

## It's the Thought that Counts

I was out shopping last week and I overheard two friends chatting about Christmas and one stated that she "wasn't giving gifts this year" At which time her friend replied "Good, now I don't have to think about you." Those were her actual words. Ouch. Would you agree that it's really not what you get or how much it costs but it truly is the thought that counts? To know that someone took the time to pick something out, make it look pretty and maybe write a nice card warms the heart. When you receive such a gift it makes you feel special and that someone was thinking about you.

So, as you read the last paragraph you were either thinking "I wish those girls were my friends!" OR you were nodding your head softly at the thought of picking out the perfect gift for a loved one, the cool ribbon you just bought at Michael's that is going to make your gifts look amazing this year (so chic, like you didn't try too hard) and you start envisioning the expression on said loved ones face as they open your beautiful, perfect gift. Yup, this world is pretty much split between the people that love to give gifts and those that just wish they could write one big cheque that would cover all gifts they would ever have to give...ever.

The Top Ten Tips below are for group B (for Bah-Humbug). But before I turn you from Bah-Humbug to Santa's Helper I must first express that I certainly appreciate a primary reason for wanting to abolish the practice of gift giving is often due to our economic circumstances. Nobody wants friends or families going into debt to buy them a gift. However, I still maintain that it shouldn't let us off the hook of letting our loved ones know we are thinking of them (see Steps 8 and 9 below).

- 1. Ask for help from those that know.** I never understand why my husband doesn't ask my closest friends for advice. It certainly would have avoided the *accidental* disposal of a country framed wall calendar two Christmases ago.
- 2. Where do they love to shop?** If your friend/sister/mom spends a lot of time or money at a particular store that's a great start (and think outside the box – maybe it's a deli or the fish store). And if you're pressed for time call ahead and let them know who you're shopping for. If they're awesome (like The Urban Rack...shameless plug) you will have items waiting for you to choose from when you arrive.
- 3. Ask if they have a Wish List somewhere.** And if they don't, maybe now they will. We find more and more customers utilizing this at The Urban Rack and it works. Always the perfect gift, always the perfect size.
- 4. Listen to the sales staff.** We are often a little suspect of salespeople but they usually have great questions that will help guide you to the right gift. I love to ask what their top sellers are. If they are constantly sold out of one particular olive oil (I **love** to get Olive Oil...if anyone's wondering), that's the one I want.
- 5. Practical or splurge?** If the person you are buying for is very practical...stay practical! I have often made the mistake of buying something I thought was so fun and cool that the person would NEVER buy for themselves but in **my** opinion they should splurge. Who am I to decide they need to splurge? They are practical because they like it that way.  
Buy the damn Tupperware.

**6. Everyone loves a pretty package.** I realize many don't want to contribute to our landfill with bags/wrap/tissue but that doesn't mean you can't make it pretty. Go to the dollar store and load up on cool re-usable boxes and top with a funky (re-usable) ribbon and you're good. Or take advantage of Complimentary gift wrapping services available at many stores (like The Urban Rack...sorry, can't help myself).

**7. Generic gifts.** There is nothing wrong with loading up on something fabulous to have on hand. Like, say, Olive Oil.

**8. It doesn't have to cost much, or even anything!** I know we often say that but it's true, you just have to be creative. Is there something you are good at? Baking? Burning CD's? Computer stuff (you could set up a Facebook account/ organize files/etc)? It may seem lame to you but I can tell you if someone baked me a lemon meringue pie I would openly weep.

**9. The gift of TIME.** Instead of exchanging gifts plan a special night out with a friend. Let her know this will be your gift to each other. Or have her over for dinner and open a great (expensive) bottle of wine.

**10.** And finally, a little tough love here for my B Group...**Fake it till you Make it.** We like to receive from people who **like to give**. Half the fun of opening a gift from my friend Pam is the excitement on her face as I open it. I never feel as though it was a chore for her to buy and beautifully wrap my gift. 'nuf said.

During this season of Giving we must also remember that sometimes **the thought that counts** just isn't enough. We believe strongly in giving back at The Urban Rack and have a few charities we support each year (check out our Cause we Care section with links to some wonderful organizations that would love your support). Once again we will have a **Toys for Tots and Ten for You** box at both locations where you can drop an unwrapped toy or book for a child and we'll give you \$10 bucks to spend in the store.

*I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.  
~Maya Angelou*