Chocolate Fruit Clusters

Home Made - **for gift giving**

Ingredients

8 ounces high-quality semisweet chocolate
1 1/2 cups hazelnuts, coarsely chopped
1/2 cup golden raisins

Introduction:

To gift wrap these treats, pile them into small, pretty boxes or aluminum pans, wrap with cellophane or plastic wrap, and tie with a bright bow.

Makes about 30 clusters.
Total time: 20 minutes.

Step 1:

Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil.

Step 2:

In the top of a double boiler, over low heat, stir the chocolate until melted. Remove from the heat and stir in the nuts and raisins. Mix to coat all the pieces.

Step 3:

Place heaping teaspoonfuls of the mixture on the prepared baking sheet. Refrigerate until set. The clusters can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 months.

invalidates the gift in the mind and heart of your wife. How will she know it was a last minute gift?

They just know.

Visit SecretsofGreatRelationships.com for tips and tools for creating and growing a great relationship. You can also subscribe to our free 10 day e-program on how to enrich your relationship today, from relationship coach and expert Jeff Herring.

Happiness is Giving to Others

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted". Aesop

Has someone been kind to you today? Feels good doesn't it? When someone does something generous, you feel grateful for their action and pleased that they thought of you. Perhaps your partner bought you a cup of tea in bed or a stranger let you in ahead of them when you were in your car waiting at a busy junction. Remember this good feeling as you continue reading through this article.

If you want to be happy but are not sure where to start, then I suggest you begin by being kinder. Acts of giving will boost your well being as well as offering something good to the recipient and the world at large. Furthermore they can take many, many forms and so you can do something that suits you personally. For instance, you can do voluntary work for an organisation; you can do good deeds in your neighbourhood, for friends, family, work colleagues, strangers. You can give as much of your time as suits.

When you are looking out to do good things in the world, you will find yourself viewing the world differently as you are focusing on the positive difference you can make, rather than just seeing the bad. Giving also means you forget about yourself for a while as your energies are absorbed with what is going on with another. This can be especially helpful if you are prone to the worries or feelings of depression. Furthermore, such immersion is a sure way to a flow experience. Flow experiences are those moments when you are so absorbed in something, everything else is forgotten, and afterwards you feel great.

Being kind can benefit you in other ways. If you decide to do volunteer work, you open yourself up to new experiences, meeting new people and learning new skills. You can draw upon and even develop your strengths, as you carry out your acts of kindness. For instance, your creativity and open-mindedness can help you come up with ideas for helping and your courage may be needed to ensure you implement them.

Remember, a truly generous person does good without expecting anything in return. So don't do it just for the praise. However, what you will get in return is greater happiness. There is also something known as the feel-good, do-good phenomenon (Salovey, 1990), where being happy inclines a person to be more generous, which in turn brings greater happiness.

Research has been conducted which supports the link between kindness and happiness. For example:

- Steger found people who engaged in activities helping others were happier and reported a greater purpose in life than those who mainly engaged in pleasure-seeking activities.

This Month's Poem

It Is the Wind in the Trees

By David Michael Jackson

It is the wind in the trees
which is only seen by the
effect and yet we know
the wind is there

It is the breeze which
rustles the leaves that
gives me hope.

It is that I cannot see it
and yet I know it is there
that gives me hope.

It is the vastness of space
itself and infinity itself
that gives me hope,

as I hold this finite brush
in my temporary hand and
I make this finite stroke
with this temporary paint
and the wind is in the
trees

giving hope

Books to give you something to think about...

Giving up on Ordinary

By Isla Dewar

Simply Green Giving :
Create Beautiful and
Organic Wrappings,
Tags, and Gifts from
Everyday Materials

By: Danny Seo

- Thoits and Hewitt's work showed happy people are more likely to do volunteer work. Also, volunteers became happier the more they volunteered.
 - Kindness as a strength has been associated with a return to life satisfaction after experiencing physical illness, according to research by Peterson, Park and Seligman.
 - Sonja Lyubomirsky's research had students carry out 5 random acts of kindness one day a week, for six weeks. After six weeks, the students reported greater levels of well being and happiness compared to the group who had not carried out the kindness acts.
- Tips to being a kinder person
- You don't just have to do volunteer work to be a kinder person. Remember you can carry out good deeds on a daily basis, in your home or at work. You can do something for people you and people you don't know.
 - Try to give people the benefit of the doubt.
 - Offer genuine compliments.
 - Give small gifts.
 - Plan something special for a loved one.
 - Share your possessions without getting uptight about them.
 - Avoid gossiping in emails and on the telephone. Instead make a conscious effort to only say good things about others.
 - You have something to offer. Think of ways you can share that information.
 - Think of ways in which you might be a positive influence on someone's life.
 - When you see an opportunity to help, take it. Don't just keep walking.
 - Not every act of kindness needs to be acknowledged. You are better off assuming you won't be. You are doing them because you want to, not for the thanks. This will ensure you won't feel resentment if people don't respond as you'd imagined. This resentment can lead you to deciding that it's pointless being kind as it gets you nowhere.
 - Carry out secret good deeds. These are acts of kindness that you carry out for another, without telling that person you did it. It's a great way to increase your humility.
 - Recognise that each act, no matter how small, will be making a difference. It doesn't have to be the grand gesture. Holding a door open for someone is something we can all appreciate.

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