

# Give the gift of slowing down

Use the slow lane when choosing holiday gifts

By LEANNE ITALIE  
Associated Press

**N**EW YORK — The world is fast and furious. Why not slow it down for the holidays?

Ways to achieve that lofty goal are plentiful. Some ideas on how to give the gift of slow living:

**THE SLOW HOME PODCAST:** The podcast is hosted by the Australian Brooke McAlary, a mother of two. She's a 30-something writer from the Blue Mountains near Sydney who suffered severe post-natal depression in 2011. That's when she decided to embrace minimalism and simplicity in her life.

In addition to the podcast, she has written two books: "SLOW: Simple Living for a Frantic World" and "Destination Simple: Everyday Rituals for a Slower Life."

**THE ART OF SLOW GROWING:** For loved ones with a green thumb, and those who aspire, set them up with seeds and everything else they need to get their hands in soil and plant.

The shop SmartSeedsEmporium on Etsy offers a way to grow a living sculpture, the Queen Victoria agave plant. With a spiral of deep green leaves, it grows slowly and can reach a foot tall and wide. Mature plants, considered hardy and drought tolerant, can cost up to \$1,000. For \$4.99, gift 20 seeds.

Queen Victorias can live for several decades and spike reddish-purple blooms. This Etsy seller offers a variety of rare, exotic seeds from the around the world as well, but the queen seeds hail from the United States.

**WALKING STICKS:** For people who aspire to walk more, appreciate the woods, get out to the local park trails or get just an hour outside to get the blood flowing, do it in style with a walking stick or cane.

In addition to specialty

makers and hiking stores, bigger chains are in on the idea. Bed, Bath & Beyond carries a 48-inch twisted oak walking stick in red for \$55.99. It has others along the same lines in different wood and color schemes.

A site called Fashionablecanes.com is full of options, including a hazel walking stick handcrafted in Ireland . \$53.99.

Antique canes and sticks are all over eBay if your gift recipient likes retro.

**WRAP UP MY CALM BLANKET:** Do you know somebody who feels they're failing at sleep? The folks at MyCalmBlanket have borrowed a tool used to soothe anxiety and other sleep disrupters — a weighted blanket.

The cotton inner blanket uses glass beads to provide mild pressure based on body weight. The blanket, which measures 48 inches by 72 inches, should weigh 7 to 12 percent of the sleeper. For a person who weighs 80 to 100 pounds, for example, a 10-pound blanket would do. An outer duvet, in a gray square quilted design, is made of minky, a soft polyester velour.

The creators caution that the blanket should not be used by anyone who likely would not be able to remove it on their own. Buying the right weight is key otherwise. It comes in four weights, from 10 pounds to 25 pounds.

Search around because many other weighted blankets are available. This one, intended for use year-round by one person at a time, costs \$169.99 for the 10-, 15- and 20-pound versions, and \$199.99 for the 25-pound blanket.

**BUDDHA BOARDS & SAND GARDENS:** A token gift or actually pretty Zen? Your gift recipient may get a tickle out of one of these either way.

Buddha Boards come in a range of styles and sizes now. They provide a surface for creating fleeting designs with water, a bamboo brush, a bowl and a stand to catch drips included.

Mini Zen sand gardens



SmartSeedsEmporium via AP

**A mature Queen Victoria Agave plant grown from seeds sold by the Etsy shop SmartSeedsEmporium. With a spiral of deep green leaves, the plant grows slowly and can reach a foot tall and wide.**



My Calm Blanket via AP

**My Calm Blanket, a weighted blanket intended to promote high quality sleep.**

are a world onto themselves, with little tools, bridges, rocks, trees and Buddha statues available. One company, Zen Life, offers a set of eight sand stamps in floral, spiral and polygon shapes. \$17.95 on Amazon.

**DEFY THE INSTANT POT:** The multi-use pressure cooker has been all the rage. Slow it on down with a simple, single-function slow cooker.

Consider a stoneware insert, make sure the lid is tight fitting and look for easy, intuitive controls. Also, it would be nice if the

handles stayed cool.

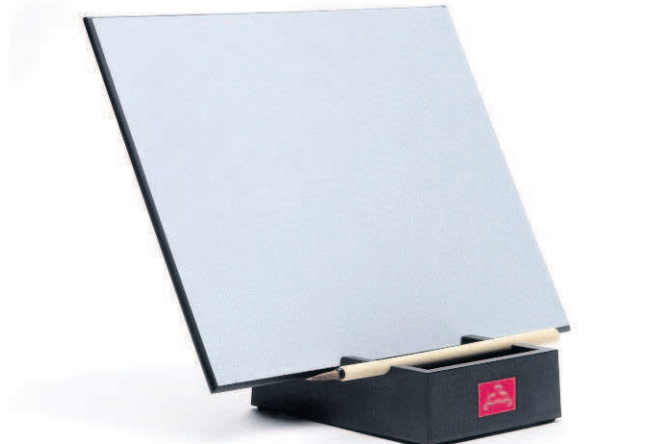
The idea is to make it easy but more importantly slow, providing the best aromatherapy of all: Eight hours of pot roast wafting through the house.

"After reading this book, you'll have an amazing list of ingredients that can help you create a meaningful life."  
—The Minimalists Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus



AP Photo/Sourcebooks

**"SLOW: Simple Living for a Frantic World" by Brooke McAlary.**



Buddha Board via AP

**A water-art Buddha Board.**



AP Photo/Fashionablecanes.com

**A walking cane in hazelwood that was handcrafted and harvested in Ireland.**

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