

## Gift Giving When Money Is Scarce

If you are experiencing money problems, holiday gift giving can present a dilemma. However, there is a solution. Instead of *buying* gifts this year, consider giving gifts money can't buy—your time, energy, talents and skills. Here are some suggestions.

**Offer Your Time**—visit a shut-in, senior citizen, or someone who lives alone. Baby-sit for a neighbor, a homebound mother or a single parent who needs time for holiday shopping. Take someone with limited transportation to a holiday concert, movie or shopping. Read to a child or someone with poor vision.

**Provide Your Energy**—Shovel snow, pull weeds, rake leaves or wash windows and remove screens for someone who finds physical tasks difficult. Clean out cupboards or closets. Offer to help cook meals for those who are expecting company.

**Share Your Talents and Skills**—Use your creative talents to make a floral arrangement, sketch, paint, quilt, design a picture or cross-stitch a wall hanging or pillow. Bake goodies. Photograph a friend's children or pet or take a family portrait. Decorate a tree for someone who would have difficulty doing so.

**Share Your Interests**—Give new gourmet recipe ideas to the food enthusiast. Your special foreign food dish may be a tasty treat. Share your gardening know-how. Take a child on a picnic, camping or to the zoo.

During this holiday season, go out of your way to make someone else happy. Giving of your time, energy, talents and skills is an inexpensive way to give gifts as well as brighten someone else's day.

*Megan Mayo and Katey Walker*

## Try Yogurt as Snack and More

Have you considered yogurt as a “food most likely to be in every family's refrigerator”? If not, now is a great time to start. Yogurt, an ancient food, is a rare mix – it is popular with all ages, and it is a nutritious food.

Why choose yogurt? It is a good source of protein and calcium—a nutrient needed for strong bones and teeth that most of us don't get enough of. Yogurt is easy to digest—even young children will welcome a snack of yogurt. A popular new yogurt style marketed today is spoonless yogurt in a tube. This handy version makes packing a breakfast, lunch or snack even easier.

Not only a stand-alone favorite, plain nonfat yogurt works well as a low-fat replacement for sour cream in dressings, dips and cold recipes. Fruit-flavored yogurt makes a tasty dip for fruit slices, and vanilla yogurt serves as a substitute for mayonnaise-type dressing on Waldorf or carrot salads. Stock up on yogurt, and savor the flavor.

*Sandy Procter*

## The Gatekeeper Syndrome

Having two parents involved in a child's life is a big advantage to that child. However, a divorced parent seeking parenting time with the children may feel like he or she has to beg the other parent for access to them. When one parent finds ways to hinder the other parent's contact with the children, it is called “gatekeeper syndrome.” A gatekeeper parent also may withhold information related to school activities, medical situations, etc. It is belittling to the parent who has to beg for time and information and creates unnecessary friction in the family.

If a parent continues to employ the gatekeeper syndrome, conflicts are likely to escalate. The parent being forced to beg may eventually lose interest in the children to avoid fighting with the other parent. Learning to co-parent with little conflict is not easy for divorced parents, but is necessary for the children's well-being.

*Charlotte Shoup Olsen*

## PARENTS CORNER

### Physical Abilities

To help your child understand how physical abilities naturally change with age, discuss things your child can do now that she or he could not do as a baby; for example: talking, walking or riding a tricycle. Point out some skills your child has learned only recently and some things the child will be able to do when she or he has grown older, such as going to a store alone.

Look at group photographs of your child at different ages so that changes in physical appearance can clearly be seen. You might point out the clothing worn in the pictures and ask if it would fit them now. If the pictures show the child being helped with something that she or he can now do alone, be sure to mention the change.

*Excerpt from The Parent's Page, Vol. 2, No. 6  
Submitted by Charles A. Smith*

### Kids Don't Like Milk?

Children who turn up their noses at milk don't need to miss the health benefits the beverage offers. Parents can provide other foods from the milk group, such as cheese, yogurt or pudding.

Offering flavored milks also may bridge children's temporary dislikes and provide the needed nutrients. For example, chocolate and "white" milk have similar amounts of vitamin A, calcium and riboflavin. Chocolate milk has about 60 additional calories, but the extra calories usually are not a problem for active, growing children.

*Kathy Walsten*

Have patience!  
In time, even grass becomes milk.

*Charan Singh, mystic*

To love is to admire with the heart;  
to admire is to love with the mind.

*Theophile Gautier, writer*

### Gift Wrapping Wonders

Try some creative gift wrapping techniques using household items such as tissue paper, rubber bands and brown paper bags. Using these materials, you will be set to create some unique packages that will bring a smile to the face of the recipients. Here are some ideas on unique, creative, inexpensive gift-wrapping techniques.

- Tear a page from an oversized, perhaps glossy, magazine and use it as wrapping paper. A plus to this method: one magazine provides hundreds of "sheets" of wrapping paper.
- Paint your own paper. One method is to stroke undulating lines of acrylic paint on bond paper and brush on liquid glitter when the paint is dry. You set the limit on creativity.
- For a worldly gift, wrap with a map! You can even coordinate a tag by cutting it from the scraps. You also could use packing twine and brown paper to make it look like a crate ready to mail.
- Cover a box in plain paper or tissue paper and add an array of different color rubber bands. This works best on smaller packages.
- Recycle a brown paper bag by decorating it with holiday rubber stamps to create a print. Wrap your package with the brown paper and use coordinating ribbon to accent. You may need to use more than one bag.

*Megan Mayo and Katey Walker*

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