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HOLISTIC + GENERATIVE APPROACHES = CREATIVE + SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Presents of Presence

By Jane Peterson, PhD

Holidays have their own particular kind of stresses, ones that often involves our feelings of give and take.

We think of give and take in terms of gifts--that is, in terms of tangible objects, or "stuff" in Annie Leonard's terms. To get that "stuff" of course we have to give our time, talent and life energy to work. And usually, that takes us away from those we love and for whom we ultimately make the gift of our work. Sometimes it seems that work takes more than it gives, and that the struggle to keep up is endless. We lack good models for finding ways of balancing the demands of work with the benefits we receive from our efforts against the pressures of family and our community.

I'm intrigued by Harvard University professor, Juliet Schor's, work on this topic. An economist by training, Dr. Schor has researched the roots of our over-commercialized, overworked culture and is proposing an interesting alternative to our frenzied lifestyle. She suggests that we work fewer hours for pay and spend the time, not more money, to provide things we need through community effort and through developing self-sufficiency in a high-tech age. For more on her innovative approach to doing more with less (and having more fun doing it!) [visit her blog](#).

Here's one gift you can give that often costs nothing and gives much to both the receiver and the giver: Give the gift of your kind and interested attention in another human being.

Give the gift of doing something for someone that they value - take a music lover to a free brownbag concert at lunchtime; chances are you'll enjoy it, too. Take someone who doesn't get out much to grocery shopping in one of the many beautifully decorated stores this holiday season. Spend an hour teaching a child to ice skate. Let your creativity and interests inspire you! Many of these activities cost little, if anything, and the gift of your kind attention and loving presence is the greatest gift of all.



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*Miss Sashi saying, as she often does,
"I would appreciate the presence of your hands on my soft fur right now!"*

Wishing you and those you love a happy holiday season and a wonderful new year!

Don & Jane