



Photo by [Kira auf der Heide](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Effects of Gifts on Relationships

A beautiful, thoughtful, and meaningful present makes us feel unique and provides us with a sense of belonging. A gift that is prepared for us, reflects someone's love, thought, commitment, and care for us, and it makes us feel happy and appreciated. A gift that is not merely a thing wrapped in paper, but receiving that gift is an experience in itself that makes us feel so many beautiful emotions. That moment of receiving such a gift becomes so special and dear to us that even the memory of receiving it brings us joy. It shows us that someone cares for us and that we are valued by someone. Considering the power of a gift, it shouldn't be reduced to being just a thing because a gift chosen for someone to show them that they are special is like gifting someone a feeling that they will cherish forever.

There is a difference in how you react when you receive a bouquet of roses compared to when you receive a bouquet of roses in your favorite color, with a note that addresses you by your nickname.

When you receive such a gift, the endorphins are going to kick in, making you laugh out of joy, and it will be difficult for you to hide the glow on your face. Because the relationship is two-way communication, you would also want to reciprocate the effort of your beloved similarly. This is just one aspect of how the power of gifts can positively influence your relationships. So what makes a gift so unique or powerful enough to influence your relationship? The following characteristics of a gift make the gift stand and leave a long-lasting impact.

- **Reflect the sender's intentions;** A gift should show the love and concern of the giver for the receiver. The gift should reflect that the sender spent time and energy looking for the gift.
- **Shows meaning;** A gift should have some meaning or sentimental value, making it way more special than just being a thing.
- **Useful;** An essential feature of a good gift is that it can be used. Whenever the gift receiver uses it, it will remind the receiver of the person by whom the gift was presented.
- **Surprise;** How the gift is presented also influences the recipient's emotions. Everyone mostly loves a little surprise, so why not use it to add to the value of your gift? Even if the gift itself is surprising, not shocking, that adds charm to the gift. If the gift is something that the receiver did not expect to receive but wanted, then that is a sure way of making your loved one happy.

Researches about gift-giving

Studies have shown that giving gifts can positively influence our well-being as well as boost our mood.

- A study conducted in 2008, showed that the happiness of 600 subjects in a study was positively related to spending money on others and prosocial causes. The participants of the study reported a high level of satisfaction in terms of spending on others. (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008).
- Another study was conducted in 2013; the researchers asked the students from Uganda and Canada to think about when they spent money on themselves. Then, they were asked to think about the time when they spent money on someone else. The student reported a greater level of happiness when the thought of spending money on others. Similar results were shown when the participants from India were asked to think of a similar situation. Students from South Africa and Canada showed a greater level of happiness when they were asked to spend money on sick children in hospitals than spending money on themselves. (Aknin L, Barrington-Leigh, C. P, Dunn, E. W, Helliwell, Burns, J, Biswas-Diener, R.& Norton, M. I. 2013).
- A study conducted in 2011 showed that the closer the relationship with the receiver, the more happiness it brings to the sender when giving a gift. So, if the gift is being given to a family member, it induces more pleasure than a gift delivered to a coworker. (Gillian. Sandstrom, Elizabeth W. Dunn, Michael. Norton, 2011)

Relationship and gifts

Relationships are essential parts of life, and we cannot imagine a life without family, friends, or anyone with whom we share a special bond. Relationships are one of our primary needs; according to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, once our physiological and security needs are

fulfilled, we move towards the need to belong, the need to be loved, and that is fulfilled in our relationships. Friends looking after each other, parents and siblings supporting you, and many other ways we feel loved and taken care of. All the different ways we express our emotions and love for our loved ones fulfill our need for belongingness.

How do gifts positively impact our relationship?

When it comes to expressing love and showing your concern for your loved one, one way is to give them something memorable. The gift shouldn't have to cost a million dollars, but it should show that your loved one is worth more to you than anything. How gifts positively impact our relationships.

- A gift represents a symbolic connection between the gift giver and the receiver.
- They help in boosting and improving interpersonal communication.
- They help to enhance relationships as well as mend previous mistakes.

A study published in 2020 asked 32 female friends to be involved in cooperative and neural activity, and some were asked to exchange gifts before the beginning of the action, and some were asked to exchange gifts halfway through. The results showed improved cognitive performance, enhanced accuracy, and lower performance time after exchanging gifts.

Another study conducted in 2016, which was published in the journal of consumer research, showed that experiential gifts improved and strengthened the relations between the giver and the receiver compared to material gifts. They showed a significant level of relationship improvement. (Journal of Consumer Research, 2016)

How do poor gifts impact our relationships?

There have been times when instead of strengthening a relationship, the gifts negatively influenced the relationship. If a good gift can affect our relationships so well, then we should not

take the impact of bad gifts on our relationships too lightly. What is a wrong gift, and why should we avoid giving such gifts? Following are some of the features we should avoid while buying a gift.

- **Egocentric gifts**, the gifts shouldn't be about the giver. The gift should not reflect the preference of the giver and instead should be a source of showing the connection and common interest between the giver and the receiver. The gift should be helpful if the receiver were able to use the gift for a long time, it would be much appreciated by the receiver, rather than being something that the receiver would not be able to use.
- **Don't be random**, do not just pick anything or give something you find the easiest to buy; if you put some effort, you might be able to remember things that your loved one might appreciate, or they need that thing, and it could be a great gift.

A wrong gift can make the receiver feel offended, making them question if the giver doesn't understand them or their choice. The recipient of a wrong gift can feel emotionally stressed if the gift does not reflect anything. It could make them question if they have anything in common with the giver or understand them. If the recipient professes that they are not that much of a fan of the gift they received, it can also upset the give.

Gifts are not just things, and they help us express our emotions and many other sentiments which we might not be able to communicate verbally. So we should not overlook the value of a gift and how it can improve and strengthen our relationships.

Reference

- Aknin, L. B., Barrington-Leigh, C. P., Dunn, E. W., Helliwell, J. F., Burns, J., Biswas-Diener, R., ... & Norton, M. I. (2013). Prosocial spending and well-being: cross-cultural evidence for a psychological universal. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 104*(4), 635.
- Aknin, L. B., Sandstrom, G. M., Dunn, E. W., & Norton, M. I. (2011). It's the recipient that counts: Spending money on strong social ties leads to greater happiness than spending on weak social ties. *PLoS One, 6*(2), e17018.
- Balconi, M., Fronda, G., & Vanutelli, M. E. (2019). A gift for gratitude and cooperative behavior: brain and cognitive effects. *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience, 14*(12), 1317-1327.
- Cindy Chan, Cassie Mogilner, Experiential Gifts Foster Stronger Social Relationships Than Material Gifts, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Volume 43, Issue 6, April 2017, Pages 913–931,
- Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science, 319*(5870), 1687-1688.