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Utah State University



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Developmentally Appropriate Gifts for Children

With the holiday season approaching, many adults find themselves wondering what to buy for children. Choosing the correct toy can boost independence, creativity and curiosity in children and help them practice developmental milestones such as fine motor skills, cognitive development, math, and language skills. While it might be tempting to give the newest electronic gadgets and games that are being promoted, the toys listed below are far more helpful to kids developmentally and will encourage exploration, experimentation, and creativity.

- Sound-makers such as squeak toys

12-24 months:

- Cloth-covered foam blocks
- Stacking toys
- Push-pull toys
- Pop-up toys
- Board books
- Two- to four-piece puzzles with easy-grasp knobs

Preschoolers (2-5 years old)

- Balls
- Blocks and construction sets
- Role-play toys
- Nesting table toys
- Wheeled toys
- Nontoxic art and clay-like modeling materials



- Simple board and card games
- Up to 16-piece puzzles and train sets
- Activity play stations such as airport, farm or zoo

School-agers (6 to 10 years old)

- Card and board games
- Arts and crafts kits

Infants up to 12 months:

- Soft cuddly items such as stuffed animals, cloth dolls or puppets (without detachable button noses and eyes)
- Water play toys for bath time
- Crib or tripod gyms with dangling toys
- Colorful floor activity quilts or play mats
- Plastic-coated books
- Rattles

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- Car or airplane model kits
- Science toys
- Jump rope
- Computer
- Bike
- Chapter books and short novels
- Sports equipment
- Musical instruments
- Jigsaw puzzles

Remember, while toys are helpful for development, don't underestimate your role with children. Giving the gift of your time with them is far more valuable than any toy. After all, you are the one that helps them know how to use toys and helps to make them more fun!☞

~Naomi Brower, Extension Professor

Enjoying the Holidays Debt Free

Reports show that 71% of Americans identify money as a significant cause of stress in their lives, 76% of households live paycheck-to-paycheck, and about 65% of Americans report feeling that their financial difficulties are piling up so much they can't overcome them. Many people report feeling fatigued, angry, and irritable because of money concerns.

The best present you can give yourself and your family is to stay out of debt. Staying out of debt this holiday season is possible with planning and creative thinking.

- Develop a holiday shopping plan and stick to it.
- Make a list of the people you are giving gifts.
- Downsize your giving.
- Decide how much money you want to spend on each person.
- Decide upon an appropriate gift for each person.
- Compare prices.
- Keep an eye out for discounts and sales.
- Track what you spend.
- Avoid impulse purchases.
- Buy with cash.
- Avoid costly fees from debit cards, credit cards, layaway, or store financing.
- Use coupons.
- Make gifts.
- Give your time.

Financial wellness is a year-round need. Take control of your finances by taking an Empowering Financial Wellness class through Utah State University. A few of

the classes offered include budgeting, financial organization, understanding credit, and eliminating debt.

Some of the important topics covered include:

- Estate planning.
- Spending habits.
- Money management.
- Retirement savings.
- Emergency savings accounts.
- Positive and negative impacts to using credit cards.
- Researching credit reports.
- Ways to pay down debt.

Visit finance.usu.edu/efw for the most up-to-date offerings.☞

~Stephanie Carlson, Extension Assistant Professor



Resources:

Duke. (n.d.). *Money-Related Stress*. <https://pas.duke.edu/concerns/emotional/stress/money-related-stress/#:~:text=According%20to%20a%20recent%20CNN,of%20simple%20dollars%20and%20numbers>.

White, A. (2022, June 2). *25% of Americans make purchases they later regret when under stress-here's how to avoid it*. CNBC Select. <https://www.cnbc.com/select/americans-have-buyers-remorse-after-shopping-while-stressed/>

Rutherford. D. (2011, Nov 10). *Plan your spending to avoid holiday debt*. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/plan-your-spending-to-avoid-holiday-debt/>

Family and Consumer Science Events

Tai Chi for Health

Tuesdays, Jan 10 through August 2024
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Pleasant Valley Library - So Ogden
Free

Free Finance Classes

Starting in January 2024. More information coming.

Tai Chi uses slow, controlled movements to regulate breathing and build stamina. By focusing the mind on moving through a series of poses, a state of mental calm and clarity can help improve coordination, relaxation, and general health.

You can register for any of the below online classes at healthyrelationshipsutah.org



STEPFAMILIES



SELF-IMPROVEMENT



COUPLES & DATING



PARENTING

SMART STEPS FOR STEPFAMILIES

This course is for dating, cohabitating, or remarried couples or individuals who have a child or children from a previous relationship.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR MAKING MARRIAGE WORK

This workshop is designed to help couples improve their friendship and conflict management skills.

THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS AND MEANING

This course provides principles and practices that are related to personal joy and well-being while also recognizing that one's life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

This is a parenting program designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful, and resourceful members of their communities.

COUPLE LINKS

Adults in a married or committed relationship learn how to strengthen their relationship.

AVOID FALLING FOR A JERK/JERKETTE

Singles learn what to look for in a healthy relationship, and how to identify key markers of an unhealthy relationship.

HOME RUN PARENTS

This course teaches about relationships, parenting, and job readiness skills using a baseball theme, where parents are the coaches, and kids are the players!

PARENTING THE LOVE AND LOGIC WAY

Parents learn how to raise responsible kids and enjoy parenting.

Science-Backed Happiness Hacks

The science behind happiness continues to reveal that real happiness and joy result from small things done often. It is small changes *over time* that make the most difference. Consider implementing one or more of the research-based changes suggested below to increase the happiness in your life.

1. **Increase gratitude.** When our lives are full of gratitude, our ability to manage struggles and become resilient is increased. Some ways to increase gratitude include expressing what we are grateful for in a gratitude journal (on paper,



in your phone, or using an app), taking time to share with those you love that you

appreciate them (in person, a letter, a phone call or even in a quick text), and practicing mental subtraction (thinking to yourself, “What would my life be without...”) during “down time” such as while driving, lunch break, or even brushing your teeth.

2. **Practice random acts of kindness.** Researcher, Dr. Martin Seligman has found that rather than focusing on happiness directly, when we forget about happiness and do something kind for someone else (even if that means we sacrifice our time, energy, and resources), happiness is often the result.

3. **Smiling is a superpower.** Studies have found that smiling stimulates the reward system in our brains in a way that even chocolate can’t rival. In fact, British researchers have found that one smile can generate as much dopamine in our brains as up to 2,000 bars of chocolate!
4. **Practice healthy habits.** Research suggests that some of the most foundational and basic “happy hacks” are moving more, eating better, and getting enough sleep. These three have even been called the pillars of mental health.
5. **Start your day in a positive way.** Did you know that what you do in the first minutes of your waking hours can have an impact on the rest of your day? Research found that those who started their day by watching three minutes of negative news increased their chance of having a bad day by 27%. Choose to start your day in a more positive way, such as reading or listening to something uplifting, exercising, drinking a full glass of water, or texting someone to let them know that you appreciate them.

While very little in this life works instantly, when it comes to overall well-being, learning to implement these small changes on an ongoing basis can help to reduce stress and help you to find more happiness in your life. What small change are you willing to make to find more happiness in your life? ☞

~Naomi Brower, Extension Professor

Content adapted from the curriculum *The Road to Happiness and Meaning* by Dr. Dave Schramm



*Merry Christmas and A
Happy New Year From
all of us at the Extension
office !*

Create Better Health News Corner

Terrific Benefits of Cranberries and Squash

If you are like me, I always look forward to festive holiday foods! Let's take a minute and learn about some of the amazing benefits of cranberries and winter squash, such as pumpkin, and why you should include them as part of your tasty holiday dinners.

Cranberries and squash are both great sources of antioxidants which fight against harmful free radicals in the body. Free radicals are the byproducts of digesting food and interacting with toxins in the environment and both can cause damage through inflammation which can be the source of many chronic illnesses. Since cranberries and squash, as well as all fruits and vegetables, are high in antioxidants they are a very healthy choice for your fall festivities!



In addition, cranberries help prevent a UTI by reducing bacteria adhering to the urinary tract. Cranberries also help decrease blood pressure thus decreasing the risk for cardiovascular disease.



Summer and winter squashes such as pumpkin are rich in fiber, vitamin C, vitamin A, calcium, magnesium, and B vitamins. Vitamin A is essential for eye and skin health.

Magnesium gives you energy and helps form DNA. Vitamin C is important for immune health. Calcium helps keep bones and teeth strong. All of these vitamins and minerals are important for preventing chronic diseases.

This holiday season make sure to load up on the fruits and veggies such as cranberries and pumpkin to give yourself the gift of a healthy body and mind! 🍁

~Alayna Johnson, CBH Ambassador

Baked Sweet Potato with Apples and Cranberries

- 4 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 medium Granny Smith apples, peeled and diced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried cranberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice

Place sweet potatoes in a large baking dish. Top with diced apples and dried cranberries. Pour orange juice over all. Cover tightly with lid or foil. Bake at 350° for 1½ hours or until sweet potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork.

Apple Cranberry Crisp

- 5 cups apples, thinly sliced & peeled
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rolled oats, quick cooking
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar, packed
- 2 tablespoons whole-wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted

For filling: In a 2-quart baking dish, combine apples and cranberries. In small bowl, stir together sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle over fruit mixture in baking dish; toss to coat.

For topping: In a small bowl, combine oats, brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon. Using a fork, stir in butter until crumbly. Sprinkle oat mixture evenly over apple mixture. Bake at 375 for 30 to 35 minutes or until apples are tender. Serve warm.

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 1.800.221.5689 or visit online at <http://fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/coalition/map.htm>. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture's policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Keynote Comedian: Larry Weaver

All sessions will be recorded and available for ticketholders after the event.



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