



December 2010

The Meaning of Gift Giving: Sometimes a Challenge in Gifting to Seniors!

Mom says she doesn't need anything – and, for all you see in her house, you agree. Dad wants you to spend your dollars on the grandkids and asks you not to give him any gifts this holiday season. What do you do?

What tugs at us to spend, spend, spend during the holiday season? Is it a family tradition, a religious celebration, a "Hallmark" moment or the retail ads that make us feel less than good about ourselves if we don't overspend or stress while finding that "perfect" gift? Is this about our ego? Are we trying to gain points in some unconscious manner? Or, do we just love shopping and giving – so the process is really more about us than the gift receiver?

Gift giving started in the earliest of times with the public giving the tribal leaders gifts to show loyalty and love. These earliest gift givers made items from bark and wood. In ancient Roman times, gifts were given on New Year's Day: coins to represent prosperity, pastries to represent happiness and lamps to provide light for the path of one's journey through life.

Christians give gifts to represent their thankfulness for the greatest gift given to them, Jesus Christ. Given the Three Kings brought the Christ child gifts of value and great significance, this again supports the repetition of gift giving as an act of appreciation and honor.

The Jewish holiday of Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights is another time of gift



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giving, primarily to children. Hanukkah had been a minor Jewish holiday until the late 19th century, increasing in popularity at about the same time that Christmas gift giving accelerated.

Most cultures and religious traditions around the world give gifts for life passages, holidays and other celebrations. Gift giving is just part of who we are and if kept in check it can be rewarding and not taxing.

It is only in the past 100+ years that gift giving moved to a new level of intensity that stresses families emotionally and financially. If you don't find just that perfect gift, you feel somehow disappointed in yourself and maybe a little guilty. If you buy too much for someone who can't reciprocate, this person will feel bad and embarrassed by the inability to give an equal valued gift to you.

Santa Claus was created in the United States by cartoonist, Thomas Nash in 1880 and picked up by Coca Cola in 1930. That brought Christmas to a more commercial venue from the previous simpler era of gift exchanging.

We hear over and over again that it is the "thought" that counts, but that seems shallow and still leaves us often feeling uncaring. Can we truly move to the gifts of "thought" and away from finding the most unique or ostentatious gift.

Most of us will shop for gifts in this "Season of Joy." Try to honor your parents or those older adults you appreciate and give them gifts of time (often the most appreciated of all). If you do feel compelled to buy a gift for someone who has everything, think of making a donation in his or her name to a favorite charity.

Gifts that might be helpful to many older adults are motion controlled night lights, sweat suits, hand warmers or emergency response systems. Framing a cherished photo or a "great grandchild's art" is usually a welcome gift that has meaning and touches the heart. After all, that is what we want to do – to say, "I love and appreciate you"! May the gifts you give and receive be heartfelt. May good health, peace and happiness touch everyone in your life.

*****Happy Holidays, Linda*****

Eldercare Services provides Counseling, Support Groups, Home Care and Care Management to aid Family Caregivers. If you or someone you know could benefit from self-care, give us a call at (866) 760-1808.



ATTENTION!! Eldercare Answers is now green. To ensure you or someone you know receives our newsletter, please send a valid email address to DanielleG@EldercareAnswers.com.



**Eldercare Services has offices in Oakland, San Francisco and Walnut Creek, CA.
Visit us on the web at <http://www.EldercareAnswers.com> for more information.**

Community Classes

Walnut Creek

Families Dealing with Dementia

3rd Friday of every month from 10 AM to Noon

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Class Registration: Please call at least 3 days ahead

For more information regarding classes and support groups, visit us at www.EldercareAnswers.com or call (925) 937-2018, (415) 469-8300 or email us at info@EldercareAnswers.com

Support Groups

When concerns for aging family members are part of every day life, or when they interfere with work, your health or other relationships, you need to join a support group.

Caring for An Aging Family Member

2nd Thursday of every month from 7 to 8:30 PM

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

1st Tuesday of every month from 6 to 7:30 PM

605 A Chenery St., San Francisco, CA 94131

Cost for Support Groups: None

Support Group Registration: Not required