

What Your Spouse Really Wants for Christmas

Gift-giving can be complicated. What does your spouse want? How much money do you spend? You may feel pressure to “top” last year’s gift or to “match” what your spouse is giving you. Some couples solve these challenges by agreeing to not give each other gifts. It may be hard to know what your spouse really wants for Christmas.

Spending money on material gifts may not be the best or most meaningful way to say, “I love you.” Even if your spouse’s love language is receiving gifts, the meaning and thought behind the gift are more important. That doesn’t minimize the importance of giving gifts; it’s just that there’s more to it than surfing Amazon for something that might fulfill your sense of obligation to have something under the tree with your spouse’s name on it.

If you know what your spouse wants for Christmas, do your best to give that! But look beneath the words they may say and consider the meaning in your relationship.

Here are some ideas that may get closer to what your spouse really wants for Christmas:

1. An experience: Studies have documented that most people remember and place a higher value on experiences over things. What are your spouse’s interests? What does your spouse talk about? When does your spouse seem most happy and alive?

Do they enjoy art or music? Consider tickets to a concert or a visit to an art museum.

Is history their thing? Perhaps a history book or an invitation to an appropriate lecture.

Fine dining? Find the best chef in your area that you can afford and arrange a special meal.

Outdoors/wilderness? How about a weekend trip to a new state or national park?

Natural wellness? Think about a day at a spa or a visit to an organic garden.

Experiences can create great memories. It may involve a gift of your time; it's worth it. And even if it's something they do without you, an experience makes a great gift.

2. A learning opportunity: A chance to learn more about an area of interest is often a meaningful gift, and one that can create lasting value.

That might start with a book or online course about a subject they are interested in. But there are many other options as well.

An art class, a day with an accomplished chef, a ride-along with first responders, a music workshop, a college/university class—such things can be both an experience and a growing opportunity.

Make sure such an opportunity is something your spouse would want to do, not something *you* want them to learn.

3. Action toward change: Is there something about you that your spouse would love you to change? Simply a promise to do better is not impactful. But if you take a specific action, that can make a huge difference in your relationship.

Does he/she want you to stop smoking? Get a prescription from your doctor for Chantix or some similar helpful medication, purchase it and wrap it up with a note circling the date on the calendar when you will begin.

Does your snoring disrupt their sleep? Ask your doctor about

an appointment for a sleep study and give that to your spouse.

Is your communication broken? Purchase a book on communication in marriage (here's ours) and begin reading it together.

Are they frustrated about how you deal with money? Purchase Financial Peace University.

Doing something specific to improve your relationship says to your spouse that they are important to you. That's an awesome gift.

4. A helping hand: What stresses your spouse? Where might they feel overwhelmed? Take something off their plate and offer that time to your spouse as a gift for them to do something they find nourishing.

You might take the kids for an afternoon to do some Christmas shopping that your spouse would normally have had to do.

Put up the Christmas tree, even though your spouse has normally done that.

If your spouse is completely overwhelmed, you might get so drastic as to take the kids to church yourself one Sunday and let your spouse have the morning for quietness and time alone with God.

Wherever your spouse feels as though they have to do something, consider finding a creative way to take some of that load.

5. Time together: Find a way to enter your spouse's world in a way that's important to them.

If your husband is into hunting but you're not, offer to spend an afternoon at a sports shop or a day in the woods together.

If your wife loves shopping, spend an afternoon at the mall with her even though it's the last thing you would want to do

yourself.

If your husband loves action movies, go to one with him that he would enjoy.

If your wife loves to talk, you plan a Saturday morning when you just meet over coffee and spend time talking.

Getting out of your comfort zone and spending time doing something your spouse enjoys is a great way to improve your connection.

Your turn: *Does anything here stimulate an idea for something you can give your spouse? I'd love to hear what gift you are planning to give. Leave a comment below. {eo}*

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