



CHRISTMAS ETHICS

Once again the holiday season has rolled around and all my conservation ethics seem to be taking a nose dive. All year long I am a penny pincher. I strive to minimize purchases, reuse and repair products, live as simple a lifestyle as possible and recycle what is left. I do not buy over packaged products and reuse the packaging I can't avoid. Then the holidays burst upon me and I throw caution to the wind. I truly enjoy making and finding gifts for others. I revel in cooking all the Christmas goodies. I get excited about sending and receiving Christmas cards from all my far flung friends. I become the quintessential Christmas elf.

Conversely, I know what an environmental and financial disaster the holidays can be. Did you know that nation wide we create an additional 1 million tons of waste per week during the month of December. The waste is attributed to wrapping paper, disposable decorations and packaging. On average most American spend or charge an additional 1500.00 in December for products and food.

I believe that there is a happy medium between over indulgence and scroogish behavior. So here are a few ideas that can make the holiday season fun, economical, less stressful and much more environmentally friendly.

- * Consider the consequences of your purchases. Are things over packaged, trendy or throw away items? Have items been made with toxic materials, are they durable or necessary?
- * Many people do not need or want any more things. Perhaps you could make a charitable donation in their name. In these trying times there are numerous groups and organizations that need our help to continue functioning. The Upper Left Edge is always a good choice! Another option is to volunteer for an organization that the recipient is involved in.
- * Do not purchase or make throw away decorations. If you make decorations be sure they are reusable. Also consider what materials were used in making the decorations.
- * Personalize gift giving. Don't rush out spending time and energy trying to purchase the "coolest" product of the year. Chances are it is only cool due to an excessive advertising campaign and not something we need or want. Consider providing a service like cleaning, ironing, mending, changing the oil in a vehicle, etc. We all have talents or skills that are different. I like to bake items or make functional gifts for my friends. The idea is to do something with a purpose and to help decrease the accumulation of stuff.
- * Try out a living Christmas tree. You can generally keep a tree in a pot for 5 years before planting it in the ground.
- * Enjoy all the free community holiday events. You do not need to drive to the city 8 times to partake in festive occasions.
- * Think about energy consumption. If you spend an inordinate amount of time driving around shopping and preparing for the holidays it not only takes a toll on your mental health but also uses extra gasoline. Try to be organized and efficient. Be energy conscious in your home. Christmas lights use electricity. Think about replacing some decorative indoor lighting with candles.
- * Reuse wrapping paper & tubes, bows, boxes, cards and decorations.
- * Cut back. Simplify!!
- * Sometimes a heartfelt thank you or praise is more appreciated than a gift.
- * Do something for someone else. Deliver food baskets, make toys, help someone with their holiday preparations, clean up the beach, volunteer to read at the school. Clean out your closets and donate unused items to flood relieve groups.
- * Remember that winter is a difficult time for animals. Help out at the animal shelter, feed the birds in your backyard and appreciate all the wild animals we are fortunate enough to live with. If you are considering giving a pet to someone make sure that the pet suits their lifestyle and that they can afford to take care of it.

No matter whether you celebrate Hanukkah, Winter Solstice or Christmas, the idea is to embrace the concepts of brotherhood, peace, sharing, goodwill, acceptance, joy and love. So enjoy the holidays, take care to respect and celebrate your good health and that of the earth's.

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PC's Networks Help & Advice

Handy Tips on how to Behave at the Death of the World
 by Anne Herbert

1. It's probably good to tell the truth as often as possible. The truth is generally appreciated by terminal patients, as we all are.
2. Avoid shoddy activities, yours are some of the last to be done on this planet.
3. Esteem basic qualities like generosity and beauty.
4. Avoid that which is only self-serving.
5. Keep in mind that you are standing in for all our ancestors, including those who lived ten thousand years ago -- and also fishes. It might be best to choose to do activities that would make those ancestors honored to have been a part of bringing you here.
6. Overcome your need for power over others -- the life system of our planet is efficiently being killed by human need for power.
7. It would be tasteful to try to correct that for yourself which must be corrected on a greater human level, for example: men try to profoundly change the way they relate to women, white people profoundly try to change the way they relate to people of color, humans try to profoundly change the way they relate to other living beings.
8. Write a mental thank-you note and note of apology to the planet. Give thanks for the great things like: sunsets, oceans, some art, some moments between beings, and the smells of fresh mornings. Offer apologies for our seemingly unstoppable dominance habits and promise to change your own participation in these dominance habits. Of course making this kind of change will involve confusion and embarrassment as you become conscious of your own negative impact, however, making this change will bring about increased personal liveliness which is a fine way to behave on a dying planet.
9. Be radical in your involvement with others -- align yourself with cultures, species, and forms of being which are now being brutally obliterated. Because we are all going to die soon the stylish way to go is to align oneself with one of these life forms and help it be as strong as possible.
10. Eschew blandness.
11. Eschew causing other's pain.
12. We are all the target so wear bright colors and dance around with those you love.
13. Falling in love is an appropriate thing to do now; love all those things which are about to leave. The rocks are watching, as are the squirrels and the stars and the tired people in the street. If you love them let them know, with grace and non-invasive extravagance.
14. Care about those beings you care about in gorgeous and surprising ways.
15. Color outside the lines.
16. Practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty.

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