

Eight priceless presents you can give your family

As we make our holiday shopping lists and worry about what to get for our friends, families and other special people in our lives, let's take a few minutes and make sure we are giving the gifts that can only come from the heart.

The Present of Listening. How do we really listen? We turn off our cell phones, the television, the computer and we focus on the person who is talking to us. We think in terms of their interests, their dreams and their disappointments. We are non-judgmental. We ask questions. We don't offer our own anecdotes. We focus on what is being said. We just try to understand.

The Present of Tenderness. It is with small actions that we are remembered. The touch of tenderness comes from the heart and can express what perhaps a thousand words cannot. A hug, a kiss, a pat on the back, a touch of the hand. A cup of coffee. A cookie and milk. These tiny gestures show the love we have for family and friends.

The Present of Good Humor. Laugh and the world laughs with you. Clip the comics. Learn to tell a joke or two. Tell a few funny stories on yourself. Share your laughter because laughter sounds like angels' music. Smile to light up a room.

The Present of Being Alone. As much as we like to be with other people, at times being by ourselves

is a wonderful gift. Be aware when the best gift for family and friends might simply be to let them have some time alone to rest and rejuvenate. Time alone helps us refill our love buckets.

The Present of Kindness. Do something that lets a loved one know that you are thinking of them. Growing up, my mom would ask



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Kids Talk™

he left me is a gift that gives every time I see his script or doodles.

The Present of Appreciation. Being able to recognize others with gratitude in a sincere manner is a gift. Give a compliment to someone for the work they have done. A few words – “What a great meal,” “Thanks for setting the table” or “I think you are handsome in that shirt” – can brighten anybody's day.

The Present of a Positive Attitude. There's enough doom and gloom in the world. We don't need to bring a rain cloud along. Help those around you see the beautiful, the hopeful and the wonderful in the world around them.

These are the jewels that shine across the decades of our lives, the golden nuggets of time in the red velvet boxes of our memories. Our

loving presence is our priceless present.

Kids Talk™ is an award-winning column dealing with childhood development issues written by Maren Stark Schmidt, M.Ed. She has more than 25 years experience working with young children and is the author of Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents. Contact her via e-mail at maren@kidstalknews.





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me if I would like to split a stick of chewing gum with her. To me, that gesture of offering to share a stick of gum communicated a lot of love and thoughtfulness.

The Present of a Handwritten Note. In today's world of e-mails, the handwritten note becomes deeply personal. Your handwriting reflects your personality and sends a non-verbal message that is difficult to duplicate. Seeing my dad's handwritten notes in the books