There are many creative ways to express the spirit of peace, joy and generosity without pulling out your credit card. Many of the following suggestions are suitable for any holiday, as well as birthdays:

- Chronicle your family history by assembling photographs, letters and important documents. Make this your one gift to the entire family.
- Record a family oral history with commentary from parents, grandparents, and aunts and uncles. Such a gift will be truly treasured in the years to come.
- Shop for secondhand toys.
- Knit a sweater, build a birdhouse, or frame one of your best photographs.
- Make your own cards and send them only to relatives and good friends.
- Design a gift certificate that gives babysitting to a close friend, an afternoon at a museum or art gallery to a grandparent, or a candlelight massage to your partner.
- Work with a social services agency to find a family in need, then share appropriate gifts with them.
- Host a potluck party instead of a giant holiday feast.

Children need not suffer under this alternative approach to the holidays. Take them caroling, help them make gifts for grandparents or cousins, and involve them in assembling gift boxes for the homeless. Along with their holiday presents, they will experience the unexpected joy of giving.

The Joy of Responsible Gift-Giving

Employee Assistance Program
1-800-451-1834