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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

KEEP YOUR DREAM

A Meaningful Season

Parenting from the Heart

The Giving Gift



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For quite a number of years, when getting closer to the holiday season and the end of a year, I've made it a habit to look back and reflect on all that has happened in my personal life and the world around me.

This past year, there has been a lot to be thankful for personally—I've enjoyed excellent health, welcomed a new granddaughter into the family, and enjoyed my work tremendously. However, when I recalled the recurring news of violence, wars, natural disasters, and the suffering these events have caused to so many innocent men, women, and children, I felt overwhelmed. Remembering some of the riveting images I've seen on the news recently, I came to the conclusion that the holiday message of peace on earth and goodwill toward men is more relevant than ever.

Even though I sometimes feel that my efforts are like a drop of water in an ocean of what needs to be done to truly make the world a better place, I know I can't let that stop me. I am determined to keep doing my part, and I hope you will join me to make this the best holiday season ever.

We can start by changing the way we see others, by being considerate to those who cross our paths, and by doing kind deeds when opportunities present themselves. A positive, kind word, spoken at just the right time, or a helping hand given to someone in need are some of the best gifts we can give. These acts of kindness can contribute to making this a beautiful world for all.

I hope the stories and articles in this issue of *Motivated* will be an inspiration to you. Together we can make a difference, and make the dream of a better world a reality.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Keep Your Dream

Author Unknown



During a fundraiser for youth-at-risk programs in California, the owner of the horse ranch hosting the event said, “I want to tell you why I let you use my house. It all goes back to a story about a young man who was the son of an itinerant horse trainer who would go from stable to stable, race track to race track, and ranch to ranch, training horses. As a result, the boy’s schooling was continually interrupted. When he was a high school senior, he was asked to write a paper about what he wanted to be and do when he grew up.

“That night he wrote a seven-page paper describing his goal of someday owning a horse ranch. He wrote about his dream in great detail, and he even drew a diagram, showing the location of all the buildings, the stables, and the track. Then he drew a detailed floor plan for a 4,000-square-foot house that would sit on his 200-acre dream ranch.

“He put his heart and a great deal of effort into the project, and handed it in to his teacher the next day. Two days later he received his paper back. On the front page was a large red F with a note that read, ‘See me after class.’

“The boy with the dream went to see the teacher and asked, ‘Why did I receive an F?’ The teacher said, ‘This is an unrealistic dream for a young boy like you. You have no money. You come from an itinerant family. You have no resources. Owning a horse ranch requires

a lot of money. You have to buy the land. You have to pay for the original breeding stock, and later you’ll have to pay large stud fees. There’s no way you could ever do it.’ Then the teacher added, ‘If you will rewrite this paper with a more realistic goal, I will reconsider your grade.’

“The boy went home and thought about it long and hard. He asked his father what he should do. His father said, ‘Look, son, you have to make up your own mind on this. However, I think it is a very important decision for you.’ Finally, after a week, the boy turned in the same paper, making no changes at all.

“He told the teacher, ‘You can keep the F and I’ll keep my dream.’

The owner then turned to the assembled group and said, “I tell you this story because you are sitting in my 4,000-square-foot house in the middle of my 200-acre horse ranch. I still have that school paper framed over the fireplace.”

He added, “The best part of the story is that two summers ago that same schoolteacher brought 30 kids to camp out on my ranch for a week. When they were leaving, the teacher said, ‘Look, I can tell you this now. During the years as your teacher, I stole a lot of kids’ dreams. Fortunately you had enough gumption not to give up on yours.’”

**So don’t let anyone steal your dreams.
Follow your heart, no matter what the
circumstances might be. ■**



40 Ways to Bounce Back When Everything Goes Wrong

By Leslie Ralph, adapted

We've all had those days, months, or years when it seems that there's nothing but problem after problem. They threaten to knock us down and stop us from moving forward.

When everything goes wrong, we may be caught unawares. Times like these can blindside us, but this doesn't always stop us from saying that we should have seen it coming. Maybe we did see it coming,

but didn't want to believe it. This can push us into a shame (or blame) spiral.

It might not be pleasant or easy when things go wrong, but there are better ways to make it through.

However it happened, you can keep it together when everything seems to be going wrong, and you can emerge from difficult situations much wiser and stronger.

When everything goes wrong, remember:

1. Everything is temporary, even this.
2. Happiness is a result of your approach to life, not what happens to you.
3. The things, even those that seem small, that are going right in your life.
4. The people who are there to support you.
5. What you care about most and what you can let go of.
6. Your resilience in other tough situations.
7. Bad times don't define you, but your reaction does.

Don't:

8. Panic or get too far ahead of yourself.
9. React by blaming, criticizing, and lashing out.

- 10.** Neglect your needs, isolate yourself.
- 11.** Ignore your intuition.
- 12.** Focus on what should have been instead of what is.
- 13.** Try to control what is out of your control.
- 14.** Ask “what if” or “why me” without also reminding yourself of what’s possible and what makes you strong.
- 15.** Worry about what people think of you.

Do:

- 16.** Accept, accept, accept.
- 17.** Stick to the present, rather than worrying about the future or dwelling on the past.
- 18.** Focus on realistic expectations for yourself and the situation.
- 19.** Differentiate between what you can and what you cannot change.
- 20.** Take one step, then another, even if they’re just baby steps, towards what you want in life.
- 21.** Look for the lesson. Challenging situations can often teach us what we have left to learn.
- 22.** Keep a positive attitude by remaining focused on solutions, skills, and strengths.
- 23.** Start small.
- 24.** Spend time with the people who support you.
- 25.** Appreciate the things going well, savor simple pleasures, and try to find the hidden gifts in the difficult times.
- 26.** Take care of yourself, treat yourself with love and respect.
- 27.** Rejuvenate rather than simply tuning out or unplugging.
- 28.** Ask for help sooner rather than later.
- 29.** Consult or get a second opinion.
- 30.** Try looking at the situation from someone else’s point of view.
- 31.** Look at the situation as a relatively short segment in the timeline of your life.
- 32.** Move, your body that is. Get moving to discharge energy. Walk, swim, or hike.
- 33.** Laugh. Watch a comedy. Call up a bubbly friend.
- 34.** Help someone else in need.
- 35.** Write. Vent your frustrations about this situation, brainstorm strategies to get out of it, or write about a more positive time in your life.
- 36.** Find a creative outlet.
- 37.** Read and reread motivational, inspirational, or encouraging words from others.
- 38.** Get outdoors and get inspired. Watch the sun rise or set. Listen to the birds. Take it all in to gain perspective.
- 39.** Give yourself time to regroup. Assess damages, sort out what can and cannot be done, or just get out of the middle of the situation.
- 40.** Choose one big goal to work on in order to make a lasting change. ■



A MEANINGFUL SEASON

By Mara Hodler, adapted

Just about everyone is excited to receive a gift. There is something wonderful about knowing that someone cared enough to think about what you would like, shopped for it or created it themselves, and gave it to you.

There is also a special joy in giving gifts. When you find a gift that you know the recipient will love, it's fun to present it to them. The recipient's delight becomes a gift to you and inspires you to keep giving. But stop and think for a moment of all the gifts you've received in your life so far, and which ones have stood out.

You might have been beside yourself

with excitement when you received the video game you were begging for, but does it still bring you that same joy after a couple of weeks? The gorgeous shirt you just "had to have," how often do you wear it now?

There are a lot of holiday traditions, and they vary by families, but it seems the one tradition most families share is gift exchange. Stores know this, so they prepare months before the holidays by flooding the shopping floors with potential gifts and pictures of happy people receiving the store's wares as gifts. They aggressively offer deals, sale days, shopping rewards, incentives, and

layaway plans in an attempt to earn your holiday budget. Everyone from the car dealership to the discount store offers ideas of the kind of gifts you can get your loved ones.

I grew up in a family, where the holidays didn't equal an abundance of fanfare and gifts, either for me personally or for the people I was around. The first holiday season that I had the opportunity to "go all out" and do tons of shopping for my loved ones and family, I was so excited! I spent days shopping at the mall, hours researching "best" purchases online, and more hours perfectly wrapping gifts and tying the packages with beautiful bows.

As the season progressed, I heard myself a few times saying, I can't wait 'til this is all over. I had never felt anxious like this during the festive season before! Sure, we were tired by the end of it, but I had never felt any dread associated with the season.

Now here I was participating in a "traditional holiday," and instead of it being a joy-filled time, it was becoming stressful. I realized I was surrounded and consumed by it, but I had the feeling that I was missing it altogether. I powered through anyway, right up to the most hectic celebration I had ever experienced. Piles of gifts were exchanged and trash bag upon trash bag of wrapping paper and packaging was gathered. I sat there in the aftermath, feeling so terribly underwhelmed. I felt like I had missed the grand finale of a great movie and just skipped to the part where the credits roll. Where had the season gone?

All those thoughtfully purchased gifts? As the weeks and months rolled by, I happened upon various gifts I had given,

stashed in the back of a drawer or sitting on a shelf gathering dust. I also found some of the gifts I had received were useless. We had collectively spent a lot of money on gifts, and a few weeks later, it seemed like no one was any better off for it.

Before I sound like I am stingy, I want to make it clear that I am not against the giving of gifts. I just hate to see the holidays eclipsed by a frenzy of shopping and stressing. I learned that year that what makes the season special is something you have to seek out. It doesn't just come because you're buying gifts, decorating a tree, and listening to holiday music.

Here are some of the ways I plan to spread holiday cheer this year:

- ▷ Sending cards to loved ones near and far.
- ▷ Sharing inspiring stories with my kids and friends.
- ▷ Posting thought-provoking, joyful, and meaningful messages on my Face book page.
- ▷ Sending donations to charities that are making the season special for kids and families in need.
- ▷ Practicing random acts of kindness in my community .
- ▷ Making treats for teachers and friends.
- ▷ Avoiding the mall.
- ▷ Keeping it simple: less fussing and more meaning.
- ▷ Spending as much time as possible with family and friends.

December is here. Join me in taking time before the holiday frenzy is in high gear to think of how we can make this beautiful season meaningful this year. ■



The Giving Gift

By Brian Joseph, adapted

After he had unwrapped his gifts one morning, a 5-year-old boy's mother explained to the child that there was a toy drive happening for children who don't get toys at this time of year. She asked him what he would think about selecting one of his new toys, or even an older toy, to donate to make another child happy.

Although difficult for the little boy, after thinking about it, he eventually agreed to part with one of his gifts. Mom told him that he could have until the following morning to decide. The next day, the boy put his four gifts in front of him and tried to decide which one to part with. It was a difficult decision. His eyes scanned over the toy flute, the book of Aesop's Fables, a book bag, and the toy dump truck with doors that really opened. He decided to part with the flute.

"Where do we take it?" he asked his mother. His mother explained that there was a donation box two streets away, and that the people who emptied this box would make sure that it got to a child

who needed a gift. His mother told him that he could tape a note to the flute and she helped him to write one that read, "Please make sure this gets to a kid who doesn't have a lot of toys." He wrote his name at the end of the note.

This parting with a gift during the holidays became a yearly ritual.

When he was 8 years old the boy parted with a treasured set of checkers. "I really love these mom," the boy said. His mother said that he could select something else, but he didn't want to have to decide again, so they prepared the gift for the donation box. That year he decided all on his own not to put his name on the note that he attached to the checkers box. Three months later, when he saw a checkers set at his friend Jerry's house, he fought back the temptation to say, "That was mine," after Jerry had told him that someone had brought it to his door.

When he was 10 years old, his mother lost her job right before the holidays,



and gifts were sparse. That year, when he looked over his three inexpensive gifts, his mother told him that this time he didn't have to part with a gift. At first this sounded great, but when he woke up the next morning, he thought how much fun Jerry had with the checkers, and how magical the giving gift was. He told his mother that he wanted to put his new football in the donation box. "You don't have to do that," his mother said, but he told her that he wanted to. Teary-eyed, she gave him a big hug.

The giving gift tradition continued into adulthood, until one holiday his own 5-year-old boy asked him, "What was the best gift you got when you were a kid?" He wanted to explain to his son that the best gift he ever received didn't come in a box, it wasn't wrapped, and you couldn't even hold it in your hand. He explained the giving gift as best he could, just as his mother had explained it to him.

"Do you still do that, Dad?" His father said he had not missed it in over 30 years.

The following day the father selected a new sweater and wrote directly on the white box, "Please give this to someone who needs it." As he was getting ready for the drive to the donation box his son asked, "Can I come?" The father asked the boy to have his mother help him put on his boots, hat, and coat while he went to warm up the car. The father sat in the car waiting for ten minutes and was just about to go back inside to see what was taking his son so long when the little boy came running out with a new Play-Doh set in his hands. "Dad, can you help me write the note?" he asked?

There is joy in watching surprised looks on the faces of children as they open gifts. Material gifts can be precious, but the greatest gifts that we can give to children aren't wrapped in fancy paper and can't be purchased at the mall. They are the gifts that we can give away but still keep. ■

Tales of Kind Strangers and Acts of Generosity

By Susan Stamberg, adapted



Acts of kindness and generosity come in many different forms: Giving food to a hungry stranger, donating one's time to aid homeless people, or helping a fellow tenant make the rent. But it's their ability to touch us and stick in our memories that makes sometimes even small gestures a powerful and lasting force in our lives.

Here are some stories that are bound to touch your heart:

After the Storm

Beverly Jordan witnessed an extraordinary act of generosity after Hurricane Andrew slammed into South Florida in 1992, leaving a wide path of destruction in its path. Jordan, a nurse, volunteered to go door to door in Miami delivering emergency relief.

Her relief van pulled up to a house that was nothing but a shell. She asked the young owners if they needed anything. "They said, 'No, but can you wait a

minute here?'" They came back out with a case of diapers and four or five bags of food and said, "Would you please give this to somebody who needs it worse than we do?"

Jordan says she never got the couple's name and wishes that she could thank them for their generosity.

The Most Memorable Gifts

Amy Scharman of Mapleton, Utah, remembered the holiday season after her parents divorced. Her mother was raising 13 kids with no child support. The situation looked pretty grim.

"It was about dusk on Christmas Eve when we heard a knock on the back door," Scharman says. When they opened it, no one was there. But someone had left 10 big bags filled with presents for the children, including clothes and toys.

"It was such an overwhelming feeling to see such generosity from I don't even know who it was," she says. Ten years later, Scharman and her family still

don't know who did that good deed. Amy Scharman ends her note, "If you're out there, thank you for making that Christmas the most memorable of all."

A Mother's Good Example

Sometimes witnessing a good deed leaves a lasting impression. Donna Delfino Dugay of Harper Woods, Mich., remembers a day in California when she was 11 years old, and her parents took their six children for a special day at the beach. Donna's mother brought a picnic lunch — fried chicken and her famous potato salad—and prepared a plate for each of them.

"When I looked up from my plate, my mother was fixing one more plate... She turned away from us and walked over maybe 20 or 30 feet to where there was a man by himself. And he was picking his way through the trashcan. And my mother — I don't know whether she just put the plate there or whether she touched him gently or whether she said a few words — but I remember him turning to her in a gesture of thankfulness."

Dugay's mother came back and sat down at the table. "Years later, Dugay asked her mother if she remembered the incident. "She laughed and said, 'Not at all.' But for me, I remember it very well because for me, it was the touchstone for what good deeds became in my life."

'A King's Ransom'

Peter Strupp of Boston remembers being "flat broke" his senior year at the University of Wisconsin. When he could no longer afford the rent at his fraternity, he found refuge in an on-campus student house.

"Inevitably the month came that I couldn't make the rent for my room at the student house either. The night before I was going to tell my housemates I was leaving, one of them stopped me in the kitchen. We were alone... He reached into his pocket and handed me a month's rent, in cash. Before I could say anything, he said, 'Don't pay me back.' Though the rent was less than \$100, Strupp writes, "in a dark hour, it was a king's ransom."

Giving at Work

David Hutmacher of Marietta, Ga., wrote of the generosity he received from co-workers when he became seriously ill three years ago. After three hospital stays, including two surgeries, he had used up all of his vacation and sick leave.

"It was the end of the year and my last paycheck at the first of December was for approximately 10 percent of its usual amount. I was worried. The holidays were fast approaching, and I wouldn't be going back to work until mid-January at the earliest. My wife, who is a schoolteacher, was just barely keeping things together. Our two daughters were 8 and 5 years old at the time. I really didn't think there would be many, if any gifts that year. So I was very surprised when on the 15th of December I received a paycheck. When I opened it there was not only a full pay period but also the pay I was missing from the previous check. I immediately called our accountant for an explanation. It seems that all the employees had gotten together and donated any vacation days that they had left for the year so I could get paid. I cried. It was truly a Good Deed." ■

On Gifts and Giving

NOTABLE
QUOTES



When a gift is difficult to give away, it becomes even more rare and precious, somehow gathering a part of the giver to the gift itself.—**Cate Blanchett**

Love and kindness are never wasted. They always make a difference. They bless the one who receives them, and they bless you, the giver.—**Barbara De Angelis**

You take away all the other luxuries in life, and if you can make someone smile and laugh, you have given the most special gift: happiness.—**Brad Garrett**

The greatest gift that you can give to others is the gift of unconditional love and acceptance.—**Brian Tracy**

The great gift of human beings is that we have the power of empathy.—**Meryl Streep**

Sometimes you can make people forget the past with a present.—**Author Unknown**

If instead of a gem, or even a flower, we should cast the gift of a loving thought into the heart of a friend, that would be giving as the angels give.

—**George MacDonald**

To give and then not feel that one has given is the very best of all ways of giving.—**Max Beerbohm**

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.—**Khalil Gibran**

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.—**William A. Ward**

Life is a gift, and it offers us the privilege, opportunity, and responsibility to give something back by becoming more.

—**Tony Robbins**

