

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas... Jingle Bells, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Silent Night and so many other familiar songs can be heard with small children anxiously awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus! With the past nine months of watching everyone on a roller coaster ride, the holiday season is witnessing many different emotions. Excitement for something positive, but fearful of allowing one's self to physically gather, even with family. Our 2020 Covid-19 Christmas!

The chance that someone might contract the virus unknowingly and the outcome of how the virus might affect other loved ones is uncertain. Some families are living life as they always have, others are riding the fence with some caution taken and others are fearful for themselves and others and are following all guidelines to do what they can to slow the spread. There are as many different thoughts as there are individuals who can think, right or wrong! This holiday season we will need to adapt "To Make the Best Better".

Holiday gift giving is that one thing that can either invigorate you with so much eagerness in that you just can't wait to see the response of those you have gifted; OR, there are some in which "shopping" can send them over the edge worrying whether the gift will be just right? Do they already have it? Will it fit? Is it the right color? What if they don't like it? And the questions are endless!

Does holiday gift giving really need to include "shopping"? Family and friends often report that holiday foods or other activities, rather than purchased gifts, can make for a happy holiday in and of itself.

Take the time to visit with family members. How does everyone want to spend that hard-earned money? Should families give small, meaningful gifts and save up for a nice family vacation or special event?

Consider these additional suggestions:

- 1) Purchase a "family" gift, such as a card or board game or basketball goal in which the entire family can participate.
- 2) Volunteer, as a family, to do something for the community: assist with a curbside pick-up holiday meal, help at a local movie theatre or food pantry or help local organizations pack and deliver holiday care boxes.
- 3) Reinforce in children that we don't always get everything that we 'want' in life, but we should be thankful for what we do have and feel blessed to be able to spend time with each other.
- 4) Most importantly, almost everyone would rather have "presence" than "presents". Make time during the holiday season to spend some quality time with children and family members. Find an activity where you actually have to communicate with each other and share ideas, whether that is cooking a meal together, playing a game or going for a drive.

The gift of love is the most personal and special present anyone can give. Share this gift with your family and friends during this unusual holiday season. Make the most of what you have and cherish your memories made during 2020!

This article was adapted from a fellow Extension Agent, Berny Unruh, who at the time was a 4-H Youth Development Agent for Barton County.

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“Is It The Gift That Matters?”

“Chasing Clovers”

By Patsy L. Maddy

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