

Gifts without Clutter



by Charlie Chapman

It's almost Christmas – a time of the year where the smiles get bigger on the faces of children but may temporarily disappear from the faces of parents! It can be a stressful time for people of all ages. How do you buy loved ones the perfect gift? Will that person like it? Will that person want it? Let's take a moment and think about what Christmas means. Whether you are a person of faith or not, it is a time to come together as a family, putting your differences aside and celebrating just being together. It is a time of great tradition for many families with seafood feasts, letters to Santa and treats for Santa at the bottom of the fireplace. It is also a time for giving.

In the last couple of decades commercialism has played an enormous part in how we prepare. As our children chant the daily words of "I want this...", "I want that...", we start thinking about how we are going to make it the best Christmas for them possible. Some families send themselves into great debt to meet the family's expectations. With the influx of gifts we can, if not planned, add to the clutter our modern families already have. So how do we host Christmas and give presents without adding to the clutter?

Step 1. Every household before the Christmas season should have a de-cluttering session. Sort and throw out items that are broken. Donate items that are no longer used. If you do this with children, let them know that they will be giving to less fortunate children. Make it a family ritual to box up toys in good condition to give away.

Step 2. Set the expectations with your extended family in good time. If this coming Christmas is going to be a financially challenging time, gently say so to set the expectation that large expensive presents will not be a part of it. Set the boundaries with the extended family. As a family we decided last year not to buy presents for each other at the parent's level. We bought presents for each other's children and for our parents.

Step 3. Create a list of what you would like to receive and what you would like your children to receive so that if family members ask you are able to tell them. Be mindful of other people's budgets. If you would like to receive a new coffee machine ask for vouchers from everyone to Harvey Norman. This allows you to realise your choice, while still allowing family members to choose their own budget.

Step 4. If you are the purchaser of the gift consider the recipients home size before you buy that racetrack that has nowhere to be set up. Ask them if there is anything that they would like. Ask the recipient if you can give a voucher towards something they really want.

Step 5. Start thinking experiences. You may like to ask grandparents to take your children to a production/play, or a day at the tennis or cricket. Instead of gifts you are giving valuable experiences that will be remembered for years. These are great ideas that won't add to the clutter in the family home.

Finally remember what Christmas is all about. Don't let the day become overwhelming with big, shiny expensive gifts that don't fit into the home and are a one day wonder for the children. I can guarantee that in the fullness of time they will remember the occasion and traditions, not what you gave them.

Happy Christmas from The Organised Family!

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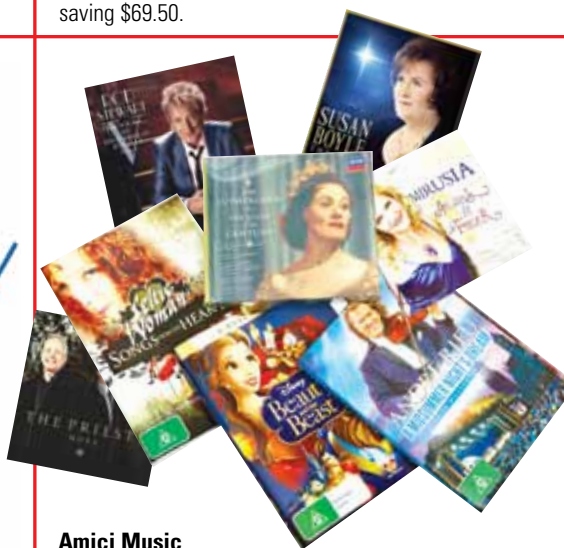
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