



# Create Christmas Spirit

By Dr. Linda Hancock

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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I have learned so much from my family, friends and clients over the years. Many of them have had very good reasons to feel sorry for themselves or bemoan their negative circumstances. Instead, they reached out to others who needed help. Much better than sitting at home, staring at a wall and pouting!

We all know the expression "It is better to give than receive" but many either don't practice this or miss out on needs that we have right in our own neighbourhood.

One of the things that I have been encouraging people to do this Christmas is to look for unique ways to give to others that don't cost a lot of money. Here are some ideas:

1. Research - Instead of offering to give turkeys to a place like the Food Bank, try calling them to see what they really need. This year, I was told that they have enough turkeys but no cranberries and have been short of stuffing. One phone call to an agency can make your giving more effective. You might find that the "traditional" ways that you have given are not needed while other opportunities are missed. Spend a little time researching the needs before you make an assumption about what they might be.
2. Recycle - Are you a hoarder? Do you have nice things but just too many of them? Try calling a community service agency to see what needs their clients have. Maybe you have too much furniture or items that were given to you but never opened that you could donate. Many charities need socks, mitts or hats to give out to their clients. Remember, new immigrants and the homeless have next to nothing. You likely wouldn't even need to leave your house to package up many things that would be treasured gifts for others.
3. Re-invest your time in providing simple pleasures. Recently my son was in the hospital and feeling very concerned about his health when he heard a choir singing in the hallway. He has told so many people about how that experience inspired him. Visiting a shut-in can brighten their day. Helping someone carry heavy items from the store to the car can be a welcomed blessing. Even just offering a smile and greeting to a stranger can be a beautiful gift. You don't have to spend money to give joy to others.
4. Re-think your giving. Most people would rather have a quart of homemade beet pickles or a loaf of ethnic bread that represents the giver than an impersonal purchased gift. Try giving a family member your handwritten history or a letter describing the day that person was born. They will hold that to their heart for years and pass it on for generations to come. It is also a good idea to offer to teach a skill to someone or share a favourite recipe. Give of yourself!
5. Reconnect the generations by telling stories about the past and building memories for the future. My cousins and I still talk with fondness about the Boxing Day fun we had together as children. My grandchildren love to hear stories about "the olden days". Family is about past, present and future. It doesn't cost one cent to share and build memories.
6. Renew your spirit. I believe that each of us is like a glass of water. If we are angry, upset or resentful, we splash toxic waste onto other people who are around us. On the other hand, if we have resolved past issues, adopted contentment and focused on positive thoughts, we splash on others and they think "That was refreshing". We need to deal with our own "stuff" before we can be attractive and inspiring to others.
7. Recreate your Christmas habits - Try adding one new tradition this year. This is your opportunity to use creativity to bless another soul!

Let the season of giving begin!