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The Best Christmas Gift You Can Give Yourself or Anyone Else: Simplicity

By Susan Dunn

The Best Christmas Gift You Can Give Yourself or Anyone Else: Simplicity by Susan Dunn,

MA, cEQc, The EQ Coach™

I had to laugh when I read that quote recently. I particularly remember a time in my merry life when I had two sons, 3 dogs, my clothes filled two closets in my home, I owned Madeleine pans, exotic juicers, a regular and a gourmet coffeemaker, 3 sets of flatware, 10 tableclothes, 10 sets of placemats for 6 or 8, and formal china tablesettings for 12 ... and most "cluttering" of all, a social calendar that was unmanageable.

Life is a series of stages, and there is the "acquiring" stage.

However, there came a point where I felt overwhelmed by my "blessings" and took a look at what was going on. At the time, my boyfriend, who was a stock broker, kept saying, "Simplify, simplify." He lived what I considered a "Spartan existence."

It caused me to take a look at the whole picture. I was exhausted all the time. I went to a therapist; too bad there weren't coaches then. She said I was "trying to do too much." I interpreted it that I wasn't capable of handling all these things, and redoubled my efforts.

Coaches make things more clear. "Why are you doing what doesn't bring you pleasure?" would've been the question to ask. Eventually I asked myself that question and here are some of the things I did.

THE CLOTHES

I was still operating from an old childhood scarcity-mentality. I never had "enough" clothes in high school, not because my parents couldn't afford it, just that they didn't want to spend their money on that. I started babysitting rigorously to buy myself clothes and makeup and stuff. Not a bad thing to do, but I realized that time was over. I gave a number of things to Goodwill, set aside a space-allotment, and stuck to it.

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I did have to "dress" for my profession at the time (PR), so I chose two outfits I could accessorize in infinite ways. Scarves, jewelry and pins take far less storage space!

THE DOGS

Two were strays we had "adopted," under pressure from my good-hearted son. However, they were difficult dogs, not having been well-raised, and took far more work than our original family pet. I decided to give up this rescuing mentality and at the same time educate my children. We found good homes for two of them, and the family pact was "no more." We stuck with our one chosen, well-cared for, and well-trained dog.

THE ENTERTAINING WARE

That's a hard one. It's been an abiding interest and love in my life, to entertain with all the

accoutrements. I decided that was an okay hobby, but to stick with what I had for a long time. How many sets of Christmas tablemats does one really need?

THE COOKWARE

Life is choices. I could eliminate a lot of these things by turning to fast food, eating out, less elaborate meals. I decided this was not something to sacrifice. There are health benefits to wok cooking, steamers, double boilers, etc., and "happy" benefits to beautiful Bundt cakes. My youngest son particularly enjoyed the camaraderie of a fondue meal. Our family dinners were fun for all of us, and a good thing, and I didn't want to sacrifice that for "convenience."

Not everything in the enriched life should be "efficient."

THE FINANCIAL PICTURE

My stocks were scattered all over the place, and we consolidated. It seemed risky to me to "put all my eggs in one basket," but we did, and it resulted in a nice financial gain.

THE ORGANIZATION

I decided it wasn't all that I had that was the problem - many of them were valuable to me and my lifestyle - it was the organization of it all.

One thing I did was buy containers, for instance, "fall decorations" and got everything in one place. I added to the box my apparel for that time of year - autumn sweaters, accessories, and jewelry. I labeled them clearly, stacked them in one place, and felt better about it all.

I tackled the gift-producing area. I had a bow maker, rolls of paper, ribbons, ready for every occasion. It was a time when the boys would be invited to a birthday party quite suddenly, and it kept me from "running out" at the last minute to buy the wrapping. This I decided to eliminate.

The storage space required and the clutter were not worth it, and it seemed I never had the right thing anyway. I bought 10 generic gift bags with white tissue, appropriate for any age or occasion.

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Also, seeing myself "burdened" by the gifts coming my way - that teddy bear statuette just wasn't "me" even if it was expensive crystal - I switched to what I call "disposable" gifts. Sending someone a floral arrangement, or a basket of fruit, or a Honey-baked ham would note the occasion, but it would "go away" and they wouldn't have to find a place for it.

I have never been comfortable giving money, but gift certificates seemed possible. It showed at least a little "thought" and "effort," the two things I find missing in gifts of money. (Not that I've ever refused one!)

For those with no material needs whatsoever, I would donate money to a charity close to their heart. That is greatly appreciated by most people. Charities list in their newsletter the gifts made in honor of, or in memory of, others, and that's a nice touch.

Re: the people in my life, I took a look at the investment-return ratio. Some of them, I had to admit, were a drain. With me being in a helping

profession, some were "using" me for free counseling, while making no improvements in their lives, and that didn't give me the friendship I needed, or provide for them the counseling or coaching they needed.

I made a list of the people who really meant something to me, with whom I had strong mutual bonds, and I whittled away at the ones who didn't contribute anything to my life. We call this in coaching, "getting rid of tolerations." Yes, people can be "tolerations" and I think this is one of the more important "ah hahs" Thomas Leonard, the founder of coaching, gave to the world.

I eliminated immediately the ones who were a negative drain on me, and took a closer look at ones wanting entry. I quietly discouraged some "friendships" from ever occurring in the first place. Life is choices.

I believe that our lives are greatly influenced by the 5 people we spend the most time with. I made sure the Top 5 were the ones I wanted and needed them to be.

META-THEORY

I decided to slow myself down at the checkout counter. I disciplined myself for 6 months. I would not make any impulse buys. I would go home and consider it. Usually it wasn't worth the effort to go back.

I would not go shopping to "window shop." There's no such thing! There's always something attracts my eye I think I "must have."

Shopping would be a necessity for essentials, not Saturday afternoon entertainment for me and the kids.

I put more thought into the things I gave others so as to slow the flow into their lives as well.

READY FOR THE NEW YEAR

As you participate in, or observe, the shopping frenzy of the holiday season. Ask yourself, "Why am I doing this?"

Good reasons are:

- It's meaningful
- I enjoy it
- I know it's something I can afford and know it's something they need or would like

Bad reasons are:

- I don't know why
- To keep up with the Joneses
- Because I always have
- Because you're supposed to

Observe closely your own behavior. That's the beginning of making positive changes.

It's the emotionally intelligent thing to do!

©Susan Dunn, MA, cEQc, The EQ Coach™, <http://www.susandunn.cc> . Author of "How to Live Your Life with Emotional Intelligence," (<http://www.webstrategies.cc/ebooklibrary.html>)and The EQ Foundation Course®, 12 modules on the Internet that can change your life:<http://www.webstrategies.cc/EQcourse.htm> . Coaching for all your needs; Emotional Intelligence always included. [Mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc](mailto:sdunn@susandunn.cc) for FREE eZine.

How To Save Money On Christmas Gifts

By Maria Estarellas

How many times have you spent more than you could afford on Christmas gifts for your family and friends?

How many times have you bought gifts that weren't what you were looking for and on top of that, paid top dollars for them?

It has happened to all of us one too many times.

Well, you can SAVE money on all your Christmas Gifts.

1. Make a list.

It's always convenient to make a list of all the people that you will be giving a gift to.

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Make sure you know what their interests are so you get a gift that they will appreciate. It will make it special for them and for you.

2. What to buy for someone that has everything?

Baskets, candles, a good book or a store certificate can be the perfect gift for that special person that has everything.

3. Buying in advance.

Don't wait until the last minute to go Christmas shopping because you'll end up paying high prices for stuff you don't even like. This happens specially with the hottest Holiday Toys because a lot of people look for them at local stores and since quantities are limited, you won't find them unless you go Christmas shopping early.

If you decide to go a local mall, make sure you do it during the first two weeks of November. You'll avoid the majority of Christmas shoppers and you are guaranteed to find what you're looking for at lower prices.

4. Take advantage of Online pre-Christmas Sales.

Most stores offer deep online discounts (up to 70%) on toys, clothing, accessories, gifts, candles, and more before Christmas during the months of October and November. They even offer Free Shipping with your order.

5. Buy from the comfort of your home.

Every year, more people buy online to save time and money. By buying online, you'll be able to see every item on every gift category you're interested in without the hassle of searching a whole store or waiting in long lines, only to find out that what you're looking for is not available or is overpriced.

You'll also receive the items you purchased early, giving you time to wrap them in advance.

The Christmas Season should be spent with family and friends instead of worrying about looking for time to go Christmas shopping.

Have a great Holiday Season.

Maria Estarellas is the webmaster for

– "The Complete Website For

The Whole Family". You'll find fun things for each member of your family.

If your looking for that special gift, visit

How To Save Money On Christmas Gifts

6 Perfect Christmas Gift Ideas For Her

The True Importance Of Gift Giving

The Holiday Shopping Experience – Rewarding or Traumatic?

Ask the EQ Coach: Christmas Present for My Wife

How to Gain and Retain More Customers

Christmas Happy Package

The Big Book Of Cookie Recipes

Dream Psychology

Wonderful Wedding Favors and Wedding Gifts



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