

How Bad Gifts Affect Romantic Relationships

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Gift-giving and Relationships

Buying a gift for someone is an act of kindness that helps us communicate our emotions for the receiver and strengthen our relationships with them. In these terms, the gift is not a mere object or product that we give to someone else. Instead, a gift can be considered as a messenger of our emotions. The type of occasion and relationship with the receiver will shape the type of gift we will choose for the receiver. A perfect gift for your mother's birthday might not be so perfect for the anniversary with your loved one. When it comes to gift-giving in romantic relationships, the success of the gift could significantly impact the well-being of the relationship itself. Consider the significance of gift-giving at the start of a romantic relationship. The consequences of gifts on recipients can help to advance relationships. At the

same time, gifts can help maintain the relationship, serving as a demonstration of love and commitment to the other person. A romantic gift is often more meaningful than a gift given to a large group of people, such as friends or coworkers, because of a romantic connection's ongoing and enduring nature (Huang & Yu, 2000).

Furthermore, romantic gifts have symbolic and expressive value in addition to practical value.

[Research on this topic](#) affirms that in romantic relationships, gifting serves as a way to show similarity to your partner. A study on married couples demonstrated that people who were quite similar to their spouse were more accurate in choosing better gifts for their spouse's preferences than those who were very unlike. At the same time, learning that a spouse has correctly predicted one's preferences may boost the feeling that the partner is similar to oneself. In the early stages of a relationship, the similarity is helpful in the creation of initial acquaintanceships. Similarity appears to grow in value as the relationship progresses, as it provides the foundation for feeling understood by our partner. In this view, providing a "bad" gift to someone we care for might affect the view that you and your partner are similar, weakening the relationship. The idea that a beautiful act like gift-giving could result in something negative is awful. The fear of delivering something unwanted can put a lot of stress on the givers and result in Giftophobic behaviors (You can read more about Giftophobia in our shared secret section). The longer the relationship, the more likely you will be requested to choose a present for your significant other, so you must be prepared!

That is why it is essential to know what constitutes a poor gift, what the effects are, and what are the things we must do in order to prevent giving a poor gift.

What Constitutes a Bad Gift?

The extent to which a gift is considered good or bad is based on the receiver's preferences.

Therefore there is not such a thing as the "List of gifts you must not choose," but luckily for

you, there are some indications that would tell you which behaviors could trick you into choosing the wrong gift. Some points that you have to keep in mind are:

- Focusing on the surprise effect alone won't work!

When choosing a gift, you might think that the best way to make your special one happy is to surprise them with something unrequested. [It was studied](#) that givers chose unrequested gifts because they believe that, even if an asked gift closely matches the recipient's preferences, an unrequested gift will result in a more favorable gift exchange. However, receivers appreciate presents that are requested explicitly since they are more likely to fit their preferences.

- Gifts that do not reflect the receiver's identity are less appreciated.

Receiving gifts that reflect one's self-image can also make people "feel right," resulting in beneficial relational outcomes. Self-verifying acknowledgment from a partner can make a partner feel understood, accepted, and tolerated in romantic relationships. In romantic relationships, greater accuracy in the perception of the other is linked to better outcomes and higher levels of relationship quality (Luo et al., 2019).

- Never give too much importance to the price of the gift.

Remember! Gifts are an expression of your love, but money is not! Price isn't always a good indicator of how much your loved one would appreciate the gift (Flynn & Adams, 2009).

Buying something expensive but without any meaning would not help you strengthen your relationship.

- Buying a present for your partner should not be taken as a task to complete.

Focusing on buying something just because a special occasion is coming up (e.g., Valentine's Day) is not the right approach toward a successful gift-giving experience. Therefore, when shopping for someone special, your focus should mainly be on the product rather than buying

something (Wolfenbarger & Yale, 1993). Especially when it is for your loved one, you should spend time and energy researching a gift that can communicate your feelings.

Direct Effects of Bad Gift on Romantic Relationships

[Dunn et al. \(2008\)](#) explored the effects of good and bad gifts on relationships. In their study, thirty-two heterosexual couples in dating relationships were recruited. They were given a list of gifts to choose from for their partner. The idea was that each participant would then evaluate their perceived similarity to the other person by looking at the present chosen for them. Each participant was asked to rate the gifts in the order they would prefer to receive them before the experiment. The experimenters then gave these preferences back to the individuals as though they had come from a new acquaintance. One-half of the participants were told that their partner had chosen their top choice, while the other half were told that they had chosen their last choice. This resulted in two groups: those who got what they desired and those who didn't.

After getting a terrible gift from their love partner, males reported feeling less similar to her, which appeared to impact their perceptions of the relationship's future negatively. However, after getting a bad gift from a romantic partner, women's perceptions of the relationship's future were unaffected, despite women being just as dissatisfied with the bad gifts as men.

[Dunn et al. \(2008\)](#) hypothesized that the observed gender differences reflect a broader tendency for women, more than men, to protect relationships from potential threats (e.g., a bad gift).

Why are Gifts Necessary in Romantic Relationships?

In a romantic relationship, gifts can serve various purposes. To make an apology, feed the flame of love, show gratitude, and celebrate special occasions.

- Gift-giving as a messenger of peace.

Fights are unavoidable in any relationship. Some may be light disputes, while others may be heated debates. In every conflict, pain becomes an unavoidable component. Is it too late to apologize if you know that you caused the fight? When you are having trouble pacifying your partner, and they're too hurt to listen to your explanations, gift-giving is one of the most effective ways of expressing regret and apologizing to them. Furthermore, if you add a touch of personalization to your present, it will reflect your efforts and serve as a symbol of sincere regret.

- Gift-giving as fuel for your love.

Understandably, if you don't do anything for your partner, the quality of the relationship will not stay the same. Each relationship will evolve into a more vital link as trust, understanding, and love are developed. The romance may lose its strength if these aren't present. You can, however, give gifts to re-create some of the early relationship memories. This will not only stir up romance but will also provide a reason to cherish lifelong memories. So go and choose a romantic gift, or do whatever it is that your hearts tell us to do.

- Gift-giving as an expression of gratitude.

While some of us may be able to express our thoughts and feelings freely, others may find it challenging to do so. There could be times when words are not enough to communicate how important a person is in our lives. In this situation, a gift could help show how you value all of their efforts to steer your life in a new direction and how grateful you are for their existence in our life.

- Gift-giving to celebrate the small things

I know you don't need anyone telling you that you should buy presents for your loved one on Christmas. Rituals and ceremonies are essential, but sometimes the small things are even

more important. If walking by a store you see that pair of glasses your special one was looking for, why wait for the next celebrations to make them happy? Remember, there is always an excuse to make someone happy.

Now you can look back at all those gifts you gave your partner with more consciousness about what constitutes a good or a poor gift. Hopefully, you didn't give them anything terrible, but if that's the case, don't worry, there is always time to make up for it!

References

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