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**I Just Love It!**

**By Kristin Johnson**

**I Just Love It!**

by: **Kristin Johnson**

You know the scenario. You're sitting at the family Christmas gathering and your ten-year-old opens one of Aunt Martha's itchy homemade sweaters. Or Uncle Bobby, who's been swearing to lose twenty pounds for years, opens an exercise cycle. Of course, if Uncle Bobby follows the politeness rule, he'll say, "Thank you, it's just what I wanted." (Then he'll conveniently "forget" about it in the basement or storage closet.) your ten-year-old may not be as skilled at pretending as Uncle Bobby, but kids know enough to know that any answer other than "Thank you, Aunt Martha, I love it" will raise the roof.

There's nothing wrong with pretending you like a gift that someone has consciously bought because they think it suits you, you'll like it, or it will be good for you. The saying "It's the thought that counts" is a truism. Unless you habitually don't put much thought into your gifts. Have you stopped to look at other people's faces when they open your gifts?

The excuse "I'm too busy" only goes so far, and your children know it. If you can take time out of your week to exercise (or not, in Uncle Bobby's case, and who knows, Uncle Bobby might have a physical reason for not losing those twenty pounds), rent a video, go jogging, go to the movies, you can put some thought into the gifts beyond recycling last year's "I love it" items or heading to the mall.

It's important to let kids know that regardless of the gift, sometimes politeness above and beyond the call of duty is required. However, you personally can create more honesty from your kids and with your kids when it comes to gifts.

Remember when your ten-year-old made you a clay ashtray? You don't smoke, but you cherish that homemade gift. Or how about when your parents hung your macaroni ornaments on the tree and your pictures of Santa on the fireplace? You genuinely said "I love it" and meant it. Your children could tell. Your parents were sincere with you.

## I Just Love It!

You are what you give, how you give it, and how you receive gifts. It's easy to moan that the true meaning of Christmas has been lost for our children. It's harder to turn away from the traditional gift-giving grudge.

Some tips:

Start making homemade gifts of your own. Gifts of food, especially Christmas cookies, are always in season, and people genuinely love cookies.

Start a Christmas cookie party or recipe swap with your family and friends. Get everyone involved. (Be sure to make some healthy alternatives for Uncle Bobby.)

Make a donation in someone's name, say to a breast cancer organization, a hospital, a homeless shelter, a nursing home.

Be honest about what you can spend. Be creative. Perhaps if you can't buy everyone a nice gift, you can take friends out for a pre-Christmas dinner instead of everyone frantically buying gifts.

How many times have you said, "Oh, I don't want anything, I'll love whatever you give me?" Kids are great at making requests. Take a lesson from them. It's dishonest to expect others to read your mind and then be disappointed about the gifts you receive.

Encourage others to be honest about what they want. Even if you can't afford it you can ask for some wish list items, or say that you make most of your Christmas presents.

Always let your children know you love them regardless of any gifts that are exchanged.

Above all, remember that the first gift of Christmas is love, and that's something no one can fake.

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Kristin Johnson is the co-author of Christmas Cookies Are For Giving: Stories, Recipes and Tips for Making Heartwarming Gifts, available from Tyr Publishing. Makes a perfect Christmas gift, and the

most perfect christmas gifts of all—cookies! Christmas Cookies Are for Giving (ISBN: 0–9723473–9–9) is hardcover, 208 pages, and features full–color photography of each recipe. A downloadable media kit is available at our Web site,

, or you can e–mail the publisher (

) to receive a printed media kit and sample copy of the book.

## **Love is Good!**

**By Frances Evelyn Mison**

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Love is Good!  
But is it Blind?  
Will Love visit Us?  
Or will it Blow away?  
I'm so fed up of looking!  
For Love!  
Do you feel that way?  
Shall we say for Today  
Though!  
That Love is Good!  
The Sadness has Passed at Last!  
With this New Love  
that we have.  
So Shall we say  
Just for Today.  
That Love is Good!

I am a new author and poet. I would love to make writing my career, and actually receive some money, for doing what I love to do—"Write"

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