

Spreading cheer, not gifts, should be our mission

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"Anyone who believes that men are equal to women has never seen a man trying to shop for his wife at Christmas time."



Some men have a difficult time shopping for their spouses and the holidays simply compound the matter.

I happen to enjoy shopping and don't mind the hustle and bustle of the malls this time of year. However, recent news clips showing the mayhem surrounding Black Friday have definitely put a damper on my enthusiasm.

Until recent years, I didn't have much trouble shopping for my wife. But after 20 years of marriage, and enough earrings to adorn 100 pairs of ears, pickings are getting rather slim. Jewellery and watches used to be the "old reliables," but lately, even these trinkets don't seem to cut it. My wife tends to be a bit hard on her watches as several sad, scratched faces sitting in her jewellery box will attest (which is such a shame, as something like this [exquisite sagittarius necklace](#) would make such a wonderful gift). And this year, my wife just happened to settle on THE most popular watch on the planet - the Coach stainless "Boyfriend" watch with crystals. Sold out almost everywhere and those that still have it are charging a premium.

This is what I get for waiting so long, according to my wonderfully organized wife, who pretty much has her shopping done. She found my "amazing" gift months ago.

And I hardly think a month before Christmas is past the point of no return. I know men who shop the last couple of days before the big day.

Our younger ones also seem to be having some hiccups this year.

My oldest loves movies, of every genre and time period. As a youngster, she burned through at least three copies of Wizard of Oz. She enjoys Gone with the Wind and I Dream of Jeannie. She presented another lengthy list this year.

My son's list is missing in action. He doesn't seem overly excited about gifts this year.

My youngest has the biggest list and this 10-year-old appears to be our brightest bulb this season.

Maybe the demands of high school, friends, a part-time job and volunteer commitments have caught up with my older two.

Even though our tree has been up for a week already, I don't have the yuletide spirit just yet. Maybe it's the weather. Maybe it's car trouble. Maybe it's the mid-season break for my favourite TV shows.

Failing a decent present, my wife claims that all she wants is a warm and pleasant atmosphere around the house this season. That, and to be whisked away on some romantic adventure. I share her desire, but the realities of our current situation get me down.

I used to be marvellously organized, prepared and spot-on with special occasions and gift-giving.

My interests have dwindled a bit, but my wife always seems to know I need. I've heard it said that when shopping for a spouse, you really get a handle on how well you know them, or don't know them.

We tried to jump-start our wide-eyed wonderment Friday evening, during a "Santa Train" ride in Orangeville. It was festive and the gingerbread cookies were great. Santa was perfect and spent time with each and every child. Of course our two teens spent a considerable amount of time getting on each other's nerves. I need a really long, really sturdy cane, if you know what I mean.

My holiday joy seems to centre around good food, family gatherings and good cheer. I'd rather munch on my favourite foods, have a few cups of cheer and relax, while the young ones engage in Nerf wars all around. I can't wait for those dinners and leftovers that await!

While parts of the world have already seen the white stuff, we've been spared so far. Blame it on the newest El Nino, which experts say will see a warming trend through the winter and into the spring. That suits me well, but I wouldn't mind a covering of snow through the holidays. We all have new snow tires as well and it would be a shame to waste them!

I am looking forward to local events and passing out toys for local drives. I believe giving is another important part of the season. In fact, in our house, it's a year-long activity.

Some holiday dinner tables will be smaller this year, and that's sad. It's been many, many years since my clan was still around to share in my mom's famous Christmas Eve open houses. That tradition has passed onto me, and hopefully my kids will one day carry this unique torch.

There are some great holiday flicks that poke fun at the hustle, bustle, lights and must-have toys. I get a chuckle out of all of them. No matter how we celebrate the holidays, certain things are important. My oldest asked Santa for "world peace," but failing that, how about just sharing in the warmth and love that the holidays bring about??How about building on the goodness that begins to ooze out of us??How about extending that to friends as well as strangers?

There's really no limit to making others feel good, this time of year, or all year long.