

**Inside the Mind of a Professional Organizer - By Jessi Bushman aka “Organizer Jessi”
Gifting...thinking outside the box when it comes to Holidays**

Is it...Holiday Season already?!! The thought of 2021 coming to an end is somewhat unrealistic – last year was never-ending and this year went way too fast! Planning for 2022, what goes through your mind? What mental checklists are you preparing to end this year and move to the next?

This article is intended to reach women of all ages and stages of life. I'd like to help each of you make organized, purposeful and realistic choices as you plan for your holiday gifting and celebrations.

The amount of people we love and interact with is overwhelming! To acknowledge your special people, start by making a list of those you want to celebrate having in your life. Make notes of their overall interests and lifestyles. The purpose of gifting is to make a person feel special. Do you notice things your family and friends use on a regular basis? What about ways to make their daily routine easier? I gifted a personalized tote to a close friend of mine who always struggled with transporting materials to the vehicle, house and office. She still uses it daily and it encourages better efficiency and time management!

When I reflect on those important to me, my memories always take me back to an experience we shared together; not necessarily a gift they gave me. On the flip side, the gifts I have received over the years (and kept) are one's I use often or visually admire on a regular basis. My point is, my “gifts” are meaningful as they reflect my style! I believe meaning is overlooked based on pressure from Social Media, Advertisements and “Keeping up with the Joneses” standards. Holiday gifting should not add stress to your financial situation or be the cause of guilt while giving or receiving.

I'd like to offer and emphasize alternative options to consider when creating or purchasing thoughtful gifts. Acknowledge and stick to a realistic budget along with your intentions.

- Do you already own something that you KNOW another person admires or has expressed an interest in? (Yes, re-gifting is a wonderful idea!)
- Have you received a Wish List? Evaluate the requested items and factor out “fad” gifts by prioritizing things that are useful and will stand the test of time. If your budget feels the pressure, is there someone in your family or workplace that you could split the cost with?
- If your focus is for a child or teen, take a moment to reflect on items or experiences you received early on. What made a lasting impression on you? A new bike or family vacation? Regardless if it was an item, an exciting overnight local stay or a destination spot, you remember it!

- Have you considered gifting your entire household by refreshing a bedroom or family space? It's amazing what a new wall color, flooring or furniture will do to impact your visual and functional time as a family. If your budget allows, maybe you dream of remodeling a space to better suit your lifestyle and needs.

Enroll in an education or hobby course:

- Pottery, painting, crafting, scrap-booking or photography.
- Cooking and nutrition lessons or online grocery shopping assistance.
- Music, instrument or singing lessons.
- Dance, yoga, spin class, or karate sessions.
- Passes to the local museum or interactive learning center.
- Lessons for next spring or summer to inspire anticipation.

Some low-cost or free options that make for memorable time together:

- Ice Skating, Hockey Games or a day playing in the snow.
- One-On One "coupons", especially if there are multiple kids in the family.
- Theater, plays, comedy shows or music performances/tickets to a concert.
- A kid-free afternoon for parents by providing babysitting coverage, allowing a much-needed date afternoon or night.
- Home-cooked, prepared meals, a gift certificates to a family-owned, local establishment or scheduling a time to cook for someone (this is my favorite – I love food with family and friends!)
- Helping out with household chores. Assisting with laundry, dishes, removing donations or trash from the house, or even organizing a junk drawer over a glass of wine!

As a Professional Organizer and self-proclaimed minimalist, I value time spent with others vs. material items. Today, many live with the mind-set "Every Day is Christmas" and if there is something you want or need, ideally, you save up and purchase when appropriate. Teaching yourself and family members to plan purchases will ultimately minimize splurge shopping, decrease debt and free up space that serves as a "holding area" for extra items not needed at the moment.

If you **do** choose to gift items, please keep shopping local and thoughtful, while supporting Dubuque and our neighboring vendors!

I'm confident this will promote ideas and planning for meaningful gifts.

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